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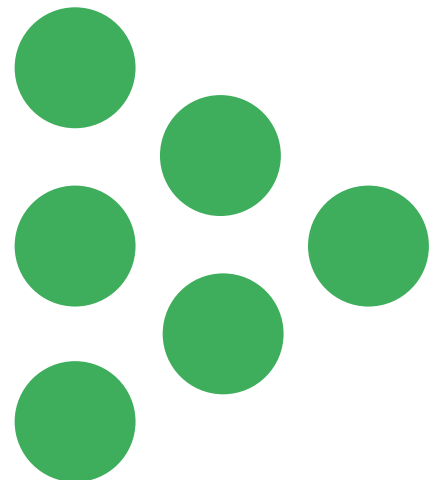## Final evaluation of the Civil Society Education Fund, 2016-2019 (CSEF III)

Final evaluation report

September 2020

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

Final evaluation report

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Contents

Annexes

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACEA	Arab Campaign for Education for All
ANCEFA	African Network Campaign for on Education for All
APAC	Asia and the Pacific
ASA	Advocacy for Social Accountability
ASPBAE	Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
CLADE	Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EFA	Education For All
EOL	Education Out Loud
EPDF	Education Programme Development Fund
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected States
FFF	Financing and Funding Framework
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GAWE	Global Action Week for Education
GiZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GOC	Global Oversight Committee
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GS	Global Secretariat
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LEG	Local Education Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
ME&EE	Middle East and Eastern Europe
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NEC	National Education Coalition
NFER	National Foundation for Education Research

OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development / Development Assistance Committee
OH	Outcome Harvesting
OI	Outcome Indicator
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
RFC	Regional Funding Committee
RFMA	Regional Financial Management Agency
RS	Regional Secretariat
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDPs	Sector Development Plans
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToC	Theory of Change

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Evaluation

In September 2019, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) commissioned the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) to undertake the Endline Evaluation of the Civil Society Education Fund, 2016-2019 (CSEF III).

The **purposes of the evaluation** are to:

- reflect on the intended and unintended outcomes achieved by CSEF

- examine the relevance of the CSEF objectives and Theory of Change (ToC)

- map the contribution of CSEF to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) objectives

- identify lessons to support the future of the GCE Movement

- map the contribution of CSEF to GCE goals

- assess transition to Education Out Loud (EOL)[1]

The evaluation addresses these purposes using two core **evaluation objectives and approaches**:

- To reflect on the **outcomes** achieved by the CSEF programme, both intended and unintended, through a quantitative and qualitative outcome harvesting (OH) approach

- To derive lessons learned for the GCE movement going forward through a qualitative **process and learning evaluation approach.**

Key Findings and Conclusions

How relevant to stakeholder needs was the CSEF III Programme?

CSEF was unique in combining the strengths of GCE, the largest, South-based[2], global civil society education campaign network with over 120 members and GPE, the largest global, multilateral education funding partnership involving most major donors and supporting governments in 70 developing countries.

The CSEF III objectives were strongly aligned with commitments to SDG4 and therefore were relevant to and strongly aligned with the changing priorities of key stakeholders such as the programme donor (GPE), programme implementer (GCE), and programme partners (NECs). The objectives of CSEF III placed greater emphasis on demonstrating policy-related targets than previous iterations of CSEF. The CSEF objectives were also sufficiently open to allow for NECs to adapt the objectives to suit their local context; however, there are some priorities of GCE and

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[1] The TOR refer to what was then the Advocacy for Social Accountability (ASA) fund and is now EOL.
[2] 'South-based' and 'North-based' are used here, as they were by those interviewed in this evaluation and in UN publications, largely to represent respectively donor and recipient countries in relation to development aid.

NECs, such as work on Transformative Education, Education and Emergencies and the role of the private sector in education that remained outside of the direct scope of the CSEF and GPE.

The CSEF III ToC was largely found to be valid at the input-to-output level. The programme was able to offer inputs that NECs found relevant and helpful in their work to achieve programme outcomes and objectives. However, as coalition contexts change over time (and in particular, with regard to political contexts), not all of the assumptions concerning outputs to outcomes held. This is particularly true with regard to assumptions concerning government relationships with civil society, such as that government and other actors take CSO voices seriously and that national governments are open to inclusive CSO engagement. Assumptions were also less likely to hold true for NECs in decentralised or conflict-affected and post-conflict countries. However, even under these circumstances coalitions have found ways to continue their advocacy work. The ToC was not used as a living document, or monitored and adapted to better fit the context of all National Education Coalitions (NECs). The CSEF III objectives remain relevant to EOL and the future of the Movement. The ToC is also relevant and valid for the future with amended assumptions and adjustment to the local contexts.

