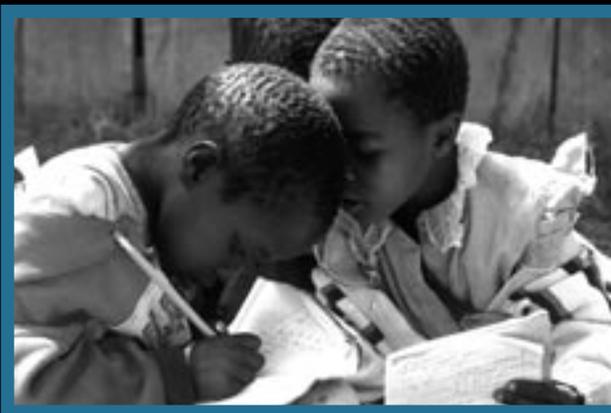
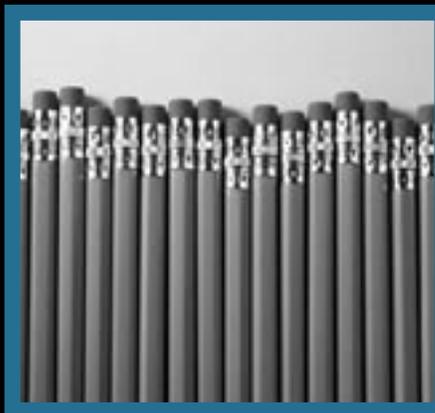


FORGING A GLOBAL MOVEMENT



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NEW EDUCATION RIGHTS STRATEGIES
FOR THE UNITED STATES
AND THE WORLD
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PUBLISHED BY ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL AND JUST ASSOCIATES
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ABOUT US

ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL USA works towards progressive change worldwide by working with individuals, partners, and social movements in the global South and in the United States to empower the poor to reclaim their rights. Our programs aim to address the various forms of power that exclude poor people from a life of dignity. We seek to build a bold new type of global solidarity based on people acting collectively to confront common economic and social injustices and forging cross-national and global social movements to advance the rights and leadership of the poor and excluded.

Our vision for education is that all children will have free access to quality education within an equitable system. We want to see schools where children's rights, especially those of girls, are respected, injustices are challenged, and children's lives can be transformed.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A

ActionAid International USA and Just Associates' research, networking, and advocacy planning process, Forging a Global Movement: New Education Rights Strategies for the US & the World, brought 25 education advocates, analysts and activist scholars together for a Roundtable Discussion in Washington, DC in July 2005, as a first step in building international solidarity for an education rights agenda.



NEW SOLIDARITY

Increasingly clear areas of common ground connect the crumbling public education systems in the US to the millions of children in Asia, Africa, and Latin American who are denied access to school. The emerging solidarity paradigm reveals the common roots of poverty and exclusion in both the North and South.

POLICIES AND POLITICS

International education movements strive to hold governments accountable to their commitments, in the face of neoliberal cutbacks in the South and the US' No Child Left Behind law. Measures such as vouchers and charter schools, supposedly introduced to allow "choice," in fact turn education from a right into a commodity, deepening existing inequities in the process. Organizing at all levels must confront these structural dynamics.

CRITICAL COMMON THREATS

The opening of the public sector, including public education, to private enterprise is eroding public funding and accountability for education in the US. The same interests and values promoting this trend in the US are impacting poor countries' ability to strengthen their education systems. The Roundtable produced consensus on the threat posed by privatization, debated the implications for advocacy and organizing: whether well-intentioned solutions may in effect advance a privatizing agenda and undermine the capacity of governments to provide quality education.

EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY

The Roundtable was an opportunity to move beyond the slogan that "education is the foundation of democracy" and begin to define the links between schools and inclusive, empowering citizen participation. Participants shared insights about education rights strategies that offer fresh possibilities to re-imagine the concepts of democracy, politics, and citizenship.



INTRODUCTION

ASK ANY PARENT ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

what she believes is most critical to her children's future and she is likely to say "education." Education unlocks human possibilities. It holds the potential to transform people, providing literacy, knowledge and basic skills that open up good life opportunities. Ideally, education also gives people the confidence and critical skills needed to challenge injustice and discrimination, demand their rights, and become active agents in changing society in the direction of inclusive democracy and fairness. The issue of education is a priority concern of women, youth, and immigrants, among other constituencies, and also presents much needed opportunities to clarify the links between broad political and economic trends, and concrete problems that people experience in the schools and other aspects of everyday life.

With these insights in mind, ActionAid International USA and Just Associates began working together on a research, networking and advocacy planning process called Forging a Global Movement: New Education Rights Strategies for the US & the World in January 2005. The first phase involved open-ended consultations with people working toward better schools in NGOs, community groups, think tanks, advocacy networks, and funding agencies. The process culminated in a Roundtable Discussion held in July 2005 in Washington, DC.

The Roundtable brought together 25 education advocates, policy analysts, organizers, and activist scholars working in a variety of countries, including the US, to assess the potential for stronger international cooperation and solidarity in advancing an education rights agenda. Participants explored commonalities in policies and trends, and began to define connections, opportunities, and differences. The process emphasized developing common understanding and identifying shared ground, rather than mobilizing around a pre-determined agenda. It included structured opportunities for collaborative analysis and reflection, as well as discussion. The conversation was a

first step in what is envisaged as a longer-term process of solidarity-building. Discussions culminated in a consensus around the challenge posed by the policies and interests that are eroding governments' capacity to provide, oversee and finance quality public education for all. It also generated intense enthusiasm for new education strategies that expand democratic participation and create opportunities for solidarity and exchange between US organizers and constituencies, and people engaged in parallel activism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

This paper draws upon insights that emerged from consultations, and Roundtable planning and discussion, and is also informed by ActionAid International's 30 years of partnership with citizens and alliances in 50 countries for stronger, more equitable education systems, as well as by ActionAid's role in the Education for All movement and the Global Campaign for Education. The paper also builds on Just Associates' ongoing work with education activists in Washington, DC and other cities to build strategies that promote equal rights, challenge privatization, and create global networking opportunities.

For US activists, the intention is to situate developments in US education within a broader global context, and stimulate new thinking about the possibilities for re-energizing US schools activism through linkages to global education rights thinking and alliances. For activists working in the global South, this paper shares information on the policies and politics that impact US schools, and on US policies that influence education outcomes internationally. It seeks to clarify some of the concepts and policy frameworks (such as the US No Child Left Behind Law and the global Education for All movement) that shape advocacy and organizing in different contexts, with a view toward building a foundation for further exchange and complementary action.

WHY SOLIDARITY FOR EDUCATION?

