# AQOCI

## Global Citizenship Education

### The AQOCI Frame of Reference

**AQOCI**
Association québécoise
des organismes de
coopération internationale

Affaires mondiales     Global Affairs
Canada                 Canada

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is an integral part of the mission of international cooperation organizations (ICOs) working in international solidarity. In continuity with its public education and engagement, AQOCI is now adopting the Global Citizenship Education (GCE) approach. This is at the heart of the raison d'être of the Association and its members, since international solidarity counts on people's awareness of inequalities and motivation to build a more just and egalitarian world.  During the Quebec Estates General on International Cooperation we collectively asserted, in the Responsables aussi du monde declaration, our commitment to take on the challenge of public education to international solidarity as a priority, in order to involve an increasingly large and diverse population in true people-to-people solidarity.[1]

At the first AQOCI meeting on GCE in January, 2017, members participated in a process of co-constructing a vision of Global Citizenship Education and developed benchmarks for the implementation of a plan of action. This plan includes the following work areas, which feed on each other:

- drafting of a frame of reference;
- training and establishing a community of practice;
- advancing analysis and research;
- strengthening of evaluation capacity;
- advocacy and policy dialogues, particularly with the education community;
- networking, alliances and strategic partnerships in GCE;
- promoting the work of the OCIs in GCE.

AQOCI members, consulted in 2017 to define a strategic plan, affirmed a new strategic vision: "Together, voices are stronger for the defense and the promotion of women's rights, of human rights, of peace and of the environment"[2]. GCE was then identified as one of the cornerstones of the five-year strategic plan 2018-2023 in order to realize this vision. As a cross-cutting approach, GCE will now be an integral part of all our practices. It will guide our annual programming - which includes all of our outreach and public engagement activities - as well as our training and advocacy activities. It is not only present in specifically so-called "educational" activities, but also through activities in advocacy, solidarity and cooperation.

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[1] Excerpt from « La Déclaration du Québec – Responsable aussi du monde » Montréal, November 10, 2006.
[2] The result of an extensive consultation process, this initiative, conducted in 2017-2018, made it possible to determine a new strategic plan for 2018-2023. Members decided that GCE would now be an integral part of all of our practices. In addition to providing an interactive and collective learning process that can take a variety of forms, GCE will guide our programming of annual activities, our training program, and our advocacy activities.

It is in this context that the preparation of a frame of reference in GCE consolidates our practices through the expression of a shared vision. Following the first GCE meeting, a committee was formed to develop a draft. To feed this writing and to involve members of AQOCI in the co-construction of a definition of GCE, further consultations took place in the autumn of 2018. The adoption of this definition took place during AQOCI's special general meeting on February 22, 2019.

During the first GCE meeting, the ICOs emphasized the importance of increasing the impact of their action in GCE and of better promotion and recognition of their expertise in this field with various partners, particularly the educational community, as well as the general population. In this sense, this new frame of reference is a first tool for the ICO members of AQOCI. It provides direction, terminology and a brief summary of our common practices to describe, guide and acknowledge our collective action in GCE.

This frame of reference aims to be inclusive and unifying. Far from being a tool of exclusion, defining a "truth", it expresses the current vision of AQOCI that values the diversified action of all its members. Each ICO has its uniqueness, its colours, that brings GCE to life in its own way. This diversity is certainly one of the great riches of our network!

## GCE makes it possible to understand the structural causes of power relations that create injustice and inequality

We live in a world of economic, political, social and ecological inequalities, where colonization and various forms of oppression are still at work (sexism, racial discrimination, physical condition, etc.). Unequal power relations exist within our societies as well as between peoples and nations. We also live on a planet where the ideology of growth has led our earth into a state of environmental and climatic crisis. The impacts of this crisis are not the same for all populations, countries historically responsible for climate change enduring the least consequences, and the least responsible countries bearing the most. It is in this context, recognizing a common but differentiated responsibility, that GCE strengthens the development of sustainable relationships with the environment, as well as reciprocal and interdependent relationships that are more just and equitable among persons and peoples. Global Citizenship Education is based on the values of equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace.[3]

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[3] These values are those of the *Women's Global Charter for Humanity*, adopted by the World March of Women in Rwanda in 2004.

