

PERSUADING POWERS



STORIES FROM EDUCATION
COALITIONS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC



2009-2011

ABOUT ASPBAE

The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) is a not-for-profit regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals across 30 countries, working to promote quality education and transformative lifelong learning for all. ASPBAE is dedicated to mobilising and supporting civil society organisations in holding governments and the international donor community accountable in meeting education targets and commitments, ensuring the right of all to education. ASPBAE sees education as an empowering tool for combating poverty and discrimination, pursuing sustainable development, and for enabling meaningful participation of citizens in governance.

ABOUT GCE

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE), formed in 1999, is a civil society movement that aims to end the global education crisis. GCE works to hold governments accountable for their promises to provide Education for All. The GCE's mission is to make sure that governments act now to deliver the right of every girl, boy, woman, and man to quality education.

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BANGLADESH

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

CAMBODIA

NGO Education Partnership (NEP)

INDIA

National Coalition for Education (NCE)

INDONESIA

Civil Society Organisations initiative for Education For All (CSOiEFA)

MONGOLIA

All For Education (AFE) Mongolia

NEPAL

National Coalition for Education Nepal (NCEN)

PAKISTAN

Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE)

also known in Pakistan as -

'Society for Access to Quality Education' (SAQE)

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN)

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI)

TIMOR LESTE

Timor Leste Coalition for Education (TLCE)

VANUATU

Vanuatu Education Policy Advocacy Coalition (VEPAC)

VIETNAM

Vietnam Coalition for Education for All (VCEFA)

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'PERSUADING POWERS' - STORIES FROM EDUCATION COALITIONS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

INTRODUCTION

'Persuading Powers' is a collection of stories from national civil society education coalitions in the Asia Pacific region. The stories highlight good practice and lessons learnt as coalitions harness their powers of persuasion to advocate for better education policy and increased education budgets.

For the past two decades, civil society organisations (CSOs) at the national, regional, and international levels have been playing an increasingly important role in advocacy for education policies that enable access to quality education, especially for those missing out. A key catalyst for this emerging role is the increased collaboration between national, regional, and international level CSOs, most noticeably through the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) which was formed in 1999. The GCE now consists of over 60 national education coalitions, along with teacher unions, international NGOs, regional CSOs, and other organisations. Regional CSOs, such as the Asia South Pacific Association of Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) in the Asia South Pacific region, play an important role supporting national CSOs and linking the national and global levels. Amongst education CSOs at all three levels, there is a striking degree of consensus in supporting the achievement of the six international Education For All (EFA) goals. A central part of support for these goals is to 'persuade the powers', that is, advocacy to hold governments and the international donor community accountable for their promises to achieve Education for All.

The emergence of national education coalitions received an important boost via funding support from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), formerly known as the EFA Fast Track Initiative. Established in 2002, GPE is comprised of 46 developing countries, and over 30 bilateral, regional, and international agencies, development banks, the private sector, teachers, and local and global civil society groups. GPE provides developing country partners the incentives, resources, and technical support to build and implement sound education plans. GPE has also provided important funding support for civil society education coalitions through the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) for the years 2009-2011. Building on the work of earlier programs such as the Real World Strategies program, the CSEF support has enabled the work of national civil society education coalitions to expand and has improved the quality of their contribution to policy engagement.

Globally, over 40 national education coalitions received funding support under CSEF, including 13 in the Asia Pacific region. These coalitions are located in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh,

Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. CSEF funding support can be credited with enabling the establishment of coalitions in Timor Leste and Mongolia, reviving the dormant coalition in Vanuatu, and playing a key role in supporting the newly-established coalition in Vietnam.

CSEF funds were managed globally by the GCE. CSEF also enabled regional organisations to provide capacity development support to national education coalitions, to help build the capacities they need to function effectively and to advocate for education reform. In the Asia Pacific region, ASPBAE works closely with the national coalitions to develop capacities in office and financial management, coalition building, undertaking research, analysing education policy and budgets, and developing and implementing advocacy strategies. The Asia Pacific office of the teachers union, Education International (EIAP), acts as the CSEF Fund Manager in the region and ensures all national coalitions are fully accountable for the expenditure of the funds. GCE's Global Secretariat also provided coalitions with capacity support.

ABOUT THE STORIES

The brief stories in the following collection attest to the richness and diversity of the actions of the coalitions in many different parts of the Asia Pacific region. While each coalition operates in its own unique context, there are a number of challenges shared by all coalitions, such as how to build an inclusive, participatory coalition, and how to develop the requisite set of skills, from financial and project management to conducting research, policy analysis, and undertaking campaigns and advocacy. Additionally, they face the challenges of understanding their local political and economic context, assessing the political space available to negotiate, and the range of internal and external stakeholders that have an influence on education policy. Further, each coalition faces the challenge to find sufficient resources to sustain their ongoing work.

This 'Persuading Powers' collection is divided into two sections, 'Good Practice' and 'Lessons Learnt', with a story from each of the 12 coalitions for both sections, making 24 stories in all. There is of course a great deal of cross-over between the sections, with further good practice evident in the Lessons Learnt stories, and many lessons to be derived from the Good Practice stories.

Many of the stories focus on the strategies and activities undertaken to advocate for education policy reform, such as taking policy makers to meet the children and adults who are missing out on education (Bangladesh and India), utilising the

media to highlight poor education facilities (Timor Leste), or raising awareness of gaps in current policy (Vanuatu). Other stories highlight the value of drawing on the resources of a global advocacy platform such as Global Action Week or the 1Goal campaigns coordinated by GCE (Nepal) or engaging multiple government departments and private enterprises (Papua New Guinea), or learning from other sectors (Solomon Islands). Some coalitions describe the value of national forums (Mongolia), public hearings (India and Bangladesh), charter of demands (Pakistan), or stakeholder dinners (Timor Leste) as vehicles to persuade decision makers.

There are stories of coalitions building their credibility so that other stakeholders see them as serious contributors to education policy. These include stories about undertaking high quality research (Vietnam), providing well considered inputs to education technical working groups (Solomon Islands), or ensuring wider community consultations (Vanuatu). There are also coalition capacity building stories that describe strategies such as involving members in decision making, training and advocacy activities (Mongolia, Cambodia, and Indonesia), utilising volunteers (Papua New Guinea), building a quality website (Indonesia), and mobilising resources for future sustainability (Cambodia).

Coalitions address a range of policy issues within the overall common agenda of furthering the six EFA goals. Attention has been given to increasing national education budgets (Bangladesh and Timor Leste), improving access to education for women and girls (Nepal and Indonesia), promoting the right to education and ensuring it becomes enshrined in law (Pakistan and India), education governance and financing (Mongolia and Cambodia), fighting against rising school fees (Bangladesh), providing adults with basic literacy (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea) and improving early childhood education and community learning centres (Vietnam).

These stories indicate that national education coalitions have come a long way and are making significant impacts on education policy and policy makers. However, most of the coalitions believe that their greater impact is still to come. One aim shared by many coalitions for the coming years is to increase participation in national Local Education Groups (LEGs) or similar significant bodies where government and donor officials and other stakeholders deliberate over education policy and budgets.

If there is a further story to be told it is the added value of CSO collaboration at the national, regional, and global levels both in terms of capacity support and in developing a shared advocacy agenda and strategies for influencing decision makers at multiple levels and in an array of platforms and policy arenas.

Many of the national coalitions are still very young – some only two years old - and have needed to give a great deal of attention to institutional strengthening and capacity development. This

was recognised in the design of the CSEF project, and national coalitions have frequently referred to the importance of the support they have received from the global and regional organisations, GCE and ASPBAE respectively, enabling them to increase their skills, knowledge, and capacities to advocate for education reform.

ASPBAE capacity support staff visited coalitions regularly to meet with staff and board members and participate in key events. For the new coalitions, regional staff played an important support role in assisting them to become established. Regional staff brought news of regional and global education platforms and policy dialogue to all coalitions to inform them of national coalition planning. Frequently, regional capacity support staff provided training in financial management, technical assistance with research and analysis, and assisted in advocacy planning and in writing proposals to locate additional resources.

ASPBAE also organised regional consultations which brought together representatives from each of the coalitions to participate in training, exchange good practice and lessons learnt, and undertake joint planning. GCE offered a global perspective at these consultations and EIAP, the regional Fund Manager, provided inputs on financial reporting. The GCE also organised a global consultation of national coalition representatives for inter-regional reflection and learning.

A further sign of positive collaboration has been between national coalitions where representatives from one coalition would visit and learn from more established coalitions or collaborate on sub-regional advocacy, for example in relation to the South Asian Education Ministers' meeting in 2009 in Bangladesh. In some instances, a coalition representative with important skills would visit another coalition to provide technical support and training, for example in conducting primary research.

GPE is currently undergoing a review of its strategies, structures, and processes and it is hoped that future support will continue from GPE to enable a strong civil society contribution at national, regional, and international levels. In the meantime, the Australian government, through its development agency AusAID, has provided valuable bridge funding support to enable this important work to continue.

We are fast approaching 2015, the timeline listed for achieving the EFA goals. However, it is clear that many of the world's poorest countries are far from achieving these goals. The need for all stakeholders to act, to enable all children and adults access to quality basic education, is urgent and great. At this time it is important that CSOs, especially national education coalitions, are equipped and resourced to effectively play their role and use all the persuasive powers they can muster.

BERNIE LOVEGROVE
CSEF Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh Coalition Takes Policy Makers to the People to See for Themselves

The constitution of Bangladesh does not recognise education as a ‘fundamental right’ and there is no legislative obligation to fulfil its citizen’s demand for education.

However, the current government took the initiative to develop a National Education Policy (NEP) in 2009, with a 16-member NEP Formulation Committee. The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) in Bangladesh, with CSEF funding support and together with Education Watch, saw this as an excellent opportunity to influence policy. The major objective of CAMPE’s intervention was to collect people’s views and expectations on quality education, gather grassroots-level evidence, and ultimately influence the National Education Policy formulation process, especially on issues of exclusion and marginalisation. In order to influence the policy, CAMPE followed strategies including alliance building, evidence generation and providing inputs, communication and media mobilisation, creating civil society platforms for engagement, and parliamentary engagement.

CAMPE and the Education Watch group members met the NEP Formulation Committee and provided them with a civil society Charter of Demands.

In this Charter, CAMPE emphasised a rights-based approach to education to address marginalisation, while stressing the need for an increase in the budget allocation for education. CAMPE also invited the NEP Formulation Committee members to visit different parts of the country so that they could hear about the needs in education ‘from the horse’s mouth’. The Committee expressed their interest in listening to the people and shared that they had limited capacity to initiate such events themselves. CAMPE volunteered to organise sub-national, grassroots-level consultations followed by national-level policy dialogue.

CAMPE organised these sub-national level consultations in all administrative divisions, with representatives from the NEP Formulation Committee present. The purpose was to enable them to learn about current realities along with expectations of learners, parents, school management committees, local



education administration, local government representatives, journalists, and other civil society groups. Within hours of each consultation, a brief summary was communicated with all members of the NEP Formulation Committee.

On completion of the sub-national level consultations, a summary was prepared that was presented in a national-level policy dialogue. Academics, researchers, representatives of teachers’ union, the media, education watch groups, members of earlier education commissions, representatives of local consultative groups, and members of the NEP Formulation Committee participated in the national consultation and contributed with their thoughts and ideas. Members of the NEP Formulation Committee shared their views and responded to participant queries. The major issues and anecdotes were published through supplements in the national newspapers on the following day to widely communicate the issues and garner further support. CAMPE also met the education minister to provide him with inputs on the draft NEP Policy from civil society.