In the US, few issues are considered more *local* than public education. Advocates and citizen groups in the US have historically focused on local and state level policies, budgets, politics and constituencies. Today, the picture is beginning to change in several ways. First, new legislation, the No Child Left Behind law, creates needs and opportunities for organizing at the national level. Additionally, US activists and constituencies are beginning to develop interest in stronger links with counterparts in the global South. This is related in part to changes in the school population. Demographic changes are sweeping through schools with the enrollment of greater numbers of children from immigrant families. Diaspora and migrant communities in the US are formalizing natural links to their home countries. Opportunities for education play a central role in the dreams and aspirations of US immigrants. Also, there is an emerging recognition among US activists of the potential of the human rights framework as a tool for promoting social justice at home, and, consequently, interest in connecting to advocacy and organizing experience outside the US that combines rights with empowering processes that expand people's democratic participation.

In most countries, education has been historically more centralized than it has been in the US, and activism and policy influence have focused on national ministries of education. Recent rapid decentralization has broadened targets to include local schools, and

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The impetus to forge new links of solidarity across borders is also rooted in a growing recognition of parallel political challenges. While there are few *precise* policy parallels between education problems in the US and abroad, it is also true that most citizens and activists are not roused by policy intricacies per se. Rather, it is the raw realities and political interests behind the policies that ignite people's sense of justice and desire to make a difference. And this is where we find commonalities between the US and other countries.



provincial and local education offices. Increasingly, education rights strategies in Asia, Africa and Latin America also target underlying budget constraints, including the policies of US-influenced international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These institutions have substantial influence over the practical outcomes for schools in many poor and indebted countries in the global South. While strategies targeting the World Bank and IMF take many forms, activists are beginning to seek alliances with US organizers and constituencies in order to push for more congressional oversight of the policies of these institutions. There is also interest among education activists in the global South in learning more about US education policy trends such as standards and testing, because these policies are being introduced through US foreign assistance programs.

The impetus to forge new links of solidarity across borders is also rooted in a growing recognition of parallel political challenges. While there are few *precise* policy parallels between education problems in the US and abroad, it is also true that most citizens and activists are not roused by policy intricacies per se. Rather, it is the raw realities and political interests behind the policies that ignite people's sense of justice and desire to make a difference. And this is where we find commonalities between the US and other countries. Over the last 20 years, Americans have witnessed the erosion of public resources, the decline of the public education system, and the lack of political will to solve the problem. What Americans see in the public sector today looks familiar to citizens of countries that have experienced several decades of deepening poverty, escalating austerity in government budgets, and deep cuts in social programs. Hearing the stories of popular struggles in other countries to push back against initiatives to scale back already stretched education spending or weaken teachers' unions is helping Americans understand the broad historical trends and forces that underpin the slow decline and racial re-segregation of American public schools.

This awareness is, in turn, stimulating a desire among some US activists to know more about the policies, values, institutions, and players that are pushing the neoliberal agenda of privatization and disinvestment and thus restricting the capacity of citizens and governments in both the US and the South to make needed improvements in public education. As crises deepen in health, education, and even the ability to obtain adequate food and water, advocates and grassroots constituencies in the global South have incor-

porated a critique of trade and economic frameworks into their analysis of the causes of social and economic insecurity. This critique is of increasing interest to US citizens and advocates, and low-income communities in particular, because it resonates with and illuminates the forces driving the decline Americans see in public goods and services, including neighborhood schools. It also helps to clarify the role and influence of the US government in defining education and economic policies worldwide.

A NEW APPROACH

The renewed interest in international solidarity is challenging old assumptions. In the past, solidarity initiatives tended to focus on creating US support for activists and popular movements outside the US. These initiatives did not emphasize the participation of US constituencies directly impacted by similar problems and abuses. Consequently, these efforts sometimes inadvertently reinforced the misperception that injustice and anti-democratic structures exist only outside the US, or are more prevalent there. In contrast, the emerging solidarity paradigm recognizes the common roots of poverty and exclusion in the richer core economies of the North and the impoverished nations of the global South, and the growing inequities in wealth and power within most nations. Moving decisively beyond charitable motives, new solidarity initiatives actively seek to strengthen and connect grassroots constituencies, building long-term relationships of trust and coordinated local actions bound by common values.

For Americans seeking to re-start a meaningful conversation about the role of public education in a healthy democracy, there is much to gain through deeper connections to the strategy lessons, political analysis, and rights framework offered by the experience of activist networks in the global South. The Roundtable reconfirmed enthusiasm among education activists and organizers from the North and South for opportunities for dialogue and exchange to explore possibilities for joint global political action while engaging in parallel local base-building organizing to advance the right to education.

POLICIES AND POLITICS

While the human need and aspiration for education has many times been defined in international law as a right, experience has shown that the right's actual fulfillment in practice demands continued struggle and vigilance. Translating a right on paper into a reality in people's lives requires a multiplicity of political strategies.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

While the US education policy landscape is dominated by the No Child Left Behind law, in most other countries, education goals and plans are shaped by policies promoted by the UN and funding agencies, much of which is purportedly guided by the concept of the right to education. These institutions influence education policies, politics and funding availability in individual countries. The UN rights framework and conferences play an important role in framing education internationally. While the human need and aspiration for education has many times been defined in international law as a right, experience has shown that the right's actual fulfillment in practice demands continued struggle and vigilance. Translating a right on paper into a reality in people's lives requires a multiplicity of political strategies.

Education was formally recognized in international law as a fundamental human right in 1948. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "(e)ducation shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for humans rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship." Several subsequent United Nations instruments have articulated similar commitments, including the Framework for Action that emerged from the 1995 Beijing women's rights conference, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the US has not signed.

The series of UN conferences on education have produced important policy gains, specifically by eliciting concrete

commitments from governments, which in turn lend power and credibility to the demands of activists. The process has also clarified what human rights experts call the specific content of the right to education—that is, what the right really means in practice.¹ In 1990, the Education for All (EFA) movement was born at a conference in Jomtien, Thailand, when official delegates from 155 countries, as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), agreed to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade.² In response to EFA, the 1990s witnessed the adoption of constitutional guarantees to education in many countries as well as some progress in school enrollment and literacy. The goal of universal primary education by 2000, however, was not achieved.