## WHAT IS IT?

**What is the definition of GCE according to AQOCI?**
The following definition, like the frame of reference in general, is intended to evolve over time and could be enriched to follow advances in GCE theories and practice.

*"Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a response to the urgency of acting on local and global issues. It is based on the recognition of the self-determination and interdependence of people and their interaction with all living beings; individual and collective commitments to promote women's rights, of human rights and the environment; and the assertion that we are all responsible for the world. GCE makes it possible to understand the structural causes of power relations that create injustice and inequality. It is a set of practices that promotes the acquisition of knowledge, awareness and solidarity and aims for a positive social transformation. It favours action in reciprocity with individuals and communities with a perspective of co-constructing soft skills and the power to act. Through engagement, awareness building, mobilizing, advocating and sharing experiences, learners become agents of change for building a world based on equality, justice, equity, inclusiveness, sustainability, solidarity and peace."* [4]

**What is global citizenship?**
In writing this document we chose not to refer to the concept of citizens but rather to that of citizenship (both individual and collective). This choice is based on the fact that the notion of "citizens" refers in particular to a legal view of citizenship as granted by states, which excludes, among others, refugees and those without regular migration status. Global citizenship suggests individual and collective responsibility for the future of our societies and the planet. Global citizenship does not imply a legal status, but rather refers to a sense of belonging and commitment to a broader human community, while recognizing the importance of diversity and existing inequalities. It encourages a «global view» that links the local with the global and the national with the international.

Global citizenship participation brings those involved to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities to be actively involved in the world. Foundational knowledge of global citizenship includes understanding that:
- we share a common humanity, with each person having the same value despite unequal living conditions;
- diversity is essential to life;
- we share rights and responsibilities towards others and the planet;
- power struggles and political divisions structure the development of democracy and respect for human rights, notably women's rights;
- we have responsibility and agency, and therefore power to make positive change;
- multiple perspectives, and the ability to reflect critically on a diverse range of views and information are important. [5]

As organizations working in international cooperation and solidarity, we are well placed to promote the concept of global citizenship. Our experiences and partnerships not only allow us to see the great challenges facing humanity from a global perspective, but also to develop perspectives, practices and experiences in co-construction with our partners here and throughout the world.

GCE is based on the recognition of the self-determination and interdependence of people and their interaction with all living beings; individual and collective commitments to promote women's rights, of human rights and the environment; and the assertion that we are all responsible for the world.

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[4] Unofficial translation of French definition adopted at the AQOCI Special General Meeting of February 22, 2019.
[5] Inspired in part from *"Effectively Engaging Canadians as Global Citizens: A Statement of Principles on Public Engagement,"* Inter-Council Network of Provincial and Regional Councils for International Cooperation, Revised November 2010, page 2.

## FOR WHOM?

***Who is the intended recipient of GCE?***

AQOCI and its members recognize that each person, regardless of age and experience, and each community are agents of change. We aim to exchange and act together, with and as learners, in formal and informal educational contexts, as well as with the general public in Quebec or elsewhere in the world. Each project or program will, of course, be adapted to the specific audience.

## WHY?

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a response to the urgency of acting on local and global issues.

***Why do GCE? What are our motivations? What needs do we want to meet?***

Through GCE we aim to transform our way of being in relation with others and the planet. We also strive to ensure that every person can live with dignity and reach their full potential, while recognizing the self-determination of peoples and the interdependence of peoples with each other and with all living beings. It is through awareness, skill development, engagement, mobilization and collective action that we are able to change the world. We practice GCE as well because there is an urgency to take action to meet the global challenges that threaten the survival of humanity and the planet. We believe that this is a relevant strategy to address systems of injustice, political division, structures of oppression, discriminatory or exclusionary mechanisms, growing inequality and hate speech.