What did the programme achieve in terms of results?

CSEF achieved most of its objectives as set out in the results framework and demonstrated strong progress and improvement through the course of the programme. The programme was most successful in reaching Outcome 2.1 (coalitions have actively consulting with, engaged and mobilised the public), Outcome 3.1 (CSO views are represented in the GPE board by CSO representatives) and Outcome 3.2 (Key regional and global debates and events on SDG4 include strong links between national, regional, and global CSO voices). While the programme did not meet all targets, it was still able to demonstrate strong progress against Outcome 1.1 (inclusive coalitions actively engaged and represented diverse actors and the most marginalised), Outcome 1.2 (coalitions actively participated in LEGs and other key sector policy and review processes) and Outcome 2.2 (coalitions engaged citizens in and produced relevant research).

There was some flexibility to redefine measurement definitions and calculations in response to programme learning about NEC work, but ultimately, targets were not updated. In these cases, the outcome indicators were not always effective measures of the achievement of objectives, particularly in contexts where ToC assumptions did not hold. However, the outcome indicators used in the CSEF Results Framework still provided a useful guide to stakeholders to track progress towards achieving the programme's objectives. In many cases, there are reports of the ways in which RS and GS were able to use data to provide tailored attention and advice to NECs to address areas of slower progress. Therefore, the complex indicators allowed for programme stakeholders to understand incremental progress towards outcomes and objectives, even if this progress was not always fully reflected in the ultimate outcome indicators.

Objective 1: To support effective civil society representation and engagement in education sector policy dialogue

The programme made notable improvements against Outcome 1.1, although targets were only partially met, which may in part be explained by changes to the indicator measures which led to an initial decrease in progress against targets. Scores achieved against this indicator were driven by

an improvement in membership numbers rather than membership engagement, but there were important ways the representation of marginalised groups has increased across CSEF NECs and there was increased representation in all seven targets groups. The programme did not meet all its targets against Outcome 1.2, which in some cases demonstrate that some of the programme's assumptions do not hold. Despite this, NECs have found ways to strengthen their engagement through informal channels.

Objective 2: To support active public outreach and citizen engagement in the generation/ use of research and evidence on quality, equity, financing and education system reform

CSEF mainly reached its Outcome 2.1 targets, with global reporting indicating that the programme met or exceeded targets until the final year of the programme. CSEF's improvements in public engagement was largely driven by the increase in the frequency of citizens meetings organised by NECs, however the Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) was still a main calendar driver for public outreach. Results against Outcome 2.2 are mixed, coalitions have succeeded in engaging citizens as part of research, but the definitions applied for OI2.2.1 have meant that progress against the production of research is difficult to track. The failure to achieve these targets, despite progress, appears to lie in the ways in which research has been defined and in the mismatch between target timelines and those which drive the need for research, including yearly planning and external events.

Objective 3: To ensure global and regional processes relating to GPE and SDG4 are better informed by national and local civil society

CSEF III met all targets for Outcome 3.1, ensuring that civil society is actively supported to engage in GPE fora. CSEF's performance against this indicator is strong, and targets were met across all reporting periods. Engagement in GPE processes brought capacity building and national-level engagement opportunities for coalitions, however, while there is strong evidence that CSEF supported higher levels of participation with civil society perspectives in GPE processes, there is less documentation on the extent to which civil society inclusion has had an impact on GPE processes. CSEF III performed strongly against Outcome 3.2, which examines the participation of and linkages with civil society and SDG4 processes, taking advantage of the timeliness of opportunities to contribute to discussions on global education goals.

What are the changes, intended and unintended, at the global, regional and national levels brought about by CSEF III?