While the draft NEP approval process was deferred for several months, CAMPE continued to keep the issue alive through its programs and consultations. For example, in late 2010, when CAMPE held a consultation on gender equality in education that was attended by the speaker of the national parliament as well as several women parliamentarians, it used the opportunity to urge parliamentarians to support the adoption of the NEP in the national parliament.

All of CAMPE’s campaigning paid off when the national parliament finally adopted the National Education Policy on 7 December 2010. The pro-poor National Education Policy adopted emphasises on inclusiveness, learning, human capital development, expansion of primary education up to grade eight, technical and vocational education, ICT in education, decentralisation of education administration and local level planning, a permanent national education commission, teachers’ rights, roles and responsibilities, and an increased allocation for education. To expedite the implementation of the policy, the government formed approximately 20 sub-

committees. CAMPE has been invited to contribute to the process as part of one of the sub-committees. An education act to implement the policy was also drafted, to which CAMPE contributed significantly.

This intervention, organised by CAMPE, provided a platform for civil society, in particular at the grassroots level, to engage with the national-level policy formulation process.

The grassroots perspective has been validated at the national level and combined with specialised knowledge that contributed to 'raising the voice' of citizens and 'strengthened accountability' of duty bearers. The success of CAMPE's initiative is clear. More than 90% of the recommendations made by CAMPE's constituency and by Education Watch were reflected in the National Education Policy. In addition, CAMPE has been invited to nominate people to represent civil society in the National Education Policy Implementation Committee.

TIMOR LESTE

Televised Video on Poor State of Schools in Timor Leste Increases Education Debate Before National Elections

The Timor Leste Coalition for Education (TLCE) believes that education is a right of every citizen and the key to growth and development of the country.

For TLCE, education is the foundation that will provide strength to the country and ensure full development of its human resource. Unfortunately, the national budget allocation for education in Timor Leste is only about 10% or even less, making it among the lowest in Southeast Asia, and way below the international benchmark of at least 20% of the total national budget.

Members of TLCE have observed that because of this, there have been no significant improvements in the education sector, including non-formal education, since the country achieved independence in 2002. It is no surprise that the Timorese people are still suffering from poor school infrastructure and facilities, unsafe school environments, and a poor quality of learning.

The coalition was aware of the significant impact of the broadcast media, such as television, in reaching out to a wider segment of the population.

Thus, the coalition secured the assistance of RTTL, a television network with national coverage, and worked with them to develop a media advocacy campaign. TLCE produced a video that documented the state of education in Timor Leste highlighting the most problematic aspects such as poor facilities (most schools have not yet been improved after the war of liberation from Indonesian occupation), lack of basic teaching materials, poor quality of teaching, lack of access for children, youth, adults, and women to schools and education classes, especially in areas outside the capital. The media advocacy campaign aimed to increase the awareness of Timorese people

on key education issues the country is facing. It also aimed to push the government to take serious action, provide a bigger budget for education, and ensure that quality public education can be freely accessed by the people.

The campaign began with a number of consultation meetings conducted by TLCE with its members and Board to strategise about how to reach out to a wider audience and call the attention of government officials to address education issues in Timor Leste. The outcome of those consultations was a media advocacy plan that in turn led to TLCE signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the television network RTTL.

Through TLCE's work with RTTL, nine public schools were featured in a video highlighting the very poor conditions of schools which negatively affect students' quality of learning. The difficult situations of teachers and the dire need for more



resources to improve the education system in Timor Leste were also clearly illustrated in the video. Interviews were then conducted with key government officials, including the President of Timor Leste, the Minister of Education, and members of parliament to bring to their attention the urgent concerns of students, teachers, and the people and to get their responses.

This media advocacy by TLCE was very timely, given the upcoming national elections in Timor Leste in 2012. It placed education on the election agenda, and it was able to bring together key stakeholders to respond to the issues of education in Timor Leste.

Due to the media advocacy, TLCE has noticed that relevant government agencies and the national parliament are now

“Discussions on the quality of education, condition of schools, teachers and students should be given priority. Also, teaching materials, library, and laboratory facilities are important and should be guaranteed in all schools to help students in their learning.” (Statement by the principal of a secondary school in Cannosa, Dili)

discussing education issues more frequently and seem more committed to finding solutions. TLCE also noticed greater public understanding on the current state of education, people’s right to claim education, the state’s responsibility, and how people can contribute to changing policies and programs regarding education. TLCE was able to reach out to the wider public at minimal cost. The issues and solutions highlighted in the TV program were included in community discussions, and in turn it is anticipated that this will lead to greater public participation in education policy dialogues in the future.

The airing of the video by TLCE and RTTL on national television also paved the way for greater visibility for the coalition. TLCE is planning follow-up work to ensure continued media coverage of key coalition campaign events.

“By 2012, Timor Leste will give huge attention to solving problems in the area of education, and the support of the international community for Timor Leste will be important to achieving good quality of education in Timor Leste.”
(Statement made by the then President, Jose Ramos Horta)

INDIA

Indian Coalition Enlists Members of Parliament to Promote Education

One of the major advocacy activities adopted by the National Coalition for Education (NCE), India, since its inception is influencing members of parliament (MPs) and policy makers through face-to-face interactions.

Before any particular interaction with MPs, NCE undertakes a strategic planning process. It identifies the core issues they want to prioritise for advocacy.

One such issue was the right to education. NCE also strategises ways that the beneficiaries of progress on a particular issue can also directly communicate with the MPs. In the case of the right to education issue,

NCE India considers face-to-face meetings with parliamentarians to be highly effective and is an approach that is replicable elsewhere in the world.

NCE chose out-of-school children to participate.

After working on the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, NCE decided to focus on five major issues with funding support from CSEF. These issues were: reducing the high number of out-of-school children, increasing the budget allocation for education, recruiting trained teachers for implementing the 2009 Act,

continuing the discussion on public private partnerships in education, and developing monitoring and grievance redress mechanisms for public private partnerships.

A group of rescued child labourers,

elected representatives of the Children's Parliament, was called to discuss these issues in detail so that NCE's core group could gain better understanding of field realities. Parliamentary questions and position papers were framed after discussion with the children. A list of MPs, according to their residences, was prepared. A framed poster was also made to be given to each MP which had the message "Respected Member of Parliament, thank you for making the law for our free and compulsory education."

Children started knocking on the doors of the Parliamentarians along with NCEs' team members. During the face-to-face meeting with the members of parliament, several issues were raised by the parliamentarians. The position papers and questions were given as answers to their queries. Most of the parliamentarians promised to raise these issues in the parliament. One member of parliament gave his letterhead and asked the NCE team to write a letter to the Prime Minister and education minister of India with NCE's views on the RTE Act 2009. Thank you letters were sent to the parliamentarians for supporting NCE's positions.

The major success indicator of this activity is the sensitisation of MPs to the extent that they are raising NCE's concerns in



the form of questions and debates in the Parliament.

After their campaigning, NCE India noticed a record number of questions being raised on education in parliament, including questions related to commercialisation of primary education, implementation of the Right To Education Act, education financing, recruitment of trained teachers, infrastructure, and teacher training. In addition, newly elected parliamentarians were sensitised on education issues, and the political profile of education was raised in both houses of parliament.

NEPAL

Coalition Utilises the Global Action Week Platform for Women and Girls' Education Advocacy in Nepal

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) urges all education coalitions around the world to celebrate the annual Global Action Week which has a different global theme each year. In 2011, the theme was 'Women and Girls Education'. The National Coalition for Education, Nepal (NCEN), has always been a firm supporter of Global Action Week and organised events throughout the country in 2011.

In Nepal, women and girls continue to face many barriers to their access to education. NCEN utilised Global Action Week to uncover the stories of women and girls regarding education and raised awareness of the government and other stakeholders about how their lives have been changed through education or affected by a lack of it. NCEN's aim was also to highlight the difficulties currently being faced by women and girls regarding education and to sensitise and encourage policy makers to take action to address the

problems.

NCE Nepal began preparing months in advance.

Initially, NCEN held coordination meetings with the Ministry of Education, Department of Education, media networks, UN agencies, and its own member organisations. From those meetings, task forces, working committees, and advisory committees were formed with the purpose of ensuring in-depth planning and effective implementation of all Global Action Week activities.

NCEN, through its network of member organisations, also began conducting local and district level 'Big Story Telling' programs, a collection of stories from women and girls in different districts. Thirty four stories were compiled, edited, and launched in a book named 'Ma Hunuko Katha', which means 'the story of my existence', during Global Action



Week. More than 150 stories were collected from different parts of the country, and among these, three women were selected to tell their stories during Global Action Week.

As part of the program, a memorandum letter was handed over by the chairperson of the NCEN to the Right Honourable President of Nepal. The memorandum described the social and religious context of Nepal regarding women and girls, their educational status, the problems and difficulties they face in pursuing education, and suggestions for the government to progress women and girls education.

The President launched the book of stories. NCEN's 'Big Story Telling' program was widely covered by the Nepalese media. Several national newspapers printed stories about the Global Action Week activities – highlighting the plight of women and girls' education. A radio interview was broadcast featuring the NCEN chairperson speaking about the activities. In addition, several news shows on different stations, as well as a TV talk show program, featured the Global Action Week events.

This event helped to recognise the women and girls who had struggled for education and the collected stories exposed the hidden social taboos around women and girls' education.

NCE Nepal believes that the 'Big Story Telling' event also

The President of Nepal, Dr. Yadav, shared stories of his two sisters who were denied an education and were married off early, while six brothers, including himself, were allowed to pursue an education. "I feel sad when I meet my sisters today," said President Yadav. He stressed the fact that for most of the girls in the country, it is still a struggle to be educated. He hoped that with the drafting of the new constitution and stability returning to the country, girls' education will see better days.

succeeded in bringing out other societal obstacles affecting women and girls education, and provided a space for discussion on joint efforts between the government, civil society, and support agencies. NCEN noticed that through involvement in the Global Action Week events, women and district-level member organisations were inspired to launch similar types of events. Another advantage of the event was that it raised the profile of NCEN and allowed it to showcase its strengths and abilities in engaging with the government, the media, stakeholders, and the wider community. Over 100 organisations were mobilised to participate in the event.

Best of all, this event facilitated sharing of women and girls' stories that inspired other women and girls to fight for their own education.

NCEN considers this to be a very successful activity with more than 150 womens' stories heard in an organised forum. About 3,000 women and girls and 1,500 men (power holders) listened to the stories. In addition, over 120 women sent their stories in written form, with many of them published in a book. This book received much attention.

VIETNAM

Quality Policy Analysis and Achievable Recommendations Enhance Advocacy Outcomes in Vietnam

The Vietnam Coalition for Education for All (VCEFA) has prioritised advocacy to strengthen Community Learning Centres (CLCs) as a way of meeting the education rights of youth and adults.

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) are the basis for continuing education in the Vietnam national education system and are considered an essential means of building a learning society. At the end of 2011, there were 11,000 community learning centres, with 96% of Vietnam's communes having a CLC. Although annually the number of community learning centres has increased, according to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), at the end of 2011, only 30% of CLCs functioned effectively.

Recognising the importance of CLCs in ensuring that adults and out-of-school youth are able to access education and learning opportunities, VCEFA decided to focus its advocacy efforts towards strengthening the CLCs.

VCEFA identified three main objectives of its advocacy activities around CLCs. The first was to assess the actual situation of CLCs. This involved identifying problems and providing recommendations to MOET to promote widespread development and increased effectiveness of the centres. The second objective was to develop criteria for monitoring and evaluating the CLCs and submit these to MOET for their consideration and reference in formulating standard national criteria for evaluating the centres. The third objective was to explore context-based solutions to improve the effectiveness of CLCs.