As members of AQOCI, here are some advantages of a common GCE vocabulary:

- to cooperate, coordinate, enrich and align our actions in order to create complementarity between our actions;
- to identify ourselves more clearly, using a common discourse, to those in the education and community sectors;
- to share a common position on GCE to assert its social relevance, its benefits and advantages of our actions as well as the sum thereof;
- to become a reference in GCE in Quebec and an important stakeholder for the government;
- to identify and share specific and common challenges in education and engagement;
- to share pedagogical practices and strategies in GCE;
- to share evaluation practices more easily.

## TO DO WHAT?

*What do we want to produce as a concrete result? What do we want to change? What impact do we want to have?*

Through engagement, awareness building, mobilizing, advocating and sharing experiences, learners become agents of change for building a world based on equality, justice, equity, inclusiveness, sustainability, solidarity and peace.

GCE aims at learning and acting in ways that allow personal, relational and societal transformations, both locally and globally. Ultimately, it is about contributing to the construction of a world that responds to the values on which our actions are based.

Concretely, ICOs aim to help build equitable and lasting relationships between people and peoples and with nature, as well as to break the asymmetry of power. They bring people and communities to action by taking into account:

- the systemic causes of poverty and injustice, the interconnectedness of our societies, the impact of their discourses, habits, behaviors, actions, and political choices and development on themselves, others, and the world,
- the interdependence of humans with all living beings,
- their responsibility, in the face of injustice and the future of the world, to establish, in their relations with each other and the world, connections of solidarity between people and peoples.

GCE aims at transforming power relations and changes in behavior, attitudes, policies, laws and institutions. Based on the notion of global citizenship, it proposes to contribute to changes in the way of thinking, of being and acting, as individuals and as societies, by developing the know-how, the will-to-act and ability to act individually and collectively.[6]

## HOW?

*What strategies do we choose? How are we going to do it?*

Various GCE strategies are chosen by ICOs to, raise awareness, inform, mobilize, engage, influence, defend, train, co-construct, engage in dialogue, promote as well as other processes enabling change. The activities can take different forms according to the desired goals: publications, conferences, workshops, mentoring, accompaniment, events, blogs, popular education circles, films, fundraising events, collaborative projects, partnerships, activities of advocacy and influence, structured approaches, etc. Composed of a multitude of educational approaches, GCE values, in particular but not exclusively, participatory and co-constructive approaches.[7]

GCE favours action in reciprocity with individuals and communities with a perspective of co-constructing soft skills and the power to act.

GCE comes alive in formal and informal learning settings, building partnerships to reach the people and groups targeted by the adopted strategy, no matter where they are, in order to have an impact on social movements, communities and institutions. We are also speaking of a three-dimensional approach that unfolds in width, depth and height.[8]

Key principles guide our action in GCE: relevance, sustainability and a sense of the long term, action, diverse participation and partnership, multiple approaches, collaborative ownership through participatory planning, evaluation and reflection, and innovative, creative and/or engaging design.[9]

GCE is a set of practices that promotes the acquisition of knowledge, awareness and solidarity and aims for a positive social transformation.