Official delegates met again in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, to review advances in basic education in the 1990s and commitment to EFA. The review made clear that initiatives to increase enrollment had fallen far short of aspirations, and had sacrificed quality for quantity. It also underscored the need for increased resources for education, with delegates pledging that "no country seriously committed to basic education will be thwarted in the achievement of this goal by lack of resources." The Dakar Framework for Action narrowed the EFA goals adopted at Jomtien, but committed governments to six broad goals to be accomplished by 2015, namely to: expand early childhood care and education; provide free and compulsory primary education for all; promote learning and life skills for young people and adults; increase

adult literacy by 50 per cent; achieve gender parity (equal number of girls and boys) in primary and secondary school by 2005; and completion of primary school for all children by 2015.

In 2000 heads of state from around the world pledged themselves to a new development agenda—the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are meant to provide developing nations clear targets and indicators of progress, and guidelines for wealthy donor nations like the US.³ Two of the MDGs focus on education: gender parity in primary and secondary school by 2005; and completion of primary school for all children by 2015. The MDGs are controversial among international education activists for a variety of reasons, including that they side-step the rights-based rationale for education, and are silent on the extent to which the social, political and economic context could in fact undermine efforts to achieve the goals.

THE US CONTEXT

Almost four years after President Bush signed it in January 2002, serious concerns are emerging about the impact of the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB). The Bush administration has provided little funding for states and local ju-

risdictions to carry out its mandates. The 1,100-page law includes contradictions and potential for harm that call out for clarification. The debate is sparking interest not only in the US, but also in places where key aspects of NCLB are being introduced through US international education initiatives and World Bank programs.

NCLB includes a rhetorical emphasis on equity, high standards and accountability, prescribing policy directions influenced by the recently debunked education “miracle” Bush achieved as Texas governor. Its requirements that schools massively test students and aggregate scores by race and income level are supposed to help make clear the exact nature and extent of racial and class-based gaps in student learning and achievement. Standards and testing were promoted in the 1980s as part of efforts to generate public support for increased education spending, and now play a central role in NCLB. NCLB purports to eliminate inequality in student achievement by establishing specific standards and measuring student learning by means of standardized tests. The idea is that increased accountability and competition will force dysfunctional bureaucracies to reform.

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE), a coalition of national education alliances involving NGOs and teachers’ unions in over 150 countries, promotes education as a basic human right, and mobilizes public pressure on governments and the international community to fulfill their promises to provide free, compulsory public basic education for all. Formed in 1999 for the purpose of facilitating civil society influence on the outcomes of the 2000 Dakar conference, GCE provides a platform for engaging with funding agencies, coordinates joint advocacy among its partners, and conducts critical research on education worldwide.

Each year, the national coalitions join forces to participate in a “global week of action.” In 2005, over five million people took part. During this week, citizens are mobilized to pressure the international community and their governments to fulfill their promises to provide free, compulsory public education for all children. In 2006, this week of action will focus on “every child needs a teacher.” (See www.campaignforeducation.org.)

Rather than promoting fairness in education, critics charge that NCLB is furthering a corporate agenda by channeling millions of school dollars to the private sector in contracts for testing materials, new curricula and textbooks, tutoring and other services.

Instead of meaningful reform, however, there is a growing sense of disillusionment and alarm as states and local school systems seek to translate NCLB's mandates into practice in structures that are reeling from the impact of years of disinvestment and lowered morale and, in working class neighborhoods, broader trends producing economic dislocation and a fraying social fabric.

A major concern is NCLB's requirement that *all* students meet standardized definitions of achievement, regardless of the particular challenges confronting students who are disabled, impoverished, unable to speak English, or otherwise marginalized. The high-stakes tests also force schools to align curriculum and teaching with standards that help students pass reading and math tests, leaving no room for art, multicultural or vocational education, sports, music or other types of learning. Critics charge that NCLB substitutes a false accountability of standards and tests for the more difficult and expensive process of building the capacities of teachers and schools to improve instruction and learning for all children

Under the terms of NCLB, schools are declared "failing" and potentially subject to budget cuts and other sanctions, including privatization, when students do not perform well on the tests—setting up a dynamic where under-resourced schools serving the most vulnerable children are penalized rather than offered help to improve. The law ignores the history of racial and socio-economic inequities in

distribution of resources for education and proposes punitive "solutions" that do most harm to schools in impoverished communities.

NCLB creates rights for children in "failing" schools to transfer to better-performing public schools, intended to open up an avenue for parents seeking alternatives to poorly performing schools. Proponents of "choice" in education argue that market-style competition promotes reform, and extends to all families the privilege enjoyed by the rich of selecting a school for their child. Others believe that this "solution" may deepen inequality and even threaten public education overall by leaving struggling schools worse than before and producing over-crowding in more desirable schools.

Activists from New York describe the experience of a typical NCLB transfer:

"A parent whose child attends a 'failing' school is given a voucher that enables her child to go to a different school. When she enrolls at the new school, the parent realizes that before- and after-care at the school are so expensive that she cannot in fact afford to send her child there."

NCLB represents a major departure from the long US history of local control over decisions about schools. While there is debate over the merits of decentralization of education in the global South, in the US—given the unhealthy concentrations of wealth and power that dominate politics and decision-making—NCLB's centralization of once-local matters, such as definitions and measurements of school success, threatens to weaken and/or displace community voices in school decision-making.

Another controversial aspect of NCLB is its explicit support for charter schools and privatized educational services. A school's failure to improve student test scores triggers reforms that often involve an expanded role for the private sector: corporate "education management organizations" may be brought in to replace school leadership; companies may be contracted to provide special tutoring to students; and non-profit or for-profit private groups may be allowed to run poorly performing schools as charter schools.

Rather than promoting fairness in education, critics charge that NCLB is furthering a corporate agenda by: channeling millions of school dollars to the private sector in contracts

IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZING

While the MDGs and Dakar Framework are largely rhetorical and No Child Left Behind carries the force of law, both present similar challenges for advocacy and organizing. Both raise important questions of *strategic emphasis*. While much activism has focused on demanding accountability for promised funding or for the few valuable nuggets buried within these broad policy frameworks, there are more and more questions about the risks and opportunity costs of engagement. Reactive engagement presents the danger of legitimizing flawed policies and undemocratic decision-making processes. It also threatens to divert energies required for building the broad-based movement needed to effect change over the long haul. There is also an emerging awareness that advocacy and organizing efforts must move beyond a narrow focus on technical education policy questions to address underlying factors that influence education outcomes, including values and ideology, and, especially in the international context, macroeconomic and trade policies that constrain education budgets.

for testing materials, new curricula and textbooks, tutoring and other services; weakening teachers' unions by supporting the growth of largely non-union charter schools; and at a deeper and less obvious level, encouraging people to think of education not as a right or an essential public service but instead as a commodity that families select from an array of choices—as if shopping in a supermarket. NCLB has been called “a set-up to dismantle public education”⁴ and “part of a larger political and ideological effort to privatize social programs, reduce the public sector, and ultimately replace local control of institutions like schools with marketplace reforms that substitute commercial relations between customers for democratic relations between citizens.”⁵

The response to NCLB has not yet crystallized, although the law creates fresh challenges and opportunities for advocacy and organizing on multiple levels. It is worth noting that many Americans, including education advocates and trade unionists, give credence to the kind of market-based reforms offered by NCLB, and a broad public discussion of alternatives is still in its infancy in the US. Within the context of the lowered expectations created by the slow decline of US schools over the past 30 years, NCLB appears to offer a level of accountability and some hope for children who are not learning how to read and write in chronically struggling public schools.

