

*Media Alert

8th November 2011,

Copenhagen*

*
*

*“First steps on the long walk to school”
Civil society welcomes GPE announcements in Copenhagen *

“The Global Campaign for Education welcomes the renewed commitment and energy shown in Copenhagen towards a revived education compact – in the form of the new Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Over \$1.5 billion was announced for GPE over the next three years, which lays a strong foundation for future growth. However for some major donors we are still witnessing a case of the “Emperors new clothes”, in Hans Christian Anderson’s very own home country. We are yet to see the serious increase in aid to education that is so urgently needed,” stated Helle Gudmandsen, from the Danish coalition and board member of GCE.

“We’re here to remind donors that promises to children should never be broken – yet many have continued to do so for every year since 2000: when they pledged to ensure that no country would be unable to educate their children for lack of finances. Whilst we welcome today’s commitments of about \$1.5 billion over three years, we urge donors to try harder. There are still more than 60 million children out of school – and none should be left behind,” said Monique Fouilhoux, chair of the Global Campaign for Education, and from Education International.

Civil society members are here from a variety of coalitions including Haiti, Zambia, Vietnam, and the Gambia. Their message is coming across clear – that whilst most southern governments have put their money where their mouth is, rich countries have failed to do the same. The Burkina Faso’s Minister of Education, told how they have more than doubled access to education in recent years, have a government spend of more than 20%; but with five bi-lateral donors now pulling out, their education budget now lacking \$150 million a year.

Donor countries, bar a few, continue to fall far short of the mark. France and Germany still spend too much on self-interested aid and make minimal commitments to the common pool. The US has committed its first contribution but it is only \$20 million – less than the Netherlands or Denmark. It’s a global travesty that 67 million children are still waiting to go to school. Low-income countries are fulfilling their side of the global promise; civil society, unions, and local organisations have come together in masses over the last decade. More than 15 million people are speaking out every year as part of the Global Action Week for education, and yet donor countries are providing only 4% of their aid budgets for

basic education. GCE demands for them to commit to 10% in line with what low-income countries are delivering.

Sitting amongst the worst performers is the World Bank, who's aid to education is at an all time low for the last 20 years – delivering only about a third of what they provided in 2010 and so far failing to deliver on the promise made by President Zoellick to increase aid to basic education for which they received such warm praise last year.

There are however a few clear class leaders, with Australia (pledging \$278 million over 4 years) and UK (\$352 million over 4 years) getting top marks and receiving a warm welcome from poor countries and civil society. “If only other rich countries could follow Australia and UK's leading examples. We're disappointed that some of the world's richest countries are not taking the future of the world's children seriously. We know education is one of the best investments that governments can make and could be part of the solution to the present financial crisis - and we know how to do it. It's not rocket science but this lack of commitment by the world's richest countries is a gross violation of the rights of the world's poorest children,” David Archer, Global Campaign for Education board member and Head of Education at ActionAid International.

“The Global Partnership for Education today made steps in the right direction, and currently represents the best quality mechanism for delivering aid to education. Whilst the path is now set, and the first steps taken, more finances are needed urgently if we are to complete the journey to school for all of the world's poorest children,” Miriam Chonya, from the Zambia Coalition for Education.

ENDS