[6] See « Définitions de l'Éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale » in the *Virtual Global Citizenship Library*.
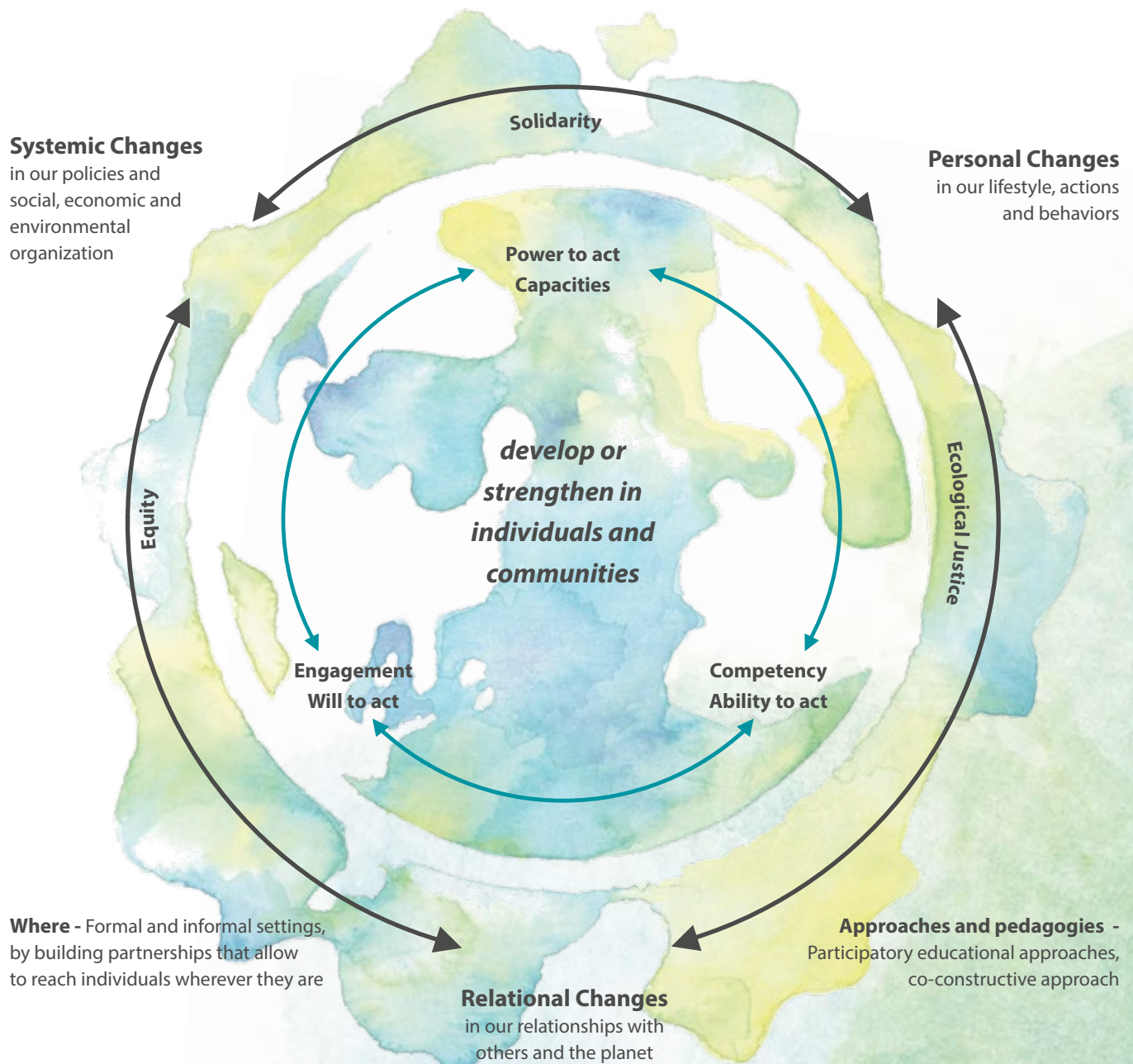[7] See « Méthodes, pédagogie et trousses » in the *Virtual Global Citizenship Library*.
[8] See « Approches » in the *Virtual Global Citizenship Library*.
[9] Key standards identified in "*Effectively Engaging Canadians as Global Citizens: A Statement of Principles on Public Engagement*," Inter-Council Network of Provincial and Regional Councils for International Cooperation, Revised November 2010.

