The right to education: making it happen
Civil Society Education Fund

Civil society as a catalyst in education governance

Education is a fundamental human right and governments are obligated to guarantee this right for all their citizens. Ensuring free and quality education for all is a major responsibility, requiring political will and commitment. Fortunately there is a wide array of actors within a country that can and should be involved in delivering on education. Civil society represents one of these partners and can play a crucial role in bringing voices together under common platforms to make the case for education.

Through these platforms, civil society can provide evidence and input to sector planning and monitor current policies and practice at the local level, encouraging increased spending on education, ensuring education budgets are spent well and that money reaches intended targets. By assembling NGOs, teachers’ unions, parents’ groups, community organisations and social movements into alliances and coalitions, civil society can make invaluable contributions based on knowledge and access to information on the ground.

Supporting civil society

The Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) has paved the way for civil society to become a credible and influential partner in education sector dialogue through its work with National Education Coalitions representing local civil society organisations within a country.

CSEF was set up by the Global Campaign for Education in 2009 to support the core work of National Education Coalitions so that civil society can fully engage with and track the progress of national governments and donor groups in working towards the EFA goals. Initially funded through the Fast Track Initiative – now Global Partnership for Education (GPE) – and currently by the Australian Government - CSEF demonstrates how GPE and the international donor community values civil society as a cornerstone in education sector processes.

Since its initiation CSEF has supported 45 National Education Coalitions across Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America, which play an active role in campaigning, advocating and engaging with governments and donors, working towards quality education for all citizens, including those who are excluded and vulnerable.
ANCEFA was established in May 2000 following the acknowledgement of African civil society’s lack of preparation for contributing effectively and in an organised way to the Education For All (EFA) process. Its vision and mission entails fighting against illiteracy through a positive influence on educational policies and practices at national and international levels. Today, ANCEFA operates in 34 African countries through national coalitions engaged in education and human rights in general. www.ancefa.org

ASPBAE was established in 1964. It strives to strengthen an Asia-Pacific movement to support community and people’s organisations, national education coalitions, teachers’ unions, campaign networks and other civil society groups and institutions in holding governments and the international donor community accountable in meeting education targets and commitments. www.aspbae.org

CLADE is a plural network of civil society organisations acting in the defence and promotion of the right to free public education for all as a responsibility of the State, based on the principles of availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability and accountability. It seeks to promote a transformation towards the implementation of a new development model that fulfils the Andean ‘living well’ concept, social justice, human dignity and the harmonious relationship with the environment in Latin-American and Caribbean countries. www.campanaderechoeducacion.org

In addition three financial management agencies are responsible for fund management and technical capacity building: Oxfam GB West Africa, ActionAid Americas and Education International Asia Pacific.
The Civil Society Education Fund includes the following objectives:

1. Establishing broad based and democratically run national education coalitions

2. Strengthening the capacity of national education coalitions to advocate for policy change and institutional reforms at country level.

Examples of the impact of civil society

- **SIERRA LEONE: EFA-SL**
  Abolition of user fees and increased education budget through dialogue with government.

- **SENEGAL: COSYDEP**
  Lobbying leads to abolition of discriminatory mechanisms in teacher recruitment.

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- **GHANA: GNECC**
  Participation in education sector review inspires new policy on re-entry of teenage mothers into school.

- **MOZAMBIQUE: MEPT**
  Findings in district level budget-tracking makes government implement measures against corruption.

- **BOLIVIA: CBDE**
  Influenced review and enactment of the Education Law, with emphasis on indigenous rights.

- **KENYA: ELIMU YETU**
  Securing the Right to Education as a Constitutional Right in Kenya.

- **BANGLADESH: CAMPE**
  On-the-ground research gathered through Education Watch and shared in user-friendly versions.

- **SOLOMON ISLANDS: COESI**
  Collaboration with Ministry of Education to develop of new Literacy Policy.

More examples of the impact of civil society

- **Benin**: Launched Learn Without Fear campaign promoting safe learning environments, which led to improved teacher training mechanisms and transparent use of funds
- **Burkina Faso**: Ministry of Education approves formal participation of civil society in Education Action Planning and budget processes
- **Cambodia**: Participated in development of Child Friendly school policy with MOE
- **Cape Verde**: Increased state budget to basic education
- **Djibouti**: Progressive teacher training and in-service policy formulated and in application
- **Dominican Republic**: Established education budget watch, uncovering underspending on education
- **Ethiopia**: A policy change in early childhood care and education achieved through direct engagement of Basic Education Network - Ethiopia.
- **Gambia**: Abolition of user fees in schools
- **Guinea-Bissau**: Policies on access to Free Primary Education
- **Liberia**: Revision and input to key policy documents, the national curriculum and the Education Act; influenced increased teacher salaries and increased education budget from 9 to 13%
- **Malawi**: More than 20% of government budget allocated to education through coalition lobbying work
- **Vietnam**: Proactively engaged the Ministry of Education and Training on strengthening the non-formal education programmes by providing concrete recommendations and indicators for monitoring, resulting in new policies
- **Vanuatu**: Signed an MoU with government to institutionalise relationship
- **Zambia**: Improved accountability and transparency in public expenditure
Increased reach of civil society

- In Asia, the percentage of female coalition board members increased from 29.6% to 42.3%.
- The number of organisations increased from 1129 in 2009 to 3341 in 2011.
- The number of coalitions recognised by Local Education Groups increased from 32 to 725.
- The number of local branches of coalitions increased from 68 to 18.

Source: CSF Results Frameworks 2009-2011