The intended and unintended changes generated by across the programme at national, regional and global levels demonstrate not only that the programme has hugely progressed against its objectives, but also has highlighted some of the unintended but crucial mechanisms used by the programme to achieve its aims. Through our OH, we identified a total of 17 types of outcomes that emerged across the breadth of the CSEF programme and at multiple levels. These encapsulated changes focused at the national level, as well as those that applied to the global and regional levels. Outcomes targeted changes three main levels: outcomes within individual coalitions and their membership, as well as the Movement more broadly; outcomes targeted at the general public, which included marginalised groups within society; and outcomes oriented towards decision makers, whether policy makers at the national level, key influencers of policy making or

implementing processes, representatives of donor groups and those involved in the setting of international goals.

While the bulk of the outcomes focus on the achievements of NECs, the GS and RSs made significant contributions in their own right. In addition to supporting NECs to contribute to global and regional dialogue, the GS and RSs conducted their own set of activities towards these by themselves acting as civil society representatives on behalf of the NECs and the Movement. Their efforts to strengthen the diversity and inclusivity of underrepresented civil society voices in global and regional fora was augmented by their efforts to create alignment and cohesion across the Movement as well as amongst civil society more broadly.

How effectively did stakeholders support the CSEF III objectives?

The Global Secretariat (GS) put in place effective mechanisms to steer programme operations, track progress and accountability, and maintain strategic alignment. Many of these mechanisms were developed in response to recommendations provided by independent evaluations and reviews with the aim of strengthening GCE's capacity to act as Grant Agent, most notably the addition of internal audit and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) capacities. The implementation of global processes was coordinated through regional partners, who ensured compliance and accountability, but also helped NECs to adapt tools and processes to national contexts where possible. The GOC and RFCs provided independent decision making and oversight, which mitigated against any risks of conflict of interest. RFCs were valued for their advisory support which provided RSs with a 'fresh pair of eyes'.

Regional Secretariats (RSs) built strong relationships of trust with individual NECs, and provided a wealth of long term support for continual improvement over the course of CSEF III, building on previous phases of the programme. The RFMA role maintained robust financial and grant management processes, while also building the NEC financial management capacities through training, tools, and support, which was valued by NECs and in some cases helped them to improve proposals and demonstrate implementation capacities to a wider set of donors.

Both GS and RS directly supported the achievement of CSEF III objectives. The GS was most valued for its provision of tools, guidance, information on GPE processes and SDG4 implementation, and in creating spaces for CSO participation in global decision-making platforms. RSs worked directly with NECs to improve their ability to contribute to both global and regional debates and platforms, while also strengthening national advocacy. RSs had the experience and expertise to support NECs working in complex and diverse contexts, and to provide tailored and long term support based on individual NEC needs.

There were challenges related to overseeing and coordinating a highly diverse and complex programme, in particular the heavy workload assigned to RSs who were balancing multiple responsibilities, and reporting and annual proposal processes which served an important function, but were time consuming and at times risked diverting RSs efforts from important advocacy work.

How effectively did the CSEF III structure support the CSEF III objectives?

Overall, the structure of the programme provided NECs with a holistic set of support from global and regional levels, which increased their visibility and credibility, and in turn supported the

achievement of CSEF III objectives and strengthened the wider GCE movement. In this way, the tri-level structure was mutually beneficial across all levels, and is possible due to the existing spirit of solidarity built through the cohesive GCE movement.

Programme management and grant management functions were strengthened based on previous independent evaluations and reviews, and were broadly effective and helped to maintain strategic alignment and monitor progress and accountability. However the CSEF III structure created bottlenecks due to the multiple layers of review and approval, which risked delays in funding and implementation, and added to stretched workloads.

The MEL strategy was strengthened in CSEF III, following recommendations from the external evaluation of CSEF II, and although there were reported challenges in the roll out of the system, which took longer than planned to operationalise to its full extent, the MEL system was a worthwhile investment which improved on the previous paper-based system. There may be further scope to improve the usability and utilisation of the MEL system for NECs beyond regular progress reporting.

How efficient was CSEF III in the use of resources?

As the Grant Agent, GCE took steps to improve grant management functions in line with independent recommendations, including improved auditing functions, which although slow to implement initially, was operational by the close of the programme. RFMAs continue to provide valuable financial accountability and reporting at regional levels, which ensures there is close monitoring and support for individual NECs. While the RFMA role added an additional layer which added to costs and at times created bottlenecks due to the added layer of review, absorbing this role into either the GS or RS is unlikely to have been effective.