# Global Citizenship Education:
## Putting Change in Motion

**Solidarity**

**Systemic Changes**
in our policies and
social, economic and
environmental
organization

**Personal Changes**
in our lifestyle, actions
and behaviors

**Equity**

**Ecological Justice**

Power to act
Capacities

*develop or
strengthen in
individuals and
communities*

Engagement
Will to act

Competency
Ability to act

**Where -** Formal and informal settings,
by building partnerships that allow
to reach individuals wherever they are

**Approaches and pedagogies -**
Participatory educational approaches,
co-constructive approach

**Relational Changes**
in our relationships with
others and the planet

## *For all work in education*

**Continuous learning:** The action of education does not necessarily have positive effects, it can even reinforce cynicism, lead to desensitization, misinformation, etc. Processes of improvement and continuous learning, whatever their forms, are essential to ensure that educational practices achieve the goals and objectives they are intended to achieve.

**Emancipatory Education:** Work in education, without a healthy measure of self-criticism and introspection, can reproduce the structures of oppression and authority present in society that we wish to collectively overcome. Listening to key stakeholders, building on their needs and intrinsic motivations, and ensuring the participation and contribution of groups representing marginalized, discriminated or underrepresented people are key elements. It is about building together for the emancipation of oppressed groups.

**Data Analysis and Evaluation:** Data analysis and evaluation practices are ways to learn, challenge, renew our practices and ensure the quality of interventions. They also make it possible to demonstrate impact and to legitimize more easily the social importance of the work done. However, exclusive or exaggerated use of data can also hinder innovation and practices for which too little data is currently available, as in areas less known or in cutting edge sectors.

**Diversity of practices:** The adoption of a common framework allows a clearer identification of the action of each organization, but not uniformity. The proposed frame of reference builds on the diversity of complementary practices to create a viable and fertile education and engagement ecosystem conducive to social, relationship and personal change. This diversity needs to be valued so that all practices of the ICOs and partners can best respond to the plurality of groups and individuals, their concerns and aspirations, their life experiences, and the local and global challenges that our societies are facing.

**Co-optation:** Discourses, whether in GCE, human rights or other areas, can be co-opted and manipulated. The adoption of a definition of GCE makes it possible to clearly specify what we mean; it allows us to respond to possible abuses of the concept's meaning.

## *Elements specific to GCE*

GCE can carry certain risks that must be taken into account in order to maintain its emancipatory objectives. As such, the proposed vision should not target a single global citizen, nor claim absolute universality, as it recognizes strength in diversity. The perception of a utopic and unrealistic social proposal that GCE entails can be detrimental to it, if it is not rooted in real people and communities actively working to put in place concrete solutions that are already being implemented everywhere on the planet. While GCE brings hope, it is nonetheless grounded in reality.

GCE also recognizes the importance of being rooted in the community to find appropriate solutions to global problems affecting the daily lives of individuals in every community. Communities can bring innovative solutions that emerge from their own contexts.