Several workshops were conducted by VCEFA in various provinces of Vietnam to gather inputs from education stakeholders involved in community education. Through these discussions, obstacles to the effective operation of CLCs were identified.

Follow-up workshops were undertaken in the Northern and Southern provinces to explore effective and sustainable



models of CLCs. Through presentations and discussions in this second round of workshops, lessons learnt and good models and experiences were gathered to enhance the performance of CLCs. The concluding workshop was organised to develop criteria for monitoring and evaluating the CLCs.

VCEFA carefully documented the results of these workshops and came up with a set of recommendations. The recommendations were formally sent to MOET, the National Communications and Education Departments, and to the provincial government branches for their consideration.

MOET recognised the efforts of VCEFA and its members in promoting community-based education in Vietnam.

A letter from the Deputy Minister of MOET was sent to VCEFA and to an active member on this issue, the Vietnam Association for the Promotion of Education (VAPE), recognising their advocacy efforts for strengthening the CLCs. This letter included an invitation to present their monitoring indicators for CLCs to the Ministry so that they could feed into the national indicators currently being developed.

Documentation of workshops was also shared with workshop participants, VCEFA members, and relevant stakeholders to raise their awareness of the importance of CLCs, generate greater support to increased resources, and to ensure the increased relevance and effectiveness of the centres.

The process established by VCEFA of identifying the key issues and constraints and providing concrete recommendations is a good model of advocacy in the context of Vietnam.

This initiative brought about practical recommendations based on the actual operation of CLCs, from the community level up to the management and policy-making level. By combining modest funding and creative strategies with the enthusiasm and experience of an active member

organisation, VCEFA was able to attract the involvement of many participants from across the country. It brought together community representatives from the north, south, and central regions and other strategic areas in Vietnam. It was able to gather quality input from local people, making the recommendations practical, effective, and responsive to

the needs of the people in the community who stand to benefit from improved CLCs.

VCEFA plans to continue to advocate for increased resources for CLCs and promote the use of monitoring indicators for their effective operation.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan Coalition Develops a 'Charter of Demand' on Education for Advocacy to Government



The fundamental right to free and compulsory education was not recognised in the original Pakistan Constitution of 1973.

As a consequence, federal and provincial governments were not obliged to ensure that every child of school going age went to school or that education facilities were provided in an equitable manner.

Since 2000, civil society in Pakistan began demanding the recognition of education as a fundamental right of every child. In 2005, after the formation of the Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE), collective initiatives were organised to advocate on this issue at all policy-level forums.

On 19 April 2010, the President of Pakistan signed the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which PCE believes is an

important step in the right direction. Under the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the acknowledged fundamental rights have been increased to include, among other rights, the right to education. The advantage of the 18th Amendment is the insertion of new articles in the Constitution, one of which is Article 25A, which makes education, for the first time, a fundamental justiciable right and obligates the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children aged five to sixteen. This was an important achievement for Pakistan and civil society organisations played their part through intense lobbying.

While the recognition of education as a fundamental human right in the Constitution of Pakistan was a great achievement, the Pakistan Coalition for Education has now focused its efforts on the realisation of these rights for every child in Pakistan.

“It is time for provincial governments to start thinking about implementation of 25A. The 18th Amendment has made education a basic right and it is now compulsory. It is worthless to talk of rights if they are not enacted immediately and implemented fully.” (One of the panellists during the PCE National Convention of Education, 2011)

In November 2011, PCE brought together over 400 PCE representatives and the broader civil society in Islamabad to meet for two days. The purpose was to reiterate their demand for a firm commitment by the State of Pakistan to Education for All through urgent implementation of Article 25(A) of the Constitution regarding the Right to Education (RTE).

Through this consultation, a 'Charter of Demand' was developed which articulates clear and specific recommendations for the implementation of the RTE, and includes detailed recommendations regarding education governance and management, education financing, girls' education, curriculum and textbook development, and access and quality of education.

An example of one of the four recommendations listed under the heading 'Education Financing' is, "Governments should ensure that allocations to education are honestly passed on from provincial centres to district-level service delivery units in a timely manner with accountability mechanisms, ensuring that Provincial Finance Commissions act as effective and functional organs." An example of one of the six recommendations listed under the heading 'Education Governance and Management' is, "Federal and provincial governments must get together to amend the National Education Policy 2009 in light of the 18th amendment (Article 25 A and Schedule 4 abolition of the concurrent list), in a coordinated

"Civil society needs to engage with the provincial governments and respected departments for the immediate enactment of the Right to Education through formulation of laws and policies".
(Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan and Chairperson of the Pakistan Education Task Force)

manner to define and integrate roles of all stakeholders across provinces in the new governance structure".

The need to ensure implementation of the Right to Education and the important role to be played by civil society was recognised by the government.

In addition to developing the Charter of Demand, PCE and its members are regularly engaged with relevant provincial education department and officials for the enactment of people-friendly policies under Right to Education. PCE is also engaged with various implementation committees for the 18th Amendment and Right to Education.

MONGOLIA

National Education Forums Prove Valuable for Advocacy and Coalition Building in Mongolia

The All for Education National Civil Society Coalition Mongolia (AFE Mongolia) is a new coalition, initiated in 2010 due to funding support from the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

Despite the fact that AFE Mongolia is only 2 years old, it has already made a significant impact in education debates within the country. For the first time in the 20 years of Mongolia's democratic history, AFE Mongolia has created an independent civil society space, which enables diverse stakeholders – from



community groups and national civil society organisations to government and international organisations – to meet at one time and place to openly and critically discuss education policy issues and needed reforms.

After decades of weak and uncoordinated civil society engagement in the education sector, AFE Mongolia organised the first Annual National Civil Society Forum on Education in 2010 to push for greater transparency and accountability, including meaningful participation

“For Mongolia’s development, it is important that we have a properly functioning government on one hand and citizens’ participation on the other. This (education forum) is a very important and timely event. Today, we are able to hear the voices and opinions of many people and groups. I believe the coalition has opened a new page in the history of Mongolia.” (Mr. R. Bandii, Director of the FTI Project Implementing Unit, Ministry of Education).

of civil society organisations and community groups towards Education for All in Mongolia.

The first Annual Education Forum brought together diverse civil society representatives, including ethnic and sexual minorities, children and youth, people with disabilities, teachers’ unions, parents’ associations, child rights NGOs, human rights NGOs, women’s groups, and other civil society groups. The theme was ‘Money, Quality and Accountability’. The second Annual Education Forum, held in August 2011, aimed at sharing the civil society education policy framework and building consensus on education policy positions and vision for Mongolia. While very much a civil society forum, the event was designed to include dialogue with other key education stakeholders. In the second Forum, a panel discussion on education policy reform involved participants from the Ministry of Education, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), a research institute, and a civil society representative.

Civil society representatives shared their experiences on the importance of citizen participation in education reforms. The civil society participants agreed that there is a need to establish evidence-based advocacy, especially on education financing, to effectively engage the government in ensuring there are enough resources for education and that all resources are utilised effectively. Quality education was also emphasised during the Forum, with videos on creating good schools and on results-based projects in the education sector being presented to the participants. This generated useful feedback on how to improve the quality of education in Mongolia. Critical issues on education aid effectiveness were also discussed.

Perhaps most importantly, as part of the Forum, participants jointly drafted and adopted a Civil Society Policy Framework Paper on Education.

This framework paper is a call to citizens to voice their views and aspirations in transforming the education system in Mongolia, from the community level to the national level, and actively participate in bringing about positive change in education policy and financing.

The significance of the annual forum was recognised by government representatives, the World Bank, and the ADB.

The education policy framework paper adopted by Forum participants has been shared widely through public discussions and media briefings involving coalition members aimed at

advocating for EFA. The paper was also sent to all members of parliament during the budget legislation period.

The annual forum provides an opportunity to increase citizens’ power through gaining knowledge, skills and capacity, and participating in processes aimed at transforming education policies and the education system. Coalition members have reported feeling increased confidence to articulate their views and demands based on the policy paper. This was especially expressed by the Association of Parents with Disabled Children, who are now actively demanding their children’s right to pre-school and secondary education.

Given the political context and history of Mongolia, AFE Mongolia’s Annual Education Forum presents an innovative democratic form of advocating for policy change. The diversity of participants and the willingness of the government and other education stakeholders to listen to the assessment of civil society on the state of education in Mongolia makes this Forum a unique and important space for education advocacy.

“The traditional Mongolian saying goes ‘no wrong if all discuss together, no dirt if washed with warm water.’ Here we have gathered to discuss our dreams, how to reach our dreams. We are in fact standing at 2 sides of the river, with one goal ahead of us, to ensure a brighter future for our children, for the future of Mongolia. We are open to all the voices and opinions expressed here today, there is no other way. We must do this. We have tried to solve the issues alone as a government for 10 years and we all know what the outcome has been - a collection of hodgepodge policies, with poor organisation, no unified policy, and hasty reforms. Therefore, we will cooperate with you. Open cooperation is important. We are working towards one goal.” (Mr. Erdenechimeg Dorjravdan, Head of the Primary and Secondary Education Department).

VANUATU

Weekly Radio Program Reaches Remote Audience to Raise Education Issues in Vanuatu

Vanuatu faces many challenges of access – to both education and information. Seventy per cent of the population of 250,000 lives in rural areas spread across dozens of remote islands.

The national coalition VEPAC (Vanuatu Education Policy Advocacy Coalition) conducted primary research in the rural area of Shefa Province, and found that less than 30% of the adult population possess basic literacy skills. VEPAC also discovered that the majority of people do not have access to a television, and only around half have regular access to the print media. Through its community engagement, VEPAC became aware that many people had concerns, misunderstandings, and questions related to education, and that there was a need for a forum where the community could access answers and information, and also provide feedback and ideas to the government. They realised that one of the best media in Vanuatu is talkback radio.

In 2010, VEPAC began conducting a weekly talkback radio program that is broadcast nationally.

The hour-long radio program airs on Mondays between 9am and 10am, and has been running since late 2010 till now. VEPAC staff act as presenters, providing information about global education movements such as the Education For All (EFA) goals and how



these align with the Vanuatu Education Road Map (VERM) which is a policy of the Vanuatu government that aims to achieve the EFA goals. VEPAC's aim in conducting the radio program is to raise community awareness of education issues in Vanuatu. The program provides current information about government policy that listeners can use to ensure their families are receiving the education services to which they are entitled. The program also provides a forum for people to share their experiences, opinions, and issues to do with education, it allows for feedback from other callers, and responses from the government. More generally, it encourages people to talk about education, begin considering solutions, and seek better services from their local and national governments.

The Ministry of Education is conscious of VEPAC's radio program and has provided feedback on questions raised by the public about government policies.

The Ministry of Education recognises that the radio program is a good strategy for getting information across to the population on issues related to education. People regularly approach VEPAC staff to discuss the radio program and encourage them to continue because it helps people – especially in the rural areas where access to information is limited - understand more

Caller Quotes:

"I don't think we are ever going to achieve EFA by the year 2015. A lot of children are not in school and it's the government's fault for not putting enough money to the schools for all children to go back to school."

"It is important that the government builds more schools to take in our children, especially here in Port Vila."

"I have 4 children in my house who've gone through kindergarten a couple of years ago but were not accepted to government schools to commence primary school because we were told that kids who did kindergarten in private institutions are not eligible to enrol in government schools and have access to this free education. These kids now are 7, 8, and 10 years old and are wasting their time at home not going to any school. I am so frustrated but since this radio program has come about, I want to put forward my concern to VEPAC to help me and other parents who face the same issues."