The introduction of new systems meant continued challenges in coordinating necessary annual proposals and reporting, which were onerous and time consuming and could cause delays in coalition contracting and fund disbursement. In part, the structure of CSEF exacerbated this due to the various levels of review and approval, however the benefit of the structure was strong accountability and transparency mechanisms at global and regional levels.

The tri-level structure which operated within the wider GCE movement added value to the programme through the cohesive and collaborative network of global, regional and national experts working towards the same goals. This allowed both CSEF and non-CSEF organisations to mutually benefit each other by sharing resources and platforms, and created opportunities for collective advocacy in order to strengthen civil society voices.

What is the likely sustainability of the programme benefits?

The main perceived legacy of CSEF III is the creation of a collaborative network of strong, credible NECs sharing a common agenda and able to advocate effectively for SDG4. This includes the creation, sustaining and strengthening of NECs and the establishment of a network with a common agenda, which built on the existing GCE movement of education coalitions.

CSEF III was perceived to demonstrate the need for and value of a civil society voice at global, regional and national levels in the establishment and promotion of SDG4, and helped to translate

the global strategy and 2030 Agenda to local contexts. It added value by ensuring that CSOs had a voice in donor coordination mechanisms and that they were invited into national policy processes.

However, there are some perceived risks and concerns related to the sustainability of the CSEF achievements as the programme comes to an end. CSEF partners valued the long-term, contextualised approach which recognised that building advocacy capacities and advocacy work itself is a process, rather than a single event or project; a change to a short-term project approach to funding and activities may put this at risk. There were questions raised about the long-term sustainability of some of the tools and systems built by GCE during CSEF III, including in particular the online MEL platform. Finally, the future of funding, with a shrinking donor landscape and the threat of Covid-19, has brought further concern for the future of NECs, in particular nascent coalitions and those who are ineligible for EOL funding.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

In moving forward, our evaluation's findings offer several lessons learned and recommendations, which are presented below.

Multi-donor fund support for advocacy through a global-regional-national civil society network is an effective way of achieving a range of positive outcomes and impact towards the achievement of SDG4

CSEF III, combining the strengths of GCE, GPE and regional networks in support of NECs, has been highly successful in achieving intended outcomes at national level. It has also been highly successful in creating a collaborative network of strong, credible NECs able to advocate effectively for SDG4. It has demonstrated the need for and value of a civil society voice at global, regional and national levels in the establishment and promotion of SDG4.

- **Recommendation 1:** GCE and GPE should seek to build on the strengths of their global and regional partnerships under CSEF, especially through the operation of the EOL fund. GCE should also look for other funding partnerships to support the GCE Movement in sustaining and benefitting from the CSEF achievements.

Advocacy and mobilising resources take time and requires a sustained approach

Support to strengthening advocacy[3] requires a long-term process to be effective. For instance, mobilisation and the development of human and other resources takes time. This raises problems for donors who need to justify to their home constituency the achievement of short-term results and an exit strategy. The need to demonstrate short-term, concrete achievements was seen by those interviewed as a move to a project approach, requiring an emphasis on activities as opposed to the building of sustainable systems and long-term processes.

- **Recommendation 2:** Future initiatives to strengthen and support civil society advocacy in relation to SDG4 should take a longer-term, sustained approach to build capacity, systems and processes and with less emphasis on short-term activities. Adequate time should be allowed for mobilising and fostering human and other resources and to allow for systems

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[3] Advocacy is used here to contrast with service delivery, and encompasses all CSEF objectives.

developed by the initiative to become fully embedded and sustainable in order to gain their full benefit.

The need to modify approaches according to context rather than employ a global approach

CSEF III employed a global ToC and Results Framework and a global approach to project resourcing and support, while also encouraging adaptation of programme design and implementation which was flexible to national needs and context. Whilst this local adaptation of a global approach was in many ways successful, the heavy requirement for global and regional planning and reporting was often resource intensive which some NECs found challenging. The global ToC and assumptions were not fully applicable to NECs in all countries.

The Results Framework contained indicators and targets which were at times too narrowly defined to allow the programme to capture the full achievements of coalitions, particularly in contexts where certain assumptions did not hold true. Furthermore, targets did not take account of changes in indicator definition and measurement, which distorted the progress against targets in some instances.

- **Recommendation 3:** Future initiatives of this nature should continue to emphasise adaptation to the local context and an approach that is responsive to the varied and changing needs of different coalitions.