Many groups that initially supported the law, largely because of the unrealized promise that it would be accompanied by increased federal funding for education, are revising their position. Others immediately protested NCLB as a back door to privatization and the abandonment of fairness and justice in education. The two major US teachers' unions, after an initial focus on increased funding for implementation, are now calling for major revisions to the law. State and local government officials have also made calls for changes. One national network of community organizations initially supported many parts of NCLB, and used the law's charter school provisions to start its own “social justice academies.” Now, like many groups and sectors, the network is re-thinking as the full implications of NCLB become clear and concern deepens over corporate involvement in schools and influence over education policy directions.



CRITICAL COMMON THREATS

PUBLIC RESOURCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

While there are exciting beacons of innovation and quality, Roundtable participants reported that schools in their countries are in most cases beset with problems—particularly those serving socially, politically and economically marginalized students. The teaching profession is often held in low esteem, and teachers are required to work for low pay and in poor conditions, making it difficult to recruit competent and committed new teachers. Parent involvement is limited by burdensome work schedules and other factors, or even actively discouraged by school authorities. Violence, racial and class disparities, and crumbling buildings have become accepted as “normal.” Education bureaucracies tend to be dysfunctional and unresponsive. Over 100 million children—the majority of whom are girls—are excluded from school worldwide and poor quality education is common.

The complexity of the challenges confronting education advocates is undeniable. At the same time, the Roundtable produced a clear consensus on the urgency of one particular threat that is connected to many other problems: the loss of—or failure to develop—government capacity and accountability for the provision of high-quality universal free education. The trend toward shrinking government resources and accountability for essential services is impacting education systems everywhere, although the specific realities, policies and politics vary considerably according to context. Whether it takes the form of school voucher schemes in the US, or World Bank policies that force governments in poor countries to open up publicly provided education services such as textbook production to private companies, *privatization*, meaning the hollowing out of public sector control, financing and capacity in favor of market-oriented alternatives, presents a critical challenge.

PRIVATIZATION

This term is shorthand for a complex web of policies, processes and ideology that demand clearer understanding and definition. The dominant education policy trend worldwide is the shift to a market model, which increasingly dictates how education is organized and delivered, by shrinking or limiting the development of government capacity to provide education, creating a larger role for private groups—both non-profit and for-profit—and restricting public expenditures on schools. At a deep level, privatization impacts how education and its purposes are defined and understood, emphasizing individualistic and competitive values, a focus on economic returns, and testing that sorts winners from losers. Privatization is often proposed in response to dysfunctional or under-performing education systems, although the political and economic interests promoting privatization are often connected to the denial of adequate public funding to schools. There is debate about whether privatization may also be diminishing education’s potential to produce positive social change and equality. Markets tend to privilege those who already have a share of political and economic resources, and provide few options to people living in poverty. Markets are not intended to and do not in practice further social equity and justice—although these are ostensible goals of public education.

The language used to describe privatization appeals to many people, focusing on the choice and healthy competition offered by market forces. Talk of choice and competition tends to move thinking away from concepts such as mutual responsibility or community solidarity, and downplays the notion of education as a right or a public good. This kind of language certainly resonates with what Americans hear in the media and political discourse, and with what is increasingly found in other countries as well. Roundtable

At a deep level, *privatization* impacts how education and its purposes are defined and understood, emphasizing individualistic and competitive values, a focus on economic returns, and testing that sorts winners from losers.

participants from Guatemala report that the World Bank is taking steps in their country to reframe education as a “community-managed” system, shifting responsibilities and costs onto poor rural communities.⁶

The concept of privatization deepens understanding of what is happening in the schools, and clarifies that quality education for the public good is not just mysteriously vanishing at the hands of incomprehensible and unstoppable forces. Rather, the ideal of quality public education for all is being corroded by a particular set of political choices. These choices are determined through decision-making processes that lack authentic popular participation, privileging powerful interests over citizen voices. While special interests have long influenced political processes, today there is widespread concern about the role money plays in determining outcomes. A related cause for alarm is the way that the government departments and agencies charged with implementing policy and delivering social programs are now actively shedding responsibility and gutting their own capacities to provide essential services to citizens, as the lack of response to Hurricane Katrina illustrated vividly. NCLB’s promotion of corporate education management organizations is an aspect of this trend. The widespread under-funding of education, particularly for low-income students of color, is another. While the various education agencies at different levels are by no means monolithic, government departments are increasingly playing a direct role in promoting the policies and values of a corporate-driven privatization agenda by diminishing their own capacities to deliver on basic rights and essential public goods.

UNITED STATES TRENDS

Charters and Vouchers

Charter schools are an important new development in US education. Charters are publicly-funded institutions that are free from some of the laws and regulations that apply to public schools, such as centralized procurement mechanisms and collective bargaining agreements with teachers’ unions. First proposed in the early 1990s, charter schools were initially promoted as a way to create excellence by freeing schools from excessive red tape and bureaucracy, creating centers of innovation that could feed new ideas and models back into public education systems.

In practice, charter schools vary widely. Committed educators, parents and community groups seeking alternatives for children and stymied by unresponsive education bu-

reaucracies have opened charter schools, producing real, progressive innovations and creative teaching environments. Charters can be far more responsive to local communities or specific populations with special needs than traditional public schools. Many charter school operators are dedicated and experienced educators who have simply lost patience with failing systems.

Increasingly, however, people are questioning the wisdom of charter schools as a strategy for creating better educational opportunities for all children. While charter schools are promoted as offering a superior education, a recent study of government data on 4th grade students found lower overall performance in mathematics among charter students, and no measurable difference between charter schools and traditional public schools in overall reading performance.⁷ Financial and management scandals involving taxpayer funds have come to light, particularly in jurisdictions where the charter authorizing and oversight mechanisms are lax. Questions also arise about equity of access; although charters are by law open to all students, factors such as selective outreach, parent-involvement requirements and the need for transportation often limit enrollment in the most desirable charter schools to families with motivation and resources.