"I want to also raise my concern that the financial contributions demanded by the school committees is becoming a big burden for us parents."

about the education policy and the plans the government has in place for schools. Callers from across the country phone in to comment, question, or raise issues related to education in Vanuatu. VEPAC believes that the radio program has reached up to 60-70% of the population as it is the only station to reach remote islands.

VEPAC continues to change and adapt the radio program.

To increase its impact, VEPAC now records the show and emails summaries of discussions to key stakeholders in Vanuatu's education sector. This allows for issues raised in the programs to be discussed via email exchanges, or on VEPAC's Facebook site.

This is a good practice because it is an inexpensive,

sustainable, ongoing activity that benefits a large section of the population.

VEPAC has identified a number of positive outcomes of the radio talk back show. The program raises the awareness of community issues related to education rights, policy, and initiatives in a country where the majority of the population has very limited access to information. The Vanuatu government has started discussing and responding to issues being raised by the public.

The radio program not only raises awareness of education issues, but also raises awareness of VEPAC's work, which in turn elevates VEPAC's profile with communities as well as education stakeholders, including the government and major donors.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Participation in Health Sector Meetings Leads to Ideas for Education Sector in Solomon Islands

The Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI) has found that working with other sectors, such as the health sector, can provide valuable insights and experience for advocacy within the education sector.

COESI's Mentoring and Advocacy Support Officer, Ms. Mary Haridi, was nominated by COESI in 2010 to represent its organisational members on the Board of the Solomon Islands National Country Coordinating Mechanism (SINCCM) for the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The Global Fund was established in 2002.

The national mechanism is designed to provide in-country guidance and enhance performance of activities and projects funded by the Global Fund. It also provides links with Global Fund operations, member constituencies, and stakeholders. SINCCM plays an advocacy role for the fund and also assists in mobilising funds. The Board is comprised of representatives from donor agencies, the government, and the private sector. Mary's participation helps to ensure national civil society organisations are part of the governance process.

Mary's attitude to her participation reflects COESI's appreciation of the linkages between health and education:

"Healthy children equals more children in school. And healthy parents means more support for children in school. So COESI's participation in

the Global Fund does make perfect sense really.

It's good for COESI as this complements our efforts towards EFA. It will help COESI advocate more on the relationship between health and education, and between literacy and peoples' access to important health information. Illiterate people will not have the same access to health information as literate people. I think an illiterate population hinders the national effort to fight against these diseases".



Apart from the links between health and education, other strategic reasons of COESI for Mary's involvement in SINCCM is that it provides a platform to promote inter-sectoral cooperation and expand COESI's knowledge of aid modalities. It also serves to enhance COESI's reputation as a capable civil society organisation that advocates for Education for All with a broad range of stakeholders. Within the multi-stakeholder

board, Mary is gaining experience in how to ensure that civil society organisation perspectives and contributions are part of the Global Fund's strategic response to global health issues. Finally, COESI hopes that Mary's participation will help support its own efforts to establish a National Civil Society Education Fund in the Solomon Islands by enhancing her understanding of resource mobilisation and funding modalities.

CAMBODIA

Growing Coalition Members' Involvement in Cambodia

Since its inception in 2001, NGO Education Partnership (NEP) Cambodia has grown from 17 members to over 100 members in early 2012.

The growth has increased remarkably over the past few years after NEP began receiving funding support from CSEF. More and more NGO members, donors, and development partners are interested in working with NEP to support the realisation of Cambodia's Education Strategic Plan 2009-2013 which aims to lead ultimately to the attainment of the EFA goals. NEP's profile has risen remarkably and feedback from its members indicates that the quality and quantity of services provided by NEP to its members has improved greatly.

Coordination is a difficult task and a great challenge for any coalition with different members, differing expectations, and capacities. A number of strategies are needed to keep a high participation rate of members in the coalition's activities and events. NEP has found that in the Cambodian context, the areas for consideration are - staff coordination skills, quality of service provided, inclusion of members' inputs to various policy debates with the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MoEYS), promoting members sense of their value within NEP, and the extent to which members feel they are benefiting from the membership, especially through learning new skills.

NEP works proactively to provide links between civil society organisations and the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) to advocate for policy changes in education.

NEP makes sure that all government or ministerial educational policies and guidelines are regularly shared with members. NEP also provides members with information on opportunities to engage with ministerial activities. For instance, the following activities were identified as ways that members could engage



with the ministry - involvement in providing their NGO's data for the MoEYS Annual Operational Plan, sharing the achievements of their NGOs in the MoEYS annual report to present during the Annual Education Congress, and joining various meetings with the MoEYS, such as invitations to join the launching of new policies.

This opening of the doors to civil society organisations is a crucial opportunity for both the government and civil society organisations to work together to support the achievement of the EFA goals. With this opportunity, NEP has needed to ensure that members have a sense of their value in engaging with the process.

NEP utilises inputs from members for policy debates and engagements with the education ministry.

Due to limited space, the ministry or government cannot invite all civil society organisations to its policy discussions. Therefore, NEP formed thematic working groups within the coalition. In these working groups, civil society members are invited to provide various inputs or evidence from the

grassroots for the coalition to use in various policy debates, policy formulations, or assessments. Selection of coalition representatives in policy debates is based on relevant criteria that will ensure productive participation and will produce good advocacy results.

Another mechanism for ensuring wide consultations with members was the establishment of a sub-national coalition, where grassroots civil society organisations are invited to provide inputs and recommendations. The sub-national coalition has regularly conducted its quarterly meetings to update members on the education progress, policy updates, and sharing best practices on the ground. Similar to the national level, the provincial coalition also plays an important role in joining with the provincial joint technical working group led by the head of the Provincial Education Office.

NEP established opportunities for members to learn from the experiences and best practices of other members, as well as from other education stakeholders.

NEP acts as a focal point for stakeholders in education. MoEYS relies on NEP's network to disseminate policy updates, and to gather data from civil society organisations for various educational purposes or policy considerations. Similarly, civil society organisations or development partners can also use the network to share information, including best practices,

lessons learnt, achievements, and challenges. Members can benefit enormously from each other and some ideas can be widely replicated to other areas.

NEP has increased services and support provided to members by also increasing the number of coalition staff.

The quality and number of services and support provided to members has played an important role in gaining high levels of satisfaction from them. It has also encouraged their active involvement with coalition activities. With the increase in services and support, there is also a need to increase coalition staff to provide support to the members. While this increases the overhead cost, the impact was equally significant as more members got involved in coalition activities and they gained the attention of the government, from local to national levels. The services and support provided by NEP to its members have included - regular updates on new educational policies through email, the NEP website and meetings, bi-monthly membership meetings, and capacity building for members, such as policy training related to education law, training on the Education Strategic Plan, and special training on topics such as monitoring and evaluation.

Members are involved in as many coalition activities as possible.

NEP has identified a number of core activities for members' involvement. These include campaign activities around Global Action Week, World Teachers Day, or Disabilities Day, as well as events at the national level with policy makers and donors. In addition, NEP has extended an invitation to members to conduct field research in their respective communities or target areas. To further include all members, NEP has produced various advocacy and campaign materials such as posters, banners, and story books for wide distribution.

NEP noticed that as its members became aware of how active the coalition is, they too became more active.



INDONESIA

Collaborating with Members in Indonesia Creates a Stronger Coalition

Strong networks and productive relationships between members has been a key objective in the newly-formed Civil Society Organisation initiative for Education For All (CSOiEFA).

Since its establishment in 2010, CSoiEFA has attracted 20 diverse member organisations. Members include PGRI, the largest teachers union, consisting of 1.6 million members, and Muslimat, the largest Muslim women's organisation which consists of 1.3 million members. CSoiEFA also has women's organisations, other faith-based organisations, and national and international NGOs amongst its membership. Between them, CSoiEFA members work in all 33 provinces and 420 districts of Indonesia. Member organisations are involved in a range of educational issues, from early childhood care and education to adult literacy. Such a diverse membership provides both challenges and opportunities.

It has not been easy to ensure organisations and institutions from different ideological backgrounds were able to work together collaboratively. However, through CSoiEFA's careful coordination, its members became aware that to achieve Education For All (EFA), there was a need to unify and work together.

CSoiEFA worked on consensus-building around the EFA goals and work on finding ways so that all members could contribute and collaborate in advocacy work. These essential ingredients enabled them to negotiate with the government and other education stakeholders.

The coalition has found that regular face-to-face member meetings are the key to strengthening the coalition and developing consensus.

CSoiEFA, and in particular the Steering Committee, have held regular meetings to discuss and plan the coalition's activities. For every activity undertaken, CSoiEFA seeks to involve its members in its work with one member organisation nominated to take



the lead and responsibility for coordinating the program. This has proven an effective way to strengthen CSoiEFA.

In addition, CSoiEFA organised targeted training activities designed to meet the needs of the membership. For example, CSoiEFA organised a members' training workshop on analysing government education budgets. One outcome was that member organisations were able to conduct their own budget analyses. Not only were members' capacities in this area increased, but the activity acted as a networking opportunity, developing positive relationships through shared experiences between members.

In addition to developing internal communications and networks within its membership, CSoiEFA was able to share ideas with other organisations working in the education sector which have different perspectives and ideologies, such as E-Net for Justice, Indonesia.

CSoiEFA has raised its profile to become known as a coalition that focuses on Education for All (EFA). The Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as the Ministry of Welfare, have recognised CSoiEFA by inviting the coalition to be involved in government programs relating to EFA, such as in the national character building program.

CSoiEFA's members are active in its programs and feel a sense of ownership towards the coalition and its achievements.

Although it is a relatively new coalition, CSoiEFA has managed to build a strong and cohesive coalition through the use of frequent meetings, regular communication, and activities targeted towards benefiting members. Through its solid membership base, CSoiEFA is able to take its position as an important voice for civil society in the educational movement in Indonesia.

“CSoiEFA has already become well known by NGOs and the government. Many activities have been undertaken by CSoiEFA, particularly in the area of education advocacy.

My organisation, as a member of CSoiEFA, is able to make positive inputs to help improve education in Indonesia”.

(spokesperson from Bina Swadaya Konsultan (BSK), one of CSoiEFA's member organisations).

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Using Local Volunteers Means Extra Hands in Papua New Guinea

The national education coalition, Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN), has creatively utilised local volunteers to increase the impact of its education policy advocacy.

The purpose of utilising local volunteers is to allow PEAN staff more time to focus on advocacy, policy development, membership mobilisation, donor reporting requirements, and other objectives that guide PEAN's work.

Due to activity and reporting pressures, as well as limited funding for the hiring of extra staff, PEAN is often in need of assistance. Through its member organisation networks, PEAN has access to capable volunteers who are committed to improving education in Papua New Guinea. PEAN calls on these volunteers to complement the role of paid staff and to fill gaps in the office when PEAN staff are involved in project work or are busy attending workshops or meetings.

With high unemployment in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, there are people who are seeking a constructive way to use their time and are willing to volunteer with organisations that offer a positive work environment and the opportunity to contribute to the community. There are also people engaged in full-time work who wish to 'give back' to their community by helping organisations such as PEAN achieve its goals.

Volunteers take on administration and logistical roles when staff are away from the office, as well as help with general office maintenance and daily office activities on a regular basis. PEAN's coordinator organises the volunteers, with some attending the PEAN office on a regular weekly basis, and others on-call to assist during project implementation or other busy times. The coordinator provides the volunteers with a bus fare, tea and coffee, and the volunteers are welcomed into the office as important members of the PEAN team.

Volunteers have been used to support the work of PEAN since October 2010. Currently, PEAN has two volunteers



on-call, and one volunteer, Rose, who comes into the office a few times every week.