There are many types of educational approaches: peace, human rights, non-violent communication, environmental, ecological, sustainable development, solidarity, development, etc.[10] In this context, the emergence of Global Citizenship Education can serve as a channel for bringing together, in cross-cutting and structural ways, these diverse forms of education.
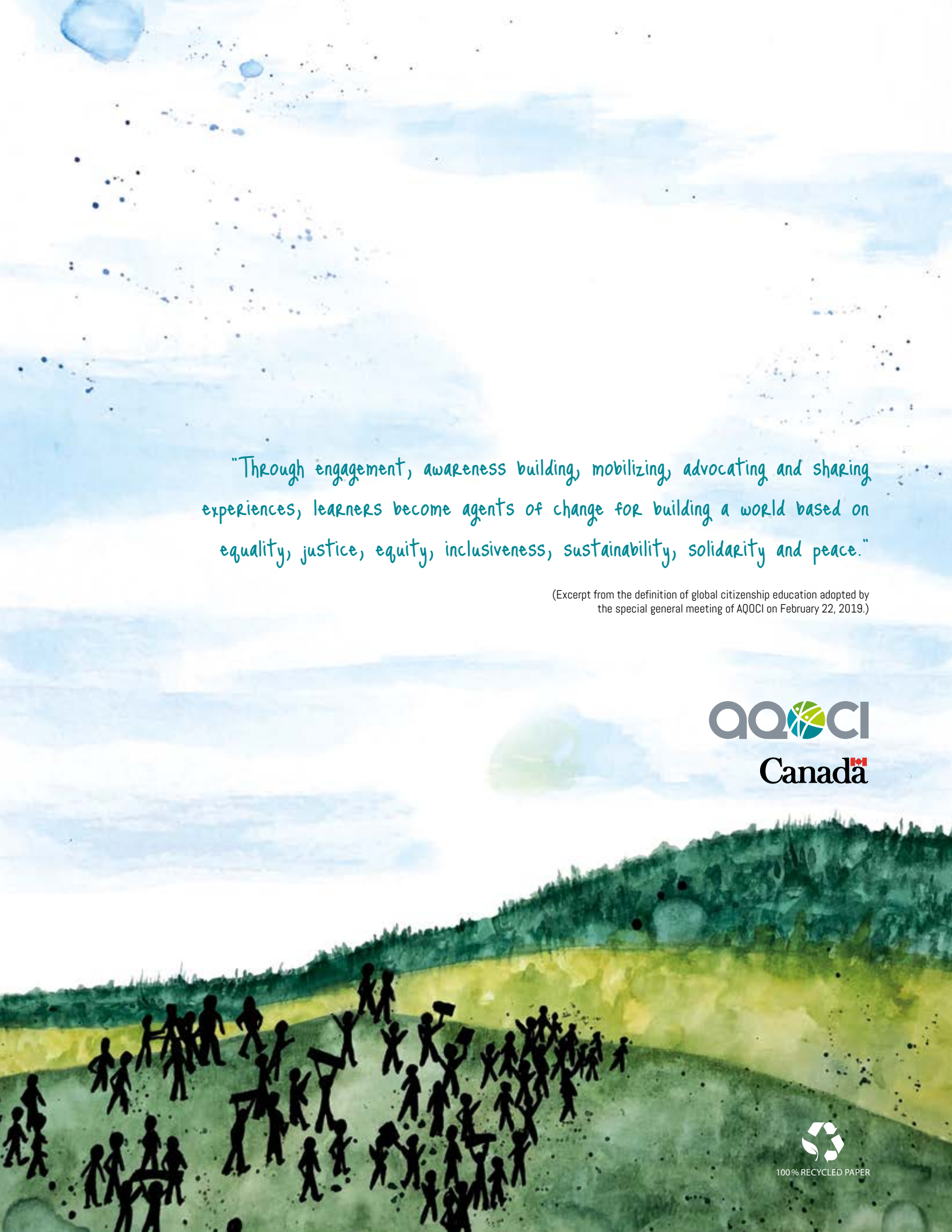
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[10] See « Lexique » in the *Virtual Global Citizenship Library*.

## VIRTUAL GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION LIBRARY

Links to texts, tools and websites on Global Citizenship Education (in French):

- **History** *http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-historique*
- **Definitions of Global Citizenship Education** *http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-definitions*
- **Approaches** *http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-approches*
- **Methods, pedagogies and toolkits** *http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-methodes*
- **Women's rights and gender equality** *http://aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-femmes*
- **Critiques** *http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-critiques*
- **Evaluation** *http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-evaluation*
- **Glossary** *http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-lexique*
- **Bibliography** *http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/?ecm-bibliographie*

"Through engagement, awareness building, mobilizing, advocating and sharing experiences, learners become agents of change for building a world based on equality, justice, equity, inclusiveness, sustainability, solidarity and peace."

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