Furthermore, there is an emerging recognition that the often well intentioned search for innovative solutions has in fact collided with an extreme right-wing agenda seeking to diminish and ultimately eliminate the government’s role in education. Rather than incubating innovation, charter schools appear to be draining public education systems of funding and energy, contributing to the shedding of public responsibility and accountability for equity in education, and fundamentally reshaping the social contract wherein public education is, in the words of the Supreme Court in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, striking down racially separate and unequal education, “perhaps the most important function of state and local governments.” Most charter school teachers are not members of teachers’ unions, which remain among the few powerful political voices in support of “traditional”—that is, publicly provided and publicly funded—public education. In spite, or because, of these impacts, up to \$65 million of private funding pours annually into research and advocacy supporting “school choice.”⁸ While some of this funding comes from foundations with an extreme right-wing agenda, much derives from well-meaning donors sold on charter school rhetoric and from local, business-oriented

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family foundations that have proven extremely receptive to the idea of applying market forces to the task of improving schools.

Vouchers, first promoted by economist Milton Friedman, provide families with a tuition credit that they can apply toward the cost of a private school of their choosing, and are explicitly intended to create a market for education. Despite consistent rejection by voters in number of US jurisdictions, small-scale voucher schemes, created by executive fiat, exist in a few states and cities, including Washington, DC. Where voucher systems operate in a climate of scarce resources, they do not provide comparable or equivalent choices to all children, and result in greater inequalities among schools and students. In a recent legal challenge, the Florida courts found that vouchers violated the state constitutional obligation to provide a “uniform” public education.⁹

There is a troubling historical connection between racism and the transfer of public funds into private education.¹⁰ The first voucher system in the US gave public monies to white students in Virginia to attend private, racially segregated academies following the *Brown* decision. Today, 50 years after the landmark *Brown* case, “national segregation levels are back at the levels of the 1960s,” according to the director of Harvard University’s Civil Rights Project.¹¹

PUSHING PRIVATIZATION AROUND THE WORLD

Few Americans are fully aware of the influence of the US government on education systems throughout the world. The US influences education policy in other nations, particularly nations in the global South, through its foreign assistance programs administered by USAID and the State Department. It also wields indirect but considerable power over the education and economic agendas adopted by multi-lateral institutions such as the United Nations (UN), where the US has played an important role in the retreat from rights concepts and language in policies relating to education and other essential public services.

The US and the other wealthy governments—the G8— influence the policies of the World Bank and IMF, which play a huge role in determining education options and outcomes in many countries. The influence that affluent nations have over the social and economic policies of indebted states raises questions about sovereignty, political voice, and power dynamics between the wealthy and impoverished countries.

The World Bank provides loans and development assistance to middle- and lower-income countries with a stated aim of reducing poverty. It is the leading international funding agency for education. The power of the purse gives the World Bank influence over national education strategies and over the past two decades the Bank has promoted lower overall investment in social sectors, school fees (although recently it has renounced this practice and given rhetorical support for increased spending on education), the privatized provision of education services, and the hiring of para-professional teachers. World Bank funds for education are tied to a set of economic policy prescriptions that constrain the ability of nations to increase spending on under-funded education systems.

The IMF is charged with ensuring the health of the international macroeconomic system of international payments and exchange rates among national currencies that facilitates trade between different countries. In return for assistance to “re-stabilize” their economies, borrower countries must implement a set of economic reforms. In theory, the IMF claims that the economic policies it promotes are intended to facilitate economic growth and consequently expand a nation’s ability to fund education and other investments needed for development and to repay its loans. In practice, however, policies promoted by the IMF have not lead to higher economic growth, have often led to a reduction in social-sector spending, and have had a detrimental effect on the poor and on women. The short term nature of IMF loans and macroeconomic plans undermines the long-term investment required to bring forth sustainable change in education.

The IMF maintains that higher spending could lead to macroeconomic instability such as higher inflation rates and deeper budget deficits.¹² The IMF therefore promotes low inflation targets and deficit levels which inevitably constrain public expenditure, with direct effects on health and education spending. IMF influence over key policies also limits the capacity of countries to generate revenues for education and allocate funding based on national need. Debt repayment is prioritized over domestic spending. IMF influence often results in caps on spending on public employee wages, including teacher salaries, as a percentage of the national budget.

IMF loan conditions also require borrowing nations to implement economic reforms which eliminate sources of

revenue that could be used to pay for schools, such as taxes and tariffs on foreign imports and revenue from state-owned industries and natural resources. The end result is that in countries such as Kenya, where user fees in primary school have been removed, the government has not had enough funds to accommodate the over one million children enrolling in school. The projected 60,000 teachers needed could not be hired (even though there are trained teachers presently unemployed) because of caps on spending.

In place of a national debate over the pros and cons of different approaches, IMF loan conditions impose an *IMF judgment* about the balance a national economic policy should strike between promoting economic growth on the one hand and, on the other, potentially risking inflation by increasing government spending on education. The IMF is not charged with promoting human rights or ensuring that poor people have access to basic services. It is an international creditor whose primary responsibility is to ensure that loans are repaid on a timely basis. Most indebted nations risk a variety of sanctions, including the suspension of loan or debt-relief programs, if they do not comply with the IMF economic policy agenda, do not repay loans on time, or significantly increase public expenditures. The influence of the IMF is amplified by the fact that other donors and creditors, including the World Bank, almost always look to the IMF to signal approval of a nation's economic policies and stability before they provide foreign aid in the form of grants, loans, or debt relief. The result is that citizens have little input into crucial decisions about education financing and national priorities.

PRIVATIZATION IN PRACTICE

UNITED STATES

In the US, the privatization agenda takes many forms, most prominently through the provisions of NCLB and also through the transfer of public funds to private institutions through vouchers and charter schools. In some US cities, the process of *gentrification*, whereby richer—and often whiter—families move in substantial numbers into working class neighborhoods, is, according to community activists, accelerating the loss of equity and commitment to public funding. School principals, strapped for funds and under pressure to meet high-stakes NCLB performance targets, often give an especially warm welcome to families with time and resources to support the school, and to students whose class background prepares them to do well on the tests—all of which may appear unobjectionable, but works in practice to crowd out less privileged students and push them into inferior schools.