According to the PEAN coordinator, these volunteers have become trusted and valued members of the PEAN team. During the week long Sub-Regional Conference for Coalitions held in PNG in November 2010, the PEAN office relied on these volunteers as most of the PEAN staff were involved in organising and attending meetings.

University Students Volunteer for Workplace Experience

In late 2011, PEAN expanded its volunteer contingent to include a student from the University of PNG. Students studying Social Science are required to complete a twelve week work placement and PEAN has recently registered to become a host organisation. The university student currently working with PEAN is developing a 'Literacy Directory' of community education service providers in the capital to promote the work of PEAN's members and identify examples of good practise amongst civil society. The trial placement has been mutually beneficial, and PEAN has already been contacted by other students keen to work there in the future.

Mutually Beneficial Cooperation

PEAN's coordinator considers the use of volunteers to be an example of good practice because it contributes much to the successful running of the PEAN office on a daily basis, without depleting limited funds. Both PEAN and the volunteers gain advantages from this relationship.

Volunteers continue to provide their skills and time and support PEAN in achieving its objectives. The people who volunteer with PEAN gain work skills and confidence and feel that they are contributing to the important work of PEAN - improving educational outcomes in PNG. The coordinator is happy to provide written and verbal references to volunteers who are seeking paid work. Volunteers who have shown themselves to be suitable for survey work have also been hired as surveyors by PEAN during their literacy surveys in various provinces.

Rose stated, "it is good because I can come and help the finance officer with his typing as he isn't as fast as I am, and he is also teaching me things about finances and accounting that will be good to know if I want to work for an NGO in the future".

VIETNAM

Collective Strength Increases the Chances of Advocacy Success in Vietnam

Early childhood care and education is fundamental for all levels of education as it has a lasting impact across all later stages of learning.

The Prime Minister of Vietnam approved the national Education Development Strategy for 2010 - 2015, in which it is stated that there is a need to *'increase the quality of education for pre 6-year-old children, allowing full physical, emotional, and mental development of children; expand the day care and kindergarten system in all areas, especially in rural and difficult areas, and increase counselling, awareness-raising, and knowledge sharing on child care and education for families'*.

Due to this Strategy, as well as Vietnam's commitment to the Education for All (EFA) goals, many programs have been carried out in recent years to achieve the objectives of early childhood care and education. Despite this, there remains a lack of adequate school infrastructure to ensure provision of quality early childhood care and education that is free and available to all children. The quality of public pre-school education is poor, especially in remote areas. The combination of poverty, poor health, malnutrition, and lack of early childhood education in certain areas of Vietnam shows evidence of significant inequality. It is due to these factors that early childhood care and education has become a key focus for the work of the Vietnam Coalition for Education for All (VCEFA).

To provide credible recommendations to the government, the coalition and its members carried out consultations and a review of existing programs and policy on pre-school education in Vietnam.

VCEFA and one of its member organisations, the Vietnam Association for the Protection of the Rights of Children (VAPCR), conducted a baseline study on the strengths and weaknesses of existing programs and policies on pre-school education in Vietnam. This baseline was used to guide the coalition in providing evidence-based recommendations to the government.

VCEFA organised a technical working group within the coalition and invited leading experts and scholars on pre-school education in Vietnam to assist the coalition

and its members to analyse the programs and policies and formulate informed recommendations. Two policy dialogues were conducted to discuss the findings and recommendations of the technical working group and gather insights from education stakeholders. After documenting the dialogues and upon completion of the policy and program review, the coalition submitted the results to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) with concrete recommendations on how to improve current government programs and policy on pre-school education.

Three relevant government bodies received and positively acknowledged the findings of VCEFA's baseline study and recommendations on how to improve existing programs and policies on pre-school education in Vietnam.

These government bodies were MOET, the Committee on Social Issues of the National Assembly, and the Committee on Youth and Children. This initiative by VCEFA and its member organisations complemented the work of other organisations in Vietnam to seriously address the issues around pre-school education. A positive result of these initiatives was the 'Decision No. 60' issued by MOET which applies to the period 2011-2015, and provides for improved benefits for pre-school education, ensures access and welfare of pre-school children, and puts greater responsibility on relevant government ministries to ensure implementation of the order. The coalition will monitor the implementation of 'Decision Number 60' to ensure that government commitments are not only on paper but will be implemented as well.



After advocacy success there is still important follow-up to ensure implementation.

While some significant achievements have been made, many challenges remain. After some success with MOET, VCEFA now realises that it needs to do further advocacy work focusing on other agencies to full implementation of ‘Decision Number 60’, such as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Construction, and the Ministry of Investment and Planning. VCEFA would also like to undertake a more extensive study into the actual situation of pre-school education on the ground if additional resources could be found.

The coalition learned several key lessons while undertaking these advocacy activities that it will use to inform future campaigns. Using the coalition as the platform for its members to express policy changes they want to achieve, while complementing the advocacy efforts of other organisations, has been very effective. The issue of the lack of benefits and low salary of pre-school teachers had been previously raised by a number of education activists and NGOs. This was complemented by specific recommendations made by VCEFA and its member organisation, VAPRC, which strengthened the advocacy effort and has contributed to the change in policy.

Utilising the power and influence of the media to increase people’s awareness of the importance of children’s care and education from 0-5 years was another key lesson learnt by VCEFA. Journalists from reputable newspapers in Vietnam were invited to policy dialogues and workshops organised by the coalition. Information packs were also sent to other newspapers that were not able to attend the workshops. After



these VCEFA events, many news articles about the workshops were printed, spreading the message of the coalition on the importance of the ‘golden period of development – 0 to 5 years old’. This generated public discussions on early childhood care and education in Vietnam and increased public awareness of the issue, creating pressure for policy change.

VCEFA found that engaging with MOET alone is not enough. It realised it is imperative to identify appropriate and creative ways to engage other relevant government agencies and sectors, such as Ministries of Construction and Finance, to ensure budget allocation, land allocation, and proper implementation of education programs, such as the pre-school program. This will be a challenge since there is a tendency of such ministries and related agencies to ignore recommendations when they see it as ‘education’.

“This activity is a good example of the strength of collective voice. It can be utilised to illustrate the need to cooperate and to network with each other to do advocacy.”

(President of VCEFA)

BANGLADESH

Filing a Writ Petition and Holding Public Hearings are Valuable Advocacy Tools in Bangladesh

Background and Context

In Bangladesh, education services are provided by both public and private authorities. Education institutions were nationalised in 1973, however by 2005-06, there were about 78,679 private education institutions including universities, colleges, junior/high schools, specialised schools/colleges, primary schools, Madrasas, and other institutions. According

to national statistics, about 45% of primary education institutions and 6% of secondary education institutions are run by the government, the rest are managed by non-state providers (Banbeis, 2010). Eighty six percent of private secondary and higher secondary education institutions receive a Monthly Payment Order (MPO) from the government, which is a grant to support teacher salaries.

These institutions are also eligible for getting periodic maintenance costs and vouchers from the government for female students.

Additional Fees and Charges

To regulate the private cost of education, especially the fees for admission, the Ministry of Education issued a circular in December 2011 which set a maximum ceiling for admission fees for different schools. The admission fee is Tk. 500 (US\$ 6) for rural schools and Tk. 5000 (US\$ 60) for city schools. But it is widely reported that many city schools which receive the MPO are charging from Tk. 8,000 (US\$ 95) up to Tk. 32,000 (US\$ 381) as admission fees or in different charges at the time of admission. Due to this breach of statutory and constitutional duties, the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), as the national civil society education coalition, expressed its concerns and asked for immediate measures to address this malpractice by governmental and non-governmental educational institutions. CAMPE and the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) then challenged the government's continued inaction to enforce its own guidelines imposing a ceiling on payment of admission fees by way of filing a Writ Petition No. 312 of 2012.

Later, CAMPE organised a public hearing on the issue where students, parents, teachers, and school managing committee members from across the country participated and raised their voices on the issue. The Education Minister, along with members of the National Education Policy Formulation Committee and civil society organisations, listened to concerns expressed that education was becoming too expensive and many could not afford the fees. The public hearing was televised and covered by the print media. The Minister committed to strengthen monitoring, and refund the additional fees collected by the educational institution or to adjust it with subsequent fees and charges.

Purpose of Writ Petition and Public Hearing

The purpose of these actions was to (i) challenge private schools that receive additional fees, making education expensive, and (ii) create a support-base for enacting a Right to Education (RTE) Act in Bangladesh. It also aimed to draw the attention of the duty bearers that such activities are a violation of the directives of the Ministry and to consider



such actions as unconstitutional and a violation of the right to access to education.

The Writ asked for an investigation report on the excessive charge of admission fees and action against it, inspection of non-government private education institutions to assess the extent of charging fees from admissions, necessary exemplary action against the institutions found to be in violation of the prescribed ceiling on admission fees, adoption of a clear time-bound plan for regular monitoring of all government and non-government educational institutions, and referral of respondents to take immediate, effective steps and ensure that errant schools and institutions refund the excess fees and charges extracted from parents and guardians. Meanwhile, some of the schools have already declared they will adjust excess fees via reduced future charges and others are exploring options for similar action.

Strategies and Action Taken

CAMPE built an alliance with BLAST, an NGO renowned for citizen's rights advocacy. Before filing the Writ Petition, CAMPE consulted with selected representatives of civil society, the media, and parliamentarians to get a support base. CAMPE also discussed the issue with concerned government officials and ministers so that they could take necessary action even before the Writ was filed.

Not surprisingly, CAMPE encountered negative responses from excessive fee-charging institutions. On the other hand, it received numerous phone calls from parents in support of the action.

“In Bangladesh we have many laws on children’s rights, but they are not implemented. We wanted to remind the state of its duties. We want to end the admissions business which results in discrimination against a section of society.”

(Ms. Rasheda K. Choudhury, Executive Director, CAMPE)

Outcomes

As a follow-up of the public hearing, the government immediately increased monitoring of school fees-related issues and realised the need for a comprehensive education act to safeguard the right to education. A working group has been formed to prepare an Act that will contribute to the RTE.

Discussion of Key Lessons Learnt

Creating a support-base is important for carrying out an advocacy initiative. Sometimes government may not like civil society, especially when the issue is relatively challenging to implement, but it is harder for the government to ignore if

the cause is supported by strong argument and evidence. Although the Constitution of Bangladesh does not guarantee the right to education, CAMPE has found that engaging related institutions can protect the rights of marginalised people and also push for the need for new laws or policies. As a civil society platform, CAMPE, needs to be ready for a 'sweet and sour' relationship with policy makers. Involvement of all the three branches of the government - executive, legislative, and judiciary - can facilitate the process of realising the rights of citizens, in this case to an affordable education.

“We want to see full implementation of the Government’s Guidelines of 14 December 2011. Those who are unable to give these excessive fees are being deprived of the right to an education of their choice. This is a violation of basic rights and the fundamental right to education.” (Barrister Ashraful Hadi, Petitioners’ lawyer)

NEPAL

Global Campaigns Can Help Galvanise National Level Advocacy - Nepal Coalition’s Participation in the 1GOAL Campaign

1GOAL was a campaign conducted during the 2010 FIFA World Cup aimed at using the power and popularity of football to advocate for Education for All (EFA). 1GOAL was led by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and included support from high profile individuals, key charities, teaching unions, faith groups, the private sector, committed governments, and FIFA. It was organised to capture the international event’s reach to a wide audience across the globe. During the campaign, names and support from the public, footballers, and celebrities were collected to make a united plea to all governments to make education a reality for all children by 2015 throughout the world.

