I. Summary

More children in developing countries, including girls, follow basic education. However, 69 million children are still out of school. The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) in the Netherlands managed to keep education high on the agenda in a year with major education budget cuts in the Dutch development budget. The Campaign used its International network and a creative media and networking approach to convince MPs and indirectly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the importance of a responsible phasing out strategy for education programmes in former Dutch partner countries.

II. Full description

Aim

GCE-NL aims to promote an optimal financial and policy contribution of The Netherlands to the Education for All goals. For 2011, the focus was on the promotion of a responsible phase out of Dutch support to education programmes, in order to make sure results achieved in earlier years were sustained and that the education situation in partner countries did not worsen.

Context

In 2000, the world leaders promised to provide all children, boys and girls, with an education by 2015 (Millennium Development Goal 2). GCE wants to ensure that all countries keep these promises. This coalition of organizations and individuals currently operates in 80 countries, including in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands has been a leading Education donor and policy lead for many years. Its involvement in Education was recently evaluated positively in a major evaluation exercise. In 2011, the Dutch government cut the development aid budget with 450 million euro; this will be followed by a cut of around 900 million
euro in 2012. Almost 50 percent of these cuts affect Education.

New policy priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been developed. Bilateral development collaboration in the field of Education will only continue in a few of the remaining partner countries, and primarily as an instrument to support the achievement of (non-education) policy ‘spearheads’.

**Main Actors**

Members of GCE-NL are the two main Dutch education trade unions (Algemene Onderwijsbond and CNV-Onderwijs), as well as NGOs Edukans, ICCO/KerkinActie, Oxfam Novib, and Save the Children-NL. Key allies are the GCE members and coalitions in different countries and continents. Other key actors are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), MPs, the media, and the Global Partnership for Education (secretariat).

**Why did Oxfam Novib get involved?**

Oxfam Novib is a core partner and funder of GCE-NL. Advocating for improved Education policies and budgets is a key strategy to realize the Education for All goals and MDG-2. The collaboration with the Global Campaign for Education is considered highly strategic for this purpose.

**Methodology**

The advocacy strategy of GCE-NL consisted primarily of raising awareness of and discussing with MPs the possible negative consequences of the decision of the MFA to substantially reduce the Education budget in (former) partner countries. GCE-NL informed MPs of the International trends in Education funding, which show stagnating Education funding levels. It also pointed at the risks faced by the Education sector in particular (former) Dutch partner countries if several donors withdraw at the same time. Southern contacts of the GCE-NL members, as well as the national GCE coalitions in developing countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Bangladesh, collaborated with GCE-NL to gather specific information about the Education finance situation in their country and possible alternative donors.

**Results**

- Suggestions for parliamentary questions on Education made and used by MPs, as part of the parliamentarian debate on the Foreign Affairs budget 2012.
- Letters and e-mails to MFA and MPs, at relevant moments in the parliamentary year; one example is the correspondence with analysis of the ‘exit strategies’ letters of State Secretary Mr. Knapen. Regular contacts by telephone, in person and by e-mail between GCE-NL and MPs facilitated this dialogue.
- Facilitating two meetings between the Chair of the Global Partnership for Education and Dutch MPs of in total four different political parties.
- Over 100 participants from NGOs, CSOs, government, private sector, academia, formulated an *Education agenda 2015* during the GCE conference of 18 November 2011.
- A platform was provided for a public debate of the IOB (Policy and Operations Evaluation Department) Evaluation Policy review of the Dutch contribution to Basic Education 1999-2009.
- Effectively used input from Southern contacts in communications with politicians, MFA, and media.

In the development budget debates in Dutch parliament, Education had a prominent place. MPs from several political parties asked many critical questions about the sustainability and the future funding of education programmes that The Netherlands had been funding until recently, and visibly used the information provided by GCE-NL.

The MFA has reserved substantial budgets for the phasing out of Dutch Education programmes in (former) partner countries, for the period 2012 and 2013. The Ministry has committed to actively search for other donors and other
solutions in so-called ‘risk countries’. Critical questions by MPs led to two additional letters with information on exit strategies by the MFA, including the commitment by the MFA to develop exit strategies for partner countries that The Netherlands will leave behind, and to keep the Parliament informed through yearly reports on the phasing out strategy. GCE-NL’s advocacy contributed to the timely publication of the IOB Evaluation Policy Review of the Dutch contribution to basic education 1999-2009.

Partly as a result of GCE-NL’s advocacy, the MFA has allocated € 30 million per year during 2011-2014 to the Global Partnership for Education.

III. Lessons learned

GCE-NL managed to combine international networking and national advocacy effectively, using both Southern CSO contacts and high level contacts such as with the chair of the GPE to influence the Dutch political and media debate. The use of a variety of campaign methods appeared effective, as the use of media attention and a public conference with a broader constituency helped to show the continued attention for education.

Oxfam’s contacts have been a useful source of information for GCE-NL, though gathering up-to-date information on education funding levels in Southern countries remains a challenge.

Read on..
http://www.campaignforeducation.org/en
http://www.educationfasttrack.org/ (Global Partnership for Education)

http://www.globalcampaignforeducation.nl/l/nl/library/download/748306

Colophon

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