Citizen participation &
the right to education

The Civil Society Education Fund
May 2015

What is the Civil Society Education Fund?

The Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) is a unique and ambitious global programme that supports citizen engagement in education sector policy, planning, budgeting and monitoring. It is founded on a shared understanding that informed, broad-based and locally-driven civil society participation is crucial to delivering national and international education goals. While governments are responsible for guaranteeing the right to free and quality education for all citizens, civil society can and should play a crucial role in bringing diverse voices together under common platforms to hold governments and donors accountable for their commitments, and to ensure relevance and equity within education sector plans, programmes and budgets. CSEF therefore supports the engagement of national civil society education coalitions in Global Partnership for Education (GPE) countries, working through broad and diverse memberships at national and sub-national level.

The CSEF programme was developed and is managed by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), in close collaboration with regional implementing partners, including the Africa Network Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA), the Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA), the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), and international organisations ActionAid, Education International, and Oxfam. With funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) since 2009 (as well as some complementary financing from the Spanish and Australian governments), and current supervision by UNESCO, CSEF supports national education coalitions in 54 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and Eastern Europe. GCE and regional partners provide these coalitions with core financing, technical assistance, and capacity support, and help facilitate new partnerships, engagement in regional and global policy processes, and cross-country learning. An International Partners Group, comprised of a range of INGOs, including ActionAid, Education International, Save the Children, VSO, Ibis, RESULTS, OSF, OSISA, Plan, and Oxfam, provides programme advice and capacity support to specific coalitions and regions.

CSEF objectives 2013-2015

CSEF currently aims to ensure:

1. Formal civil society participation in education sector policy and review processes, and engagement with policy-makers and parliamentarians is strengthened and better-recognised.

2. National education coalitions are actively strengthening grassroots capacity to access and participate in education sector debates, through building awareness, knowledge and skills, and opening opportunities to participate.

3. Civil society research and analysis effectively contributes to national government plans, policies, financing and practices that better achieve the right to quality education for all and the six EFA goals.

4. The CSEF project builds the quality and impact of civil society engagement in the education sector through promoting partnerships, strengthening South-South collaboration, sharing learning, and facilitating impact on global policy processes.
Priority areas for national coalitions

Coalitions focusing on quality and learning include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte D’Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cambodia, India, Mongolia, PNG, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste.

Example: CNEPT Burkina Faso submitted a proposal on improving recruitment processes to ensure more qualified teachers by replacing ineffective tests with more appropriate methods, and to cease recruitment of volunteers as educators. The government is acting on the suggestion with the coalition monitoring the proposal.

Coalitions focusing on education financing include: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, DRC, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Lesotho, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Example: Following lobbying by the Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) for improved financing, with an emphasis on quality and equity, the government increased the education share of the 2014 National Budget to 20.2% and committed to implement a re-entry policy for girls. (2013-2014)

Coalitions focusing on girls’ education include: Bolivia, Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen.

Example: GNIECC Ghana presented the results of a study and civil society consultation to the Annual Sector Review process, indicating that exclusion of pregnant girls and young mothers from school significantly hampered girls’ access to education; this contributed to a new government re-entry policy.

Coalitions focusing on access and inclusion include: Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Côte D’Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, DRC, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Timor Leste, Togo, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Example: Elimu Yetu Coalition Kenya submitted a proposal on the affordability of secondary education to the government-convened Task Force on School Fees, calling for additional government funding and regulation to curb illegal fee increases; the proposal was incorporated into the Task Force recommendations, which eventually led to a reduction in fees.
In 2009, 33 national coalitions were part of the CSEF programme; by 2015, this number had increased to 54.\(^1\) Of these, 23 operate in fragile states or countries affected by conflict – representing over 42% of the coalitions funded by the programme.

CSEF has contributed to a significant expansion of coalition memberships and civil society reach. In 2009, the 33 coalitions collectively represented 1129 organisations; by 2015 the 54 coalitions which are part of CSEF represent 4256 organisations. This means that in 2009 the average coalition membership comprised of 34 organisations, rising to 79 in 2015 – an increase of over 100%.

Coalition constituencies comprise a diverse range of members, such as teachers’ unions, parents’ associations, youth groups, women’s networks, community and grassroots organisations, child rights movements, INGOs, academic and research institutions, and tax justice networks.

\(^1\) Mali, Liberia and Uganda are not currently supported by CSEF (2015).
Civil society coalitions have increasingly gained access to participate in formal education sector policy and review processes through CSEF, with improved recognition by decision-makers. CSEF coalitions have strengthened this participation by building capacity at grassroots level to contribute to and engage in education sector debates, and through advocating with governments for expanded opportunities for citizen participation.

**Increased reach of civil society**

- Since 2009, CSEF has supported the development of 21 new national education coalitions.
- Through CSEF the memberships of coalitions have expanded greatly from 1129 civil society organisations in 2009 to 4256 in 2015.
- Engagement with Local Education Groups:
  - From 29 coalitions engaging in 2013 (with just over one third having permanent, formal, written agreements with the LEG) to 35 coalitions engaging in 2015.
- Engagement in other decision-making fora including technical working groups, joint sector reviews, government committees etc.:
  - Coalitions are members of 147 fora in 2013.
  - Coalitions are members of 261 fora in 2015.

**What have national education coalitions done through CSEF 2013-2015?**

- 188 research studies, budget tracking reports and monitoring exercises have been undertaken.
- 2,306 media interventions were carried out including appearances on TV and radio talk shows, and producing community radio programmes, press releases, media briefings and newspaper articles on education issues and developments; and significant engagement via social media to expand public debate on education.
- 1,090 public-facing interventions have been successfully carried out by coalitions with CSEF support in the current phase. This has included development and dissemination of mass campaigns, policy briefings during public forums and conferences, guidelines and training on engagement for coalition members, and public information and awareness-raising materials.
- 383 policy proposals and submissions were presented to government.

*Source: CSEF Reporting Data 2009-2015*