The National Campaign for Education, Nepal (NCEN), decided to join the campaign, with a focus

on three policy demands for the government of Nepal:

- 1) allocate at least 20% of the national budget to education
- 2) make educational policies, programs, and budgets transparent



3) declare schools as Zones of Peace

This last demand was very relevant in Nepal's context where schools were taken over and targeted during the years of fighting between the Maoists and the previous government.

NCEN recognised this campaign as a good opportunity for the coalition to meet and influence parliamentarians and other policy makers, and deliver messages to thousands of Nepalese people about Education for All to gain solidarity.

NCEN's 1GOAL Campaign started on the day of the World Cup Football 2010 opening and ended on the day of the closing with a large street rally. It worked jointly with the Association of International NGOs (AIN), as well as with various media organisations to coordinate their campaign. Other aspects of the campaign included a mass signing of the three policy demands, a public service announcement of the demands telecast just before the football matches, and wider media mobilisation. Some regional member organisations of NCEN also organised successful 1GOAL campaign programs in different districts of Nepal.

***'I am a person who was deprived of an education until 18 years of age, but now I am lobbying for 'Education for All'. I came to better understand the importance of an education and will continue to work to ensure the right to education for all children',
(Member of Parliament)***

NCEN felt that this campaign contributed immensely to making education a concern of all sectors of society, including those from the arts and sports fields, the corporate sector, civil society, and the government. Utilising the 1GOAL campaign opened avenues for further cooperation

and coordination with the Government of Nepal. Other stakeholders also recognised and participated in the campaign.

Through its efforts in utilising the 1GOAL campaign, NCEN contributed to the government's decision to increase the national education budget from 16 to 17.1%. It also played a role in the government of Nepal declaring schools to be 'Zones of Peace'.

Furthermore, participation in the campaign also resulted in increased capacity of NCEN for later campaigns. In addition, NCE Nepal's visibility was increased and coordination among member organisations and with the government was improved.

***"I took part in this rally as this campaign has captured the burning issue of education",
(a participant of the 1GOAL campaign in Nepal)***



INDIA

Public Hearings Help Monitor Education Policy Implementation and Ensure People's Participation in India

NCE India

In India, the 'Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009' has become a ray of hope to more than 8 million children who have been deprived of an education of any kind.

This Act could prove to be a vibrant instrument in ensuring all children in India enjoy the right to an education, leading to a better life free from poverty and exploitation. The National Campaign for Education (NCE), India, feels that it is the obligation of each and every individual in Indian society to help children in evoking their right to education by all the means possible in light of this much-awaited and historic legislation.

One major advocacy activity adopted by NCE India since this Act was introduced has been to hold public hearings to engage teachers, school communities, the public at large, and the local and state administration to discuss the realisation of the right of children to free and compulsory education.

There were many objectives in organising the public hearings. They were designed to monitor the implementation of the Right To Education (RTE) and ensure public engagement and participation in the process, and to support and encourage the government's endeavour to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals. There was also a need to generate awareness among, the broader public and civil society organisations of the challenges and strategies associated with fully implementing the ACT. The public hearing process was also designed to encourage high-level political engagement on the issue. To this end, each public hearing involved an organised march through the streets and follow-up meetings to sensitise people on the importance of education for all children and all people in India.

NCE India used the opportunity of the public hearings to support School Management Committees (SMC's) as social watchdogs for education rights, to take stock of the ground realities of implementing the RTE Act and numbers of out-of-school children, and governance of schools. The public hearings were also used as an opportunity to promote cooperation between the community, teachers, and SMC's, and to encourage child-friendly schooling and



the enrolment of out-of-school children in neighbourhood schools. In particular, a key focus of the public hearings was the enrolment of out-of-school children working in stone mines, quarries, and engaging in other hazardous work; and children who are either migrants or displaced from other states. Another key focus was the protection and promotion of the right to education of children with special needs.

NCE planned to undertake a series of public hearings covering the remotest, educationally backward states of the country motivating and mobilizing people, especially parents and the children, to evoke their rights and guarantee a better future for the children. A substantial number of out-of-school children are working in mines, stone quarries, and in other hazardous vocations. These are sad cases of denial of right to education. Also, these children are mostly migrants and displaced from flood-affected areas and other natural calamities. The objective of the public hearings was to hold an interface with the local community, government administration, teachers, and school management committees to take account of out-of-school children, the implementation of RTE rules, and the formation and capacity building of SMC's.

In organising the public hearings, NCE India strategised to bring all the concerned stakeholders on board.

NCE India consulted representatives of teachers' unions, the Department of Labour, Department of Elementary Education,

local administrators, parents, and members of SMC's. NCE also summarised the key features of the RTE Act, presenting lapses and good examples of school governance. This was done to pressurise state administrations to take corrective action. As a strategy, NCE India challenged the local community to take ownership of their school's governance and implementation of the RTE Act. Ensuring that the local community was on board was also important for sustained action in the future

Several challenges were encountered while organising the public hearings.

In the beginning it was very difficult to get local administrations and the teachers' community on board. There was suspicion from the teachers' community that this process would become 'anti-teacher', with a focus on teacher absenteeism and corporal punishment in schools. The local administrations felt that civil society organisations were always negative, and worried that NCE India would highlight lapses in the system and bring this out in the media and the local leadership for punitive action. It took time and effort to build trust and a willingness to be involved.

Positive Outcomes Due to the Public Hearing Process

In almost all the areas where public hearings were organised, the formation of SMC's was promptly done with the participation of teachers and the wider school community. Perhaps the most significant outcome was the increase in enrolment in schools, particularly for girl children. A substantial number of children from stone mines, kiosks, and those involved in domestic child labour were taken out from work places and enrolled in schools. The local administration continues to be in close touch with NCE volunteers for implementing the Right to Education Act.

Other Lessons Learnt

NCE found that it was best to document the evidence of both lapses and good practices and acknowledge the local people for their own initiatives. The other lesson learnt was not to be negative on such lapses and to avoid getting into fault-finding. It is most effective to look into corrective action instead. It was also learnt that follow-up planning and action was important to ensure sustainable results.

Giving leadership to local people makes the outcome of the process more sustainable than doing it by yourself.



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Solomon Islands Coalition Discovers Credibility is Built by Producing Quality Research and Policy Inputs

The Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI) has worked hard to build its credibility so that its contribution to education policy debates in the Solomon Islands is more effective.

Gaining credibility is not achieved overnight. The process of building COESI's credibility with the government and donors has been ongoing since the coalition formed. Evidence of COESI's growing credibility has been the invitation by the Ministry of Education for COESI to become a member of the national Literacy Technical Working Group.

However, to get to this point required prior demonstration of COESI's capacity and commitment. In the period before becoming a member of the Literacy Technical Working Group, the COESI staff and board undertook a range of activities, including increasing stakeholder awareness through regular media contributions and participation in national and provincial education meetings, including the Education Partners Group (EPG). COESI also hosted member and partner consultations and undertook public consultations on the draft Disabilities Act and survey results in 2011.

COESI further demonstrated its commitment to education policy improvement through actively engaging in processes such as the SWAp (Sector Wide Approach) and preliminary analysis of the National Education Action Plan. COESI continued to be a public advocate for Education for All (EFA) through events such as International Literacy Day and Global Action Week. Finally, COESI continued its research into literacy and education in the Solomon Islands which enabled them to make informed contributions, backed by evidence and primary data. When the research was completed and launched, it attracted widespread interest and media coverage, including outside the country. The research report greatly enhanced COESI's credibility with government officials.

Credibility was built by producing high quality research and well-informed policy inputs.

As a result of its work, COESI was invited to be a member of the Literacy Technical Working Group

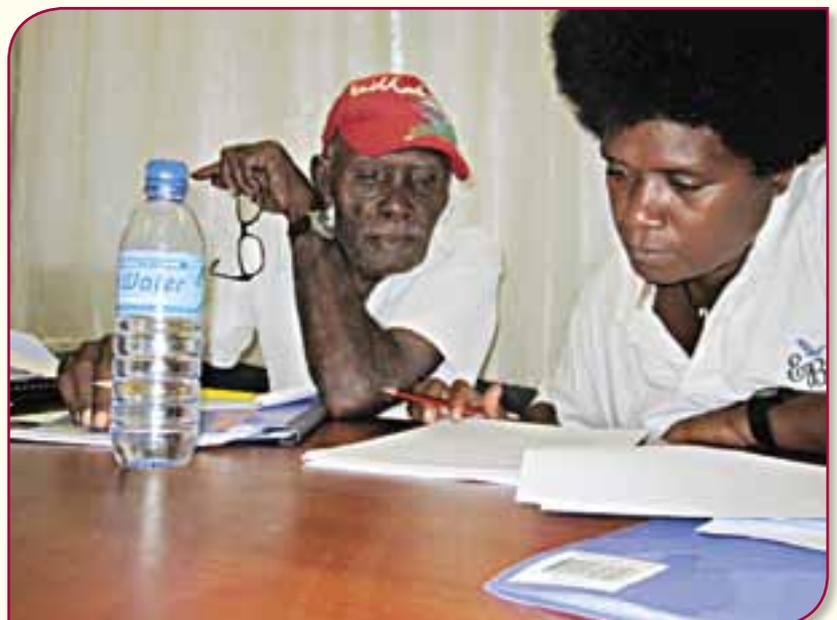
established to assist the Ministry of Education to develop a national literacy policy for Solomon Islands. In recognition of their expertise, COESI was asked to draft a concept note with one of its member organisations, the Literacy Association of Solomon Islands (LASI), outlining the scope of a national literacy policy. COESI had been advocating for the development of a national literacy policy for many years and was pleased to see its advocacy having an impact.

Calling on Outside Help When Needed

Another lesson learnt by COESI was the value of drawing on external expertise. COESI felt it needed to improve its research policy analysis, writing skills, and its resource mobilisation skills, so at various times called on ASPBAE, the regional organisation providing capacity support to Asia Pacific coalitions with the help of CSEF funding. ASPBAE was able to provide technical assistance to help COESI undertake research, provide quality inputs into the Literacy Technical Working Group, and to find additional funding support.

Uncertainty of funding support seriously constrains coalition effectiveness.

A further lesson learnt by COESI is that the constant search for funding support and the uncertainty surrounding sustainability is a serious constraint to effective civil society education policy



advocacy. COESI staff needed to commit a great deal of time to the coalition's financial management and reporting and to secure funding. This involved developing concept notes and funding proposals. CSEF funding support was crucial to COESI's survival and enabled it to secure some additional funds. For

coalitions with few staff, this substantially limits the time that can then be applied to policy advocacy work. Nonetheless, COESI is proud that it has still been able to contribute to policy debate and continues its involvement in the Literacy Technical Working Group.



TIMOR LESTE

Education Dinner Brings Key Stakeholders Together in Timor Leste

Timor Leste remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with an economy that is dependent on international donor support. TLCE (Timor Leste Coalition for Education) is a newly formed coalition funded by the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). TLCE advocates for the government and donors to increase spending on education and ensure a better functioning public education system. It also advocates for better monitoring of scarce education resources to ensure they are utilised effectively to achieve maximum results and contribute to human and economic development.

Towards this end, TLCE organised an 'education dinner' to bring together key education stakeholders in Timor Leste. The dinner aimed to provide a conducive environment for key education stakeholders to discuss education issues facing the country. It

also aimed to increase the visibility of TLCE to the government, donors, and civil society and open opportunities for TLCE to engage in the different government and donor working groups. The third main aim of the dinner was to urge stakeholders to increase their financial commitment to education and encourage regular discussions with civil society to collectively address education issues and concerns.

Prior to the education dinner, the coalition made individual visits to different government agencies, donor and international organisations, embassies, and civil society organisations to introduce and present the work of the coalition. It presented its advocacy positions and other materials which were very helpful in representing the work of the coalition.

