

Millions of Girls Still Out of School on International Women's Day

To mark International Women's Day, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) urges world leaders to take action to reverse the unacceptably slow progress on girls' education. If they continue to delay, their inaction on girls' education will mean increased poverty later and will condemn countries hard-hit by AIDS and other diseases to a grim future of underdevelopment and dependence over the next decade.

Donor representatives meet in Moscow next week to review progress of the Education For All Fast-Track Initiative, the global plan agreed in 2002 to assist countries serious about getting all girls and boys into school. GCE believes this is a key opportunity for rich countries, especially the G8 nations, to come forward with pledges to enable the Initiative to reach more countries in the coming years. Campaigners expressed disappointment that political momentum from 2005 has not yet translated into hard cash to provide teachers, books and school buildings.

"Last year the world missed the first Millennium Development Goal: to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005," said Rasheda Choudhury, a GCE board member. "World leaders barely raise an eyebrow as millions of girls are denied life-saving education. As the representatives of rich countries gather again next week, we exhort them to take urgent action to get all girls and boys into school."

Education equips girls and women with a basic confidence in their abilities and rights, an ability to acquire and process information, and increased earning power. It costs as little as US\$100 per year to provide this critical asset, and in the 21st century there can be no excuse for 60 million girls to be denied it.

For more information or interview, please contact:
Alex Kent in South Africa or Taylor Thompson in US
alex@campaignforeducation.org taylor.thompson@oxfaminternational.org
+27 11 447 4111
+1 202 321 2967