TRADE AND EDUCATION

The World Trade Organization (WTO) decides rules that govern international trade. WTO rules are important because they limit the role that governments can play in their national economies. These can include the level of taxes charged on goods coming into the country, support for national industries, such as textbook publishing, and subsidies for farmers. If a country breaks WTO rules, it risks sanctions and other penalties. With more than 150 member countries, the WTO technically operates by consensus, but wealthy members, such as the US, have the most political clout in negotiations. Two WTO agreements with the potential to impact education are the General Agreement on Trade in Service (GATS) and Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).¹³

GATS aims to promote international trade in services by reducing governments' ability to intervene in these markets. In effect, it smoothes multinational corporations' access to new markets by restricting governments' sovereign abilities to limit the involvement of foreign companies in the service sector, to promote social goals through regulation, or to favor local companies in the provision of education and other services. Technically, GATS rules do not apply to services that are provided "in the exercise of governmental authority." However, the scope of this exclusion

In place of a national debate over the pros and cons of different approaches, IMF loan conditions impose an *IMF judgment* about the balance a national economic policy should strike between promoting economic growth on the one hand and, on the other, potentially risking inflation by increasing government spending on education.

is unclear. In most countries, the line between public and private education systems is not clear, because of subsidies, fees and regulation. Also, the existence of private schools could be used to argue that there is competition among different service providers. As such, education could be defined as a commercial enterprise open to competition under GATS rules, and public expenditure on education could be defined as an impermissible "subsidy" to government schools and as a barrier to trade under the terms of GATS.

Primary and secondary education have not yet been the focus of negotiations, so GATS' practical impact remains

at the margins. While some countries have offered to open up their basic education systems to trade and investment under WTO trade rules, the actual meaning of these offers is unclear and they may not represent a threat to the core educational system. (Countries like Sierra Leone that have opened up their education systems have not in fact attracted foreign investment.) Nevertheless, there is a strong case for keeping a close eye on GATS negotiations in the coming years. GATS negotiations on higher education—a billion dollar industry—have been going on for some time. And as public-private partnerships become more widespread in the US and other richer education systems of the North, the prospect of big for-profit education service providers extending into poorer countries is very real. Twenty-five years ago, as a comparison, few would have imagined that profits could be made from a universal natural resource like water, as they are today.

As a result of the stricter copyright regime imposed by TRIPS, governments in the global South are facing growing costs for providing textbooks in public schools, and often pass these costs onto parents, many of whom can barely afford to send their children to school. In South Africa, copyright law makes the price of books in high schools and universities two to four times the price of the equivalent book in the US. Nelson Mandela's autobiography costs \$11.60 in the US, but \$23.70 in his native country, South Africa, while average income in the US is roughly 12 times that in South Africa. In parts of sub-Saharan Africa, up-to-date textbooks are routinely unavailable. TRIPS limits on translation impact many students. One viable alternative to copyright law in education are open content licenses, which permit the adaptation or translation of material used for educational purposes without charge.

ACTIVIST RESPONSES

The Roundtable surfaced a lively debate on *strategic responses* to privatization. A key challenge for advocacy and organizing is that many forms of privatization, such as voucher schemes, tend to isolate people and defuse the potential for collective action by families and teachers, while their impacts reinforce inequality, frustration and internalized race and class prejudices. Reversing these trends will take fresh thinking and a re-conceptualization of politics and the role of the state, as well as strategies that address the ideologies that drive social, political, and economic inequality.

While there is an emerging consensus among education rights activists on the need to resist a corporate-driven

privatization, there is less agreement on the level of danger posed when schooling is provided by the non-profit sector. Some groups feel a responsibility to provide educational opportunities where none exist. Others feel a responsibility to question the context of scarcity. A handful of non-governmental and anti-poverty organizations, for example, have abandoned their previous focus on building and operating schools, in the belief that these efforts have constrained rather than contributed to the development of democratically accountable governments with capacity to provide quality education. Yet there are also examples where the principles of democracy and self-determination work in tandem with the private provision of education. Autonomous popular movements are coordinating their own schools as a part of broader processes that strengthen

PRIVATIZATION IN PRACTICE

INDIA

India, at the behest of the World Bank, is privatizing its teacher corps by hiring temporary contract labor as a solution to chronic teacher shortages. While para-professional teachers' aides can be a valuable staff complement, and are in the US a way to recruit and train teachers from communities that lack access to professional opportunities, para-professional teachers in India and elsewhere often lack proper training and qualification, and as contract workers are unable to organize and bargain collectively. The teacher shortages that give rise to the need to hire contract teachers are often rooted in the depleted education budgets of heavily indebted countries, or in loan conditions that require indebted countries to preserve macroeconomic stability at all costs, including limiting public spending on teachers and other public employees.

and empower communities. Local communities in many places throughout history have banded together and devoted time and resources to respond to gaps or inequalities in public education, or the complete lack of a legitimate and responsive state, by building and repairing schools, paying for materials, and taking teachers into their homes.

Some Roundtable participants expressed a particular concern that non-government alternatives, however well intentioned, run the risk of helping government shed responsibility and accountability for education, and thus pave the way for forms of privatization that emphasize schools as opportunities for corporate profit rather than rebuilding communities. They believe that ultimately only a strong and accountable state can fulfill the right to education, and that there are serious dangers, especially at this specific political moment, in blurring the roles of government, civil society, and the market. They urge that advocacy and organizing strategies respond to the realities of privatization by actively seeking to build government capacity and accountability. In practice, this means that education activists need to be critical friends of public education systems, attuned to the very real problems but also mindful of how criticism and attacks can be used to further a privatization agenda.

This set of questions about the appropriate response of activists and organizers to the besieged state demands continued dialogue and debate. On a practical level, these questions require thoughtful strategic choices, attention to context and clarity about values and vision. With a long-term goal of building government capacity and accountability, it may in fact be strategic for activist groups to provide schooling as part of a broader strategy that blends service provision with organizing. There is renewed interest in *political* strategies that combine services with empowering processes that build active citizenship and strong movements capable of influencing budget and policy processes, breathing life into democratic mechanisms, and holding governments accountable for fundamental human rights.

EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY

TENSIONS

Education's importance as a means of preparing students for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship is always in some tension with its other purposes and rationales. While education is often invoked as the foundation of democracy, it also plays a role in preparing students to enter the workforce or otherwise contribute to the economy, and is one of the key institutions charged with passing on elements of a cultural heritage. While learning and community stewardship of schools in theory provide multiple opportunities for collaborative and deliberative problem-solving involving different and sometimes conflicting perspectives, the potential of schools to inspire hope and strengthen community and democracy is usually woefully under-developed.