During these visits, the different stakeholders became better

Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that the dinner was quite a unique initiative, as compared to the usual formal meetings or forum. The dinner provided a more relaxed venue where the different stakeholders could discuss and express their insights on education more freely and spontaneously.

acquainted with TLCE and many of them expressed their appreciation of the emergence of a civil society education advocacy coalition in Timor Leste. They highlighted that there was a need for a strong civil society group that could bring fresh and grassroots-based perspectives on education to the government.

The education dinner included a brief presentation about the coalition by the in-country Mentoring and Advocacy Support Officer of TLCE, Mr. Joao Pequinho. It also included a presentation outlining the CSEF objectives and its international partners shared by ASPBAE's sub-regional Capacity Development and Advocacy Support Officer, Ms. Helen Dabu. During the evening, much time was allowed for casual conversation and interaction between education stakeholders.

After this education dinner, follow-up meetings were held by TLCE as a number of these stakeholders invited the coalition for another meeting to explore possible partnerships in the future.

TLCE did encounter some constraints in organising this event.

The limited number of three full-time staff at TLCE limited the ability of the coalition to reach out to some stakeholders, such as the media. Some coalition members assisted but many of them were also pre-occupied in completing their own organisation's tasks.

In the future, the coalition will provide more time to prepare events like this and obtain a higher level of involvement from the members to reach out to more stakeholders and achieve greater levels of participation.

The education dinner was a very successful initiative in multiple ways.

Through the education dinner, TLCE was able to bring together all of the important stakeholders in education and was able to establish new contacts and plan cooperation with them. A number of organisations issued invitations for follow-up meetings and for TLCE to explore joining existing government and donor technical working groups. Some key representatives of these working groups committed to open spaces for TLCE to join in policy dialogues. In addition, the dinner resulted in resource mobilisation opportunities with an invitation from UNICEF for TLCE to submit a proposal for collaboration with them during Global Action Week in 2012.

The coalition learnt some important lessons through this activity.

- Creativity is very important in advocacy work. The different stakeholders that the coalition wanted to engage with had proven difficult to approach in a formal setting, but with the creation of a relaxed and informal space through the education dinner, TLCE staff found they were able to connect and have more useful discussions with them.
- Increasing the confidence level and capacity of the TLCE staff and Board members in dealing with the government, donors, and other NGOs (both local and international) is very important to build the image of the coalition as a credible advocacy organisation.
- Effective collaboration between TLCE and ASPBAE, as regional capacity support, helped the coalition to carry out its initiatives effectively and present a more credible face to the government, donors, and other education stakeholders.

Creativity is very important in advocacy work.



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Coalition Finds Value in Engaging Multiple Government Departments, Development Partners, and the Private Sector



Papua New Guinea is one of the most challenging development contexts in the Pacific with low levels of literacy, high unemployment, rising internal migration, and significant increases in the cost of living. The country receives the largest aid flows in the Pacific region and is experiencing a resources boom with rapid growth in the private sector. The political context has been particularly unstable in recent years. In 2011, there were two people claiming to be Prime Minister and schools closed due to civil unrest. The PNG Education Advocacy Network (PEAN) has responded to this context by ensuring it engages with a broad range of stakeholders and does not rely solely on individual relationships with the Department of Education.

Engaging with Multiple Government Departments and Offices

PEAN has had long-standing relationships with the Department of Education and the Department for Community Development. The PEAN coalition continues to be a member of the Steering Committee of the Education Sector Program and, in 2011, made a presentation at the annual conference of the provincial education officers. However, to broaden its engagement with the government, PEAN has been working with other government wings. The coalition is a member of the National Census Working Group and is now working with the National Statistics Office to improve the quality of information collected about education. PEAN has also been working with the Department of National Planning and Monitoring to understand and align its work with the PNG Government's Vision 2050 which provides strategic direction for all government departments and development partners.

Mobilising Resources – Including the Private Sector

PEAN is currently developing a resource mobilisation strategy to ensure its financial viability and envisions the private sector becoming a major funder in future years. With the rapid growth of the private sector, PEAN has worked to promote corporate social responsibility. In 2011, the coalition conducted consultations on the establishment of a sustainable funding mechanism for civil society work on education in PNG. PEAN will be discussing their criteria for accepting funds from various entities in the coming months. However, they have received expressions of support and interest from the National Gaming Control Board and also the banking sector.

Understanding Individual Donors

Despite global commitments from donors to align their work with national systems, PEAN has learnt that it is important to work not only with joint donor committees but also to liaise separately with individual development partners. For example, Australia's aid agency, AusAID, makes the largest aid contribution to PNG and has considerable influence on education aid issues in the country. PEAN meets with AusAID officials as part of joint donor-government meetings on education. However, PEAN has recognised the need to liaise directly with the AusAID office in Port Moresby, and also to understand AusAID's broader workings and priorities and their impact on the PNG government, especially the Department of Education. To this end, PEAN has sought assistance from ASPBAE's Canberra-based staff in passing on updated information, advocating for education policy change, and in identifying funding opportunities through AusAID.



MONGOLIA

Building a Democratic, Transparent, and Inclusive Education Advocacy Coalition Breaks New Ground in Mongolia

The 'All for Education!' National Civil Society Coalition, Mongolia (AFE Mongolia), was established in September 2010. Establishing the core group of members was a challenging task as a number of individuals and organisations who did not share the same vision and understanding of human rights, gender equality, child rights, and human rights were involved during the initial stages, which complicated the process of developing consensus. It took some time for the core group of members to develop a unified understanding of principles and values and establish a sound process based firmly on democratic principles, mutual respect, trust, and egalitarian culture.

When several civil society organisations came together to establish an education advocacy coalition in Mongolia, they saw the potential of the coalition to serve as a role model for Mongolian civil society. They saw potential in terms of strength of internal democracy, transparency and accountability, as well as the use of consensus-based, inclusive, mutually-supportive, and shared power processes.

Many obstacles were encountered and overcome during the initial phases of forming AFE Mongolia.

Another significant challenge was excessive pressure and workload on the lead organisation, especially during big events, due to delays in hiring additional full-time staff. These delays were caused by a lack of suitable candidates with required skills, attitude, and commitment to civil society work.

AFE Mongolia found that development of the coalition was closely linked to the overall level of civil society capacity in Mongolia. They found that the initial stages were difficult due to a low level of awareness of human rights and gender equality across civil society organisations. In addition, they found that democratic decision-making skills and teamwork capacities of NGOs working in the education sector was also very weak. AFE Mongolia worked to increase capacities through training workshops and member participation in other coalition activities.

AFE Mongolia also found that there were differing understandings of what constituted 'education' across their newly-established membership. NGOs in the education sector saw education as a sectoral issue and mainly focused on formal education, whereas human rights NGOs and teachers' unions saw education more broadly. There was a need for constant communication and

awareness-raising by AFE Mongolia to promote education as defined more broadly based on the EFA framework.

AFE Mongolia found that it was very important to invest time in building shared understandings and a sense of mission based on core principles such as human rights, gender equality, democratic governance, transparency, inclusiveness, and participatory processes.

As the coalition progressed, it built people's participatory capacity and understanding of these important concepts. To get these concepts across to its members, AFE Mongolia found that

repetition was key, as well as continually emphasising the use of an ethical processes as a form of empowerment.

AFE discovered that it was very important to openly share information and promote a positive, proactive approach and to build a balanced governance and financial management system with clear checks and balances. In order to achieve this and to ensure the coalition had a strong foundation, the coalition hired experienced national consultants to facilitate the discussion and



draft founding documents including by-laws, strategies, conflict of interest clauses, code of ethics, and membership criteria. The drafting of these documents was done using a consultative process which included feedback from independent experts.

AFE Mongolia learnt early on that it was important to actively work to ensure the organisation was inclusive, with particular emphasis given to marginalised and silenced groups, such as children with disabilities, ethnic and sexual minorities, children and the youth, elderly people, rural populations, and women. The coalition provided targeted activities to build the capacities of such people to engage in advocacy and oversight of education, and to include their perspectives in AFE Mongolia's work. The coalition also works to ensure its activity budgets respond to the diverse needs of members, especially those from disadvantaged groups.

During the initial stages of its establishment, AFE Mongolia Board members and staff found opportunities to exchange ideas and discuss plans with other coalitions at regional and international conferences organised by the GCE and ASPBAE.

The support role of ASPBAE as the CSEF Regional Secretariat was also critical in the establishment of the coalition and its consistent development. The regional CSEF staff assigned to support AFE Mongolia provided advice and suggestions that were crucial in aiding the coalition to develop project proposals, annual plans and budgets, and increased the reporting capacity both on finances and activities. The presence of the

CSEF Regional Coordinator and Officer assigned to support AFE Mongolia during national forums and meetings with stakeholders, especially the government and donors, was also helpful in establishing the credibility of the coalition.

AFE Mongolia has already seen several indicators of success from its coalition-building.

Members of the coalition have already begun sharing their experiences and practices with other civil society groups in Mongolia. They are seeking to contribute to strengthening civil society development based on clearly articulated values and principles and enhancing civil society's ethics, accountability, and effectiveness.

AFE Mongolia's by-laws have become a model for similar organisations. Peak body NGOs such as MONFEMNET National network, Association of Men's NGOs, and the Health Council of civil society organisations have reformed or developed their by-laws based on the AFE Mongolia coalition's by-laws. Through members' involvement in other NGOs, the coalition's experience of democratic governance is being shared more broadly. There is clear evidence that members have deeply understood the principles of human rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, and inclusiveness. High levels of cohesion, mutual understanding, solidarity, and a strong sense of community and collective identity was established. The coalition has successfully created a principle-based, welcoming, and supportive institutional culture. The challenge now is to keep it going!



PAKISTAN

Regular Face-to-Face Meetings with Key Stakeholders are Crucial for Advocacy Effectiveness in Pakistan

Pakistan Coalition for Education

A National Education Policy (NEP) had been under debate in Pakistan since 2005, although the voice of civil society was not heard during the initial phase. A draft education policy was shared with civil society first in 2007. The Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) gathered recommendations from civil society and submitted them to the Ministry of Education. However, the first draft of the policy did not carry a single recommendation that was submitted by the coalition. This experience made PCE realise that they needed to devise a comprehensive campaign that covered all of Pakistan.

PCE held a series of consultations in all four provinces which culminated in a national-level consultation held in Islamabad. All major stakeholders, such as teachers, educationists, parents, children, unions, religious scholars, media persons, members of the public, development workers, and political

party representatives participated in the consultations. To

conclude the process, PCE members and the National Secretariat held a series of roundtable dialogues with key members of all political parties, parliamentarians, and other key officials

to update them about civil society recommendations and policy actions that should be incorporated into the National Education Policy. Eminent educationists and members of civil society gathered in Islamabad to take part in the national consultation which rounded up the process. Their suggestions and recommendations were forwarded to the Ministry of



Education and to concerned parliamentarians.

In addition, PCE organised several other campaigns aimed at influencing the education policy. They led a letter-writing campaign, where a series of letters and statements were sent to the President, Prime Minister and Federal and Provincial Ministers for Education, the Speaker for the National Assembly, and other parliamentarians. PCE also organised an SMS campaign where SMS messages were sent to parliamentarians, the media, civil society organisations, academics, and activists. Media campaigns were organised where education issues were highlighted on radio and television, and press conferences and demonstration walks were held to raise awareness. In addition, PCE provided material and information to people who were regular writers or columnists in leading newspapers, and ensured the dissemination of research-based advocacy material such as leaflets and policy briefs.

