

# **1GOAL: Education March – Quality Public Education for All**

## **10<sup>th</sup> March Constitution Hill, Johannesburg**

Over 40 civil society organisations – representing more than 3 million people in South Africa, have come together around our deep concern for the state of education, both in South Africa and across the continent.

This is a critical moment: 16 years into our democracy, with the World Cup taking place on African soil for the first time, President Jacob Zuma and other world leaders have committed to education as a lasting legacy of the World Cup. We, as civil society and concerned citizens, are here to ensure that this commitment goes beyond words. We are here to say that we will not rest until every child, and every person denied education development, receives their right to a quality education.

### **THE STATE OF EDUCATION:**

72 million children around the world are denied their right to an education – nearly half of these children are in Africa.

In South Africa education remains deeply divided and unequal, with the majority of our children receiving an education that is undignified and dehumanizing.

Most of the innovations introduced by government have not yielded positive results in large part because of their exclusion, especially of the communities and parents of the rural and urban poor, in the decision making processes relating to education transformation and implementation. Education policies have failed because they have not addressed the fundamental challenges of inequality. The Department of Education, through its policy choices is building a two tiered system; one for the children of the rich and one for the poor.

Too many of our children attend schools that are under-resourced, bleak and fearful places. Too many of our children still do not have access to education in their mother tongue, and, shamefully, too many of our children are forced to learn on an empty stomach. Our scores in literacy, numeracy and our critical thinking skills show how much the education system continues to reproduce the characteristics of apartheid education. Inequality undermines our collective values and spirituality.

We are saying that a quality and equal public education should not be a commodity for a few, but the right of everyone. Until all of our children have access to a quality education, democracy will not be realised.

The lack of quality education is no longer tolerable or justifiable; and it compromises our shared dignity.

Education belongs to the public and we, who work with our people on the ground, know that education redress and quality education requires all of us – parents, children, youth, teachers, workers – to step actively back into education.

### **OUR CALL**

- WE ARE CALLING FOR A QUALITY AND EQUAL EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR ALL IN SOUTH AFRICA.
- WE ARE CALLING ON WORLD LEADERS TO COMMIT TO ENSURING THAT EDUCATION FOR ALL GOALS ARE MET, WHICH WILL SEE 72 MILLION CHILDREN ACCESSING THEIR RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION.

In South Africa we call for:

- government to put education at the top of the national agenda; we are saying that a country that has the ability to host a world class event, also has the ability to ensure that every person in South Africa receives a quality public education.
- Free quality education for all and especially Equal and quality access for all women and girls.
- Equal access to all educational resources
- Safe and protected schools
- The empowerment of teachers through effective teacher development for quality education
- Equal and quality education for children with disabilities; for the government to ensure that education is inclusive and equal, meeting the needs of disabled children.
- Education development for all adults in South Africa denied their right to education. Adult illiteracy and functional illiteracy is not only morally untenable but also serves to exclude millions from participating effectively in many social, political and economic activities since these increasingly require capacities in reading, writing, numeracy and other communication practices. This includes serious limitations to adults being able to meaningfully participate in supporting and ensuring quality public education for their children.
- The government to recognize and value all forms of learning, including workers education
- To recognize that migrant and refugee children are equally children and that children without documents must not be denied their right to an education. Further all children must be treated equally in schools regardless of their nationality.
- For the government to develop a clear set of policies with implementation plans that deal specifically with current infrastructural issues and backlogs, roll out training for teachers nationally and distribution of resources to poor schools.
- A clear plan of action on how the government will address, as a matter of national urgency, the schooling situation faced by the urban and rural poor.

Now is the time to act, and now is the time for political will and determination to place our education system on the road to equality.



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