Roundtable participants report that little about the way schools are run or decisions about education are made encourages students, families, teachers and other staff to develop the skills and capacities they need to participate as citizens in democratic decision-making. Both education and democracy seem to be shrinking to the status of commodities. Education is being re-framed by the proponents of school choice as a sort of retail item that parents “shop” for among competing providers—a luxury good that will open doors to future wealth and prestige. The way people think and talk about public education is driven by a questionable ideology: the language and framing relates to the market place and to winners and losers, instead of process and participation. Improvements in public education are justified in reference to a need to prepare students to compete in global markets, rather than to take on the responsibilities of critical and active citizenship. Similarly, rather than a deep and ongoing public conversation about what it means to be part of a pluralistic community, political life has been reduced to periodic opportunities to choose among candidates or policies that often lack substantial distinctions. What is happening in the schools appears connected to and reflective of what is happening in political life.

EDUCATION AND RIGHTS

Many citizens and even activists do not think of everyday problems, such as poor public education, in terms of rights. Rights are, however, a potentially powerful resource for social justice advocacy and organizing. The concept of rights reframes demands on governments or other powerful institutions as *claims* against which people have an *entitlement*, rather than mere appeals to charity or efficiency. The international human rights community, which historically focused mostly on civil and political rights, has recently embraced economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights, including the right to education.

Reference to rights is less prevalent in the US, where there is resistance to defining as a right anything that requires the government to invest significant resources, such as health and education (although some state constitutions do include a right to education). Nevertheless, US social-justice organizing stands to gain hope, inspiration, and help shap-

These new approaches also advance the fundamental right to democratic participation by framing rights work as a process focused on building the leadership, organization and influence of people to claim their rights as citizens and to hold public structures and decision-makers accountable.

ing new political consciousness by linking to rights concepts and movements. New connections and relationships also hold the potential to help American constituencies overcome their isolation, develop a sense of global citizenship and begin to question: 1) why the US is not a signatory to key agreements guaranteeing basic rights; and 2) the role of the US government in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling basic rights at home and abroad.

But rights and *rights-based approaches* to social change—as they are called by many activist groups in the global South—are not a magic bullet. Often, these concepts translate in practice into highly technical or legalistic approaches that fail to develop people’s sense of themselves as active citizens and subjects of rights, capable of engaging with and reshaping power. Many times, rights work concentrates skills and action in the hands of well-intentioned “expert” advocates, disempowering people and communities who feel they can’t speak for themselves or fully understand the “complex” issues at stake. Approaches that focus narrowly on teaching people about rights or reforming laws and constitutions usually fail to address the need to strengthen the accountability and capacities of the state to deliver quality education for all. Legalistic approaches tend not to challenge the values and interests that present fundamental threats to public education. Nor do these methods build consensus around the precise content of the right to education—exactly what the right entitles a person to—although experience has shown that specific attributes and definitions are often a prerequisite to making a right real in people’s lives.

In contrast, new strategies are re-conceptualizing rights as the evolving product of a history of struggle. Taking a critical view of the rights framework as a “work in progress” by continually seeking to translate human needs and aspirations into new social, legal, and political commitments opens up multiple entry points for action and facilitates holistic strategies that respond to the complex realities of power and politics. These new approaches also advance the fundamental right to democratic participation by framing rights work as a process focused on building the leadership, organization and influence of people to claim their rights as citizens and to hold public structures and decision-makers accountable.

TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE OF POLITICS

What kinds of advocacy and organizing strategies will facilitate the realization of education rights and create an economic climate that is more hospitable to quality public education? Often, there is a tendency to organize in a reactive way, responding to external policy or electoral events or seeking disconnected short-term wins, without a focus on building and sustaining people’s interest and involvement. Movement-building strategies have been all

but forgotten in the US, although they are being re-discovered as US activists working on education and other issues take a fresh look at approaches that openly aim to build power.

The experiences of activist groups from New York, Washington DC and Brazil shared at the roundtable show that it takes a variety of political strategies in order to make the right to education real in people’s lives. The experience of the National Campaign for the Right to Education in Brazil highlighted an approach that purposefully combines policy change goals with longer-term strategies aimed at *involving new players and transforming the way decisions about schools are made*. These diverse experiences challenge activists to assess gaps in current strategies and to explore creative approaches that move beyond sharing information and “mobilizing” or “turning out” people to build the consciousness, organization and power required to build a strong base and movements capable of producing long-term change. Advocacy and organizing approaches that begin with people’s realities, engaging them in a process of critical thinking and planning for political action help to build citizen voice and power, and are equal to policy change in importance over the long haul. Engaging people in re-defining for themselves concepts such as education, democracy, and citizenship can also put people back in touch with their dreams, aspirations, and sense of justice. Framing grassroots demands as rights is inspirational and

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empowering and helps refocus citizen energy on the important role of government in reclaiming public resources for the common good.

An intriguing global opportunity exists in the unprecedented emergence of rights-based alliances and movements, involving community groups, policy organizations, teachers' unions, and parents, that seek to revalue and reform education (and that are part of a wider global movement that seeks to amplify citizen voices in the global political system and revive local economies with the power of democratic values, involving players and processes such as the World Social Forum) and that seek citizen engagement in schools as a foundation for participatory democracy and a new conception of the state.

BRAZIL

The National Campaign for the Right to Education

In Brazil, the National Campaign for the Right to Education for formed in 1999 to:

- ① democratize financing of education to ensure quality education for all,
- ② improve transparency in administration and resource distribution,
- ③ value the profession of teaching and teachers,
- ④ create models of democratic and participatory governance in education.

One of the first and most important acts of the Campaign was to create a Carta—a statement of principles. The Carta provided a campaign identity as well as an agenda for future advocacy. Today, the Campaign has claimed a space to participate and dialogue with the government on issues of education policy. It has been able to work successfully to:

- ① expose the contradiction between government rhetoric on education for all and actual budgetary restrictions on government spending that prevent meaningful reforms,
- ② set a minimum per student expenditure for basic education,
- ③ provide alternative analyses and solutions to the market approach to education,
- ④ create public awareness and participation in innovative ways such as popular education programs and circular formations during protest actions,¹⁴

- ⑤ increase government accountability through a number of different strategies including dialogue with the federal, state, and municipal departments of education; monitoring and evaluation of government education programs; independent research; and even a lawsuit against the government for violating constitutional provisions for government spending on education.

The experience of the National Campaign has shown that:

- ① The process is itself a result because it builds alliances and trust.
- ② Plurality must be acknowledged and respected – the number of different actors and the ability to respect them all.
- ③ Organizers and popular educators should not fear conflict.
- ④ Having political patience is crucial but it is also important not to lose a sense of urgency.

In Brazil, the word “capillarization” is used to describe the kind of advocacy network that activists want to build. The metaphor of capillaries evokes a powerful image of networks that are deeply interconnected, filled with life and blood, composed of mutually interdependent elements, constantly re-filled with critical material, and deeply embedded in the body politic.