The recently-approved National Education Policy is relatively more people-centred and includes approximately one-third of the policy actions suggested by PCE.

Some key recommendations of PCE are:

- education should be seen as a fundamental right as per the constitution
- policy itself is a living document that can be changed and modified according to the circumstances through a consultative process
- vernacular language should to be used as medium of instruction until grade three
- free and compulsory education up to secondary level is a constitutional obligation of the state
- the commitment to provide quality education to every child should be given legal cover in the Constitution of Pakistan
- School Management Committees (SMC's) should be formalised and be given legal status and powers
- the provinces must be allowed to make their plans according to local needs
- there must be equitable financing for education at all levels, from early childhood education to higher education, including on teachers' salaries
- corporal punishment must be strictly forbidden

PCE learnt some important lessons through this campaign.

- there is a need to have interactions with key

education department officials on a regular basis as the complex mechanisms and weak structures of education departments create difficulties in getting access to information, policies, frameworks, and other documents

- sustainable and effective campaigns must include all relevant stakeholders in order to achieve continued momentum
- the coalition requires strong and sustainable technical and financial support to strengthen itself to build national-level momentum around important education issues

“A comprehensive, time-bound, phase-wise, people-centred framework is required by all provinces to implement devolution and the Right to Education in Pakistan in the next three years till 2015. Only 1.5% of the Gross Domestic Product has been spent on education, which needs to be enhanced. All stakeholders should come forward and guide the government on how to achieve the goals of devolution”.

(PCE Coordinator)



INDONESIA

Good Quality Website Promotes Education for Girls in Indonesia



Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia states that every Indonesian citizen has an equal right to education, and that men and women should have equal access to education. In addition, the government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through Law (CEDAW) No. 7 of 1984 and Permendiknas No. 84 in 2008, as a state commitment to prevent various forms of discrimination against women, including in education. Furthermore, the Government signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW on 28 February 2000.

Despite the legal mandate, however, Indonesian women continue to be left behind in terms of access to education, with two-thirds of Indonesia's millions of illiterates being women.

This continuing inequality drove Civil Society Organization initiative for Education For All (CSOiEFA) to create a web-based Education Information Center for Women. The website was launched in February 2011 as part of CSOiEFA's public campaign and advocacy around Global Action Week, which was assisted by the CSEF. CSOiEFA continues to maintain and update the website, as an average of 70 visitors from all over Indonesia access it every day.

Website visitors can obtain articles portraying the education situation of girls and women in Indonesia. The website also provides news and feature articles written by CSOiEFA and its members, annual programs and advocacy activities of CSOiEFA, and results of CSOiEFA's studies and policy briefs such as the 'Budget Tracking Study and National Examination

Survey'. In addition, downloadable documents from international institutions and networks are available, such as 'Gender Responsive Budgeting' from UNESCO and studies from the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

The content of the website has been expanded to cover not only education for women and girls, but also other issues and EFA developments.

In addition, the website has been expanded to include both Indonesian and English languages.

This was in response to requests from people who wanted to know more about CSOiEFA but who were not able to understand the Indonesian language.

The website is an inexpensive and sustainable activity.

The website receives positive feedback from an increasing number of visitors and is proof that people in Indonesia, especially women, need information regarding education. The website is a popular means of raising people's awareness of the significance of advocacy around EFA, and supplements other media advocacy initiatives undertaken by CSOiEFA, such as print media and interactive radio discussions.

The lead coordinator of CSOiEFA's member organisations for this innovative program is the *Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantrendan Masyarakat* (or P3M) - Center of Media Study and Development. P3M was founded on August 2007 by professional media workers in Jakarta with the aim of increasing access to information for Indonesians, fostering independent media, and promoting open communication on policy related to public interest. P3M has committed to continue supporting the website, even if CSEF funding of CSOiEFA ceases. Likewise, other CSOiEFA members have resolved to continue maintaining the website with two important formal agreements made, that is:

1. CSOiEFA member organisations will allocate some budget to maintain the website
2. CSOiEFA's members will contribute in updating the website

Mahmudah from Jakarta (Visitor of CSOiEFA's website): *“The first time I came to know about this website - www.csoiefa.org - was from a flyer I got from my friend. In the website, I found useful information about education for women. After I read it, I realised that many women do not have access to education”.*

Sodiq from Jogjakarta (Visitor of CSOiEFA's website): *“When I wrote my bachelor's thesis, I did a Google search for organisations that focussed on education. I then found the CSOiEFA website. I can now contact all of CSOiEFA's members. I also learnt many things about education from the website”.*



VANUATU

Community Consultation is Vital When Conducting Research in Vanuatu

When VEPAC (Vanuatu Education and Policy Advocacy Coalition) conducted primary research into education and literacy in rural areas of Vanuatu, it was important for them to keep in mind the traditional chiefly structure of village society.

The ‘Education Experience Survey and Literacy Assessment’ was carried out by VEPAC with support from the Asia South Pacific Association of Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) in rural Shefa Province in 2011. The survey consisted of a series of questions about respondents’ attitudes and experience in education, as well as a test to assess actual literacy levels. VEPAC surveyed 1,475 people and provided statistically



significant, reliable data on actual literacy rates in the country. One important outcome of the research was the finding that actual adult literacy rates were below 30% as compared to the official rate quoted at around 70%.

Consultation with chiefs and community leaders began well before the implementation of the survey.

Two months prior to the survey being carried out, VEPAC’s Coordinator and Mentoring and Advocacy Support Officer travelled to each of the twenty villages across eight islands that

had been selected for the survey. The main purpose of the visits was to consult the chiefs and community leaders about the purpose of the survey and the advantages it could deliver for the village. A visit to leaders of the communities to be surveyed was essential to the success of the whole survey implementation process. Mats, yams, *kava* (a local drink), pigs, and calico fabric are gifts traditionally used for peace-making or showing respect. When the staff met with the village chiefs, they gave each chief a mat and four yards of calico as a way of seeking the chief's approval for his village to be surveyed, as well as to pave the way in for VEPAC surveyors to enter the community in peace.

A verbal agreement was made between VEPAC and the community to share responsibilities of the survey. VEPAC agreed to provide all finances and personnel required for successful completion of the survey, while the community agreed to provide accommodation and cooked meals for a reasonable price, and to provide volunteers to help accompany the surveyors for security and translation purposes. They also agreed to participate in the actual survey questionnaire. VEPAC promised to invite and fund representatives from some of the communities to attend workshops where the survey findings would be presented and discussed.

These consultations with chiefs and community leaders led to the surveyors being welcomed into the villages.

The consultations with chiefs during pre-visits to the villages made a positive impact on the rest of the survey implementation process. Each survey team was led by a team leader who had sound knowledge of the community. The chiefs and his leaders met each team on their arrival on the beach or airstrips and some of the villages even prepared food for the surveyors

on arrival and gave them *salusalu* (fresh flower necklaces). The chiefs spoke on behalf of the community to welcome the surveyors and assigned a local host to take them around the village as a part of an orientation. Some villages provided translators to assist the surveyors throughout the survey. Village women prepared a place for the surveyors to stay, with most accommodation provided in community halls where all surveyors slept in a big open room on mats spread out on the floor. All meals were prepared by the village women and girls and in many communities the surveyors were given *kava* as a sign of acceptance and peace. The survey process went very smoothly due to this community acceptance and participation. Chiefs and other leaders, men, women, and youth all participated in this process.

The approach was very effective as the community felt their contribution was important and appreciated.

“We have no regrets in taking this initiative as participation levels were very impressive! Involving and engaging community chiefs and leaders is the entry point for community development. The chiefs are the managers of their village. They are the key to influencing community participation. If we had not have done the pre-visits or consulted the chiefs prior to the survey implementation process, we would not have had this positive result. Some villages may have chased the surveyors out and made excuses not to participate in the survey. That is why it is very important to always do a pre-visit and do a community consultation with the chiefs and community leaders if you want successful surveys in the future!”
(Anne Pakoa, Mentoring and Advocacy Support Officer, VEPAC)



CAMBODIA

Setting Up a National Fund to Sustain Civil Society Education Advocacy Depends on Many Contextual Factors in Cambodia

In 2010, the NGO Education Partnership (NEP) worked to set up a National Civil Society Education Fund (NCSEF) in Cambodia.

NEP was initially established in 2001 as a Secretariat to share information among education NGOs in Cambodia. When the number of members increased gradually, NEP decided to register as an NGO and signed an Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS). NEP is currently governed by a 7-member Board of Directors elected from its members during its Annual General Meeting.

From late 2009 to early 2012, NEP was funded by the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), an initiative of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). It was during this period that NEP Cambodia worked with the Civil Society Education Fund regional and international partners to engage development

partners in Cambodia to encourage them to participate in establishing a National Civil Society Education Fund to ensure a sustainable funding future for civil society education advocacy work.

NEP worked with the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to lobby development partners on the need to establishment a national fund. Initially, this involved developing a strategy and background documents to initiate dialogue with development partners. This included a background document on previous experiences with pooled funding in Cambodia. Furthermore, NEP looked into good practice models and strategies from other countries to find ideas that could be useful in the social, political, economic, and legal context of Cambodia. NEP began conducting meetings with development partners and international and local civil



society organisations to garner support for the idea.

Pooled funding does not appeal to all development partners.

While some development partners agreed with the idea of a pooled fund for NGOs, others did not. The main questions focused on why there was a need for a NCSEF when the majority of development partners had already allocated funds for Cambodian NGOs. The development partners wanted to know what the focus of the pooled fund would be and how it would differ from allocating funds more generally towards NGO work. The timely visit of a GCE representative proved a good opportunity to address these questions. NEP learned through this experience that it needs to be very clear in advance about the issues it wants to work on and the arguments that support their position.

Some development partners worry about civil society organisations being critical of the government.

Another key challenge was that some development partners are reluctant to cooperate with civil society organisations because they are afraid that some of them may criticise the government and cause problems for their own work. Their mandate is to work primarily with the government. Thus, NEP found that there was a need to engage the relevant government ministries, as well as development partners, to develop a workable solution and to ensure that the work of civil society organisations will be sustained.

Organisations' key decision-makers need to be involved in discussions.

NEP also realised that some development partner representatives who attended the meetings were not sufficiently senior to make funding decisions. This meant that concrete plans and decisions were not able to be confirmed during these meetings. NEP found that wherever possible, it was important to have decision-makers at these meetings.



While not succeeding in setting up an NCSEF as originally conceived, the initiative has led to several positive outcomes. NEP succeeded in introducing the idea of pooled funding to donors and development partners in Cambodia as an alternative mechanism to fully maximise resources in-country. Funding was previously provided separately to individual civil society organisations in Cambodia.

Work Still to Be Done

Unfortunately, the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF) committee is managed by development partners and government ministry staff without any civil society representatives. The government has no budget allocated for NGOs, and as such, it is not clear if NGOs can access the general fund. Nevertheless, the CDPF pool fund has some money allocated specifically for NGOs. There is a need to pursue this and ensure that civil society organisations can actually access this funding. Based on feedback from its members, NEP was able to identify a relevant and timely focus for its proposal to the CDPF pooled funding - that of life skills programs in schools. The coalition is now in the process of preparing the proposal. NEP is also working to explore the possibility of having NGO representatives in the Capacity Development Partnership Fund Committee as envisaged in the National Civil Society Education Fund original concept.

Three major development partners agreed to allocate USD \$15 million to a fund known as the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF). The purpose was to support a government initiative to build capacities of the staff of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports and out of this amount, \$2.5 million was set aside for NGOs in Cambodia. NEP sees this as a significant milestone in pooling donor funds towards education and supporting the work of Cambodian civil society organisations.



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