UNITED STATES

Education Rights Strategies in New York City

Popular Educators from the Center for Immigrant Families write:

“In October 2005, in response to a growing movement of low-income parents of color and concerned community members, the New York Department of Education was forced to implement a policy that addresses the racial and economic inequalities in our schools! The Center for Immigrant Families (CIF) has worked to build this movement in our community over the past several years. The new policy—which calls for a uniform admissions process through the implementation of a lottery—represents an important first step toward making sure that our public schools serve us all.

As gentrification has intensified, public schools that once served our community in Manhattan Valley (on the Upper West Side) are quietly being turned into quasi-private institutions that are shutting out low-income families of color. At the same time, white and middle-class families are being courted and welcomed by school administrators. Admissions to certain schools have increasingly depended on how much money a family has, the color of our skin, and which language we speak.

We identified this as a problem in CIF's Escuela Popular de Mujeres/Women's Popular Education Program, where we came together to talk about our expectations of life in the US. For all of us, one of our main hopes, and one of the reasons we continue to stay here, is for our children to have access to a decent education. We recognized, through a collective process of talking about what we actually found and experienced in the US, that the racism we faced in the public schools could not be accepted as "normal" or "just the way it is." Further, it reflected a pattern that was happening not just to each of us individually but to our entire community. We also learned that our district is one of the most "diverse" and one of the most segregated in the city.

CIF has worked to break the "normalization" of racism and inequality in our district's public schools. We have performed street theater throughout the community, organized community events, and started spreading the word that a "take-back" of the public schools was happening. We documented hundreds of stories of parents' exclusion from

our schools and released a community report, "Segregated and Unequal: The Public Elementary Schools of District 3 in New York City". This was a powerful process of coming together as a community, led by strong and determined women. We have found strength, empowerment, and affirmation that we can change what we've always known shouldn't be.

CIF's vision for public education is that public schools reflect, respect, and are accountable to the communities of which they are part and that parents are true partners in our children's education. Our vision is of schools that encourage all children to flourish and develop as full and engaged human beings. The implementation of this new policy is an important part of the larger struggle to which we're committed. At a time when public monies are used to fund war and not education, and when public schools serve as sites for military recruitment and the criminalization of low-income and children of color, this vision is all the more critical.

CIF plans to see to it that the lottery is implemented fairly and equitably. Although this is an important first step, inequities still persist. We are challenging Gifted and Talented programs, school zone lines, and resource allocation. We are demanding racial and economic diversity in all of our schools. Parent monitoring squads are organized to make sure that public education is indeed a human right and not a luxury."



As gentrification has intensified, public schools that once served our community in Manhattan Valley (on the Upper West Side) are quietly being turned into quasi-private institutions that are shutting out low-income families of color.

PARTICIPANTS

ROUNDTABLE

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Victor Cristales, Educación para Todos y Todas, Guatemala

A number of prominent African education advocates invited to the Roundtable were unable to participate due to difficulties in obtaining US visas.

RESEARCH AND CONSULTATIONS

ACORN, USA
ActionAid International, Bangladesh, India and Nigeria
Africa Action, USA
Basic Education Coalition, USA
CAMPE, Bangladesh
Catholic Relief Services, USA
Citizens Network for Essential Services, USA
Civil Society Action Coalition on Education For All, Nigeria
Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, USA
Educ-Net, Philippines
Elimyu Yetu Education Network, Kenya
ENLACES, USA
Global Campaign for Education, UK and South Africa
Guatemalan Unity Information Association, USA
Human Rights Watch, USA
International Center for Research on Women, USA
National Education Association, USA
New World Foundation, USA
Oxfam International, USA
RESULTS, USA
Save the Children, USA
Teaching for Change, USA
TENMET, Tanzania
Unitarian-Universalist Service Committee, USA
United for a Fair Economy, USA
World Education, USA

ENDNOTES

¹ For more thinking on the right to education, see Tomasevski, Katerina Human Rights Obligations in Education: The Four A Scheme, Wolf Legal Publishers, 2005.

² http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/index.shtml

³ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>. For more information on progress toward the goals, see <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org>.

⁴ Beam, J., Brown, C., and Dingerson, L., "Twenty-Six Conversations about Organizing, School Reform, and No Child Left Behind" April 2004, <http://www.communitychange.org/shared/publications/downloads/nclbconvo.pdf>

⁵ "The No Child Left Behind Hoax" by Stan Karp available at http://www.rethinkingschools.org/special_reports/bushplan/index.shtml

⁶ PRODESSA, CONGECOOP e INS. Educación, salud, tierra: hacia soluciones en el espíritu de los Acuerdos de Paz. 2004

⁷ See <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/charter/2005456.asp>

⁸ See <http://www.nea.org/vouchers/index.html>

⁹ See Bush v. Holmes, <http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/decisions/2006/sc04-2323.pdf>.

¹⁰ Barbara Miner: "Distorting the Civil Rights Legacy." http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/18_03/18_03.shtml

¹¹ Quoted in Robin Shulman: "US Honors Martin Luther King, but kills dream of equality," The Guardian, Thursday January 19, 2006.

¹² For a detailed analysis of how IMF policies limit practical outcomes in education and health, see "Contradicting Commitments: How the Achievement of Education For All is Being Undermined by the International Monetary Fund" September 2005 and "Changing Course: Alternative Approaches to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals and Fight HIV/AIDS" September 2005, available at <http://www.actionaidusa.org/publications.php>

¹³ For more on the impact of GATS and TRIPS see "GATS and Education: Enforcing Privatization? Should we be scared?" and "Access 2 Knowledge: a call for global action" Education Action pp. 17 – 21. London: UK, ActionAid International.

¹⁴ At rallies, campaigners dance and protest in a large circle, symbolizing their strength as a group and their commitment to a shared vision and analysis, in a powerful image of social-change work focused inward on building strength as well as outward on engaging with power.

FORGING A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

G N K L J S J D L K O K N K L E W C E L J S J K W E O
N E W F E D U C A T I O N W R I G H T S O S T R A T E G I E S
L F O R E T H E N U N I T E D N V S T A T E S K S
W C C J L K G A N D K T H E V W O R L D I E O
F X L D E F G K K L C J L O Q E I T R Y S C O B K G J
J S J D P I J K C O Q U G X L N O P R D W O P W M B I O



This report situates key trends in crumbling US public education systems within a broader global context, exploring critical threats to the notion of the public good, including diminishing government commitment and capacity to deliver on basic rights. It offers fresh thinking about strategies to challenge the root causes of over-burdened school systems in impoverished nations, and re-energize US organizing and movement-building efforts through new linkages with global education rights experiences, concepts and alliances.