- **Recommendation 4:** ToCs should be treated as living documents, designed to the meet the differing needs of the stakeholders in different contexts. Formatively reflecting on these helps to equip the programme with a better understanding of whether the designed approach is working, for whom it is working, and in which contexts in order to allow necessary adaptation.

- **Recommendation 5**: As with ToCs, Results Frameworks should also be used as living documents in which targets can be adapted or amended in light of changing external factors affecting the potential for target achievement, or to provide more meaningful measures of programme achievement. The use of proximal indicators such as output indicators may allow for more flexible targets and a more granular picture of what is working, where, and for whom, which supports a fuller picture of programme progress, a more nuanced approach to course correction and supports a better understanding of the programme ToC.

The value of regional support and expertise supporting a contextually-relevant, responsive approach

RSs played a key role in supporting NECs. NECs strongly endorsed the importance of RSs in the achievement of CSEF III objectives. This was in the light of the RSs' deep understanding of the NEC context and greater ability to provide capacity development, technical support and 'South-South' lesson-learning than would have been possible with a purely global-national programme.

- **Recommendation 6:** Global funds should take into account the value of working closely with or through regional networks that are able to provide continuity of support through capacity development, technical support and 'South-South' lesson-learning. The potential trade-offs of this approach may include increased inefficiencies due to increased levels of

governance, which should be mitigated against through strong processes and clear communication channels.

The importance of building a spirit of global solidarity and trust

CSEF III was a fund that supported NECs through a complex and well-designed interlocking global-regional-national structure. However, more than this, the programme has built on the previous work of GCE to further the spirit of global solidarity and trust.

An important outcome of the programme was the cohesion of civil society and across the different levels of the programme, which had a multiplier effect for the achievement of other outcomes such as credibility in the eyes of decision makers and the public. GCE was able to add value to CSEF III through its pre-existing movement of coalitions, which included both CSEF and non-CSEF members, and drew upon the wider expertise and external relationships within the Movement to meet common objectives. There are some concerns about the risk of maintaining the spirit of global solidarity and trust, in EOL.

- **Recommendation 7:** Programmes involving global funds should take into account, not just measures to strengthen administrative effectiveness and efficiency, but also motivational and community-building aspects, in particular the establishment of a spirit of solidarity and trust between stakeholders.

The need for effective communications, lesson learning and information sharing on a 'South-South' basis

Communications, lesson-learning and information sharing – especially on a South-South basis – supported NECs to achieve the CSEF objectives. This was enabled through the structure of CSEF, which utilised roles and relationships across different levels for effective horizontal and vertical communications, as well as the use of the MEL platform as a global repository of information that could be quickly shared. There are some concerns about the ability to continue to benefit from lesson learning and especially South-South information sharing to the same extent in future as the programme shifts to EOL.

- **Recommendation 8:** Future programmes, particularly those focused on supporting diversity and inclusion, should consider measures to ensure strong communications flows between global and national levels through the use of regional levels structures which provide long-term support and build strong relationships with the national level.

- **Recommendation 9:** Future programmes should ensure strong MEL systems, such as the one used in CSEF III, as a means to not only monitor progress across a number of short-term output indicators and longer-term, composite outcome indicators but also as a platform to strengthen communications and provide South-South lesson sharing.

Need for strong human resources within and supporting NECs

Future funders should take into account that capacity building and advocacy activities require sufficient levels of human resources and person time, and not simply activity costs. The enhanced capacity of NECs to undertake advocacy work in line with the CSEF III objectives was strongly assisted by the ability of NECs to secure appropriate staff through the CSEF fund. The long-term

funding of core staff time and resources allowed coalitions to remain active and therefore visible, adapt and take advantage of unexpected opportunities, helped to reduce high staff turnover and loss of capacity.

- **Recommendation 10:** Providers and potential providers of funds for capacity building networks and national-level advocacy coalitions should pay particular attention not just to funds needed to support activities, but to support the core costs of human resources needed to build capacities for, efficiently undertake or to augment these activities.

1　Introduction

1.1　Evaluation Objectives

In September 2019, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake the Endline Evaluation of the Civil Society Education Fund, 2016-2019 (CSEF III).

Funded by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the CSEF III programme aimed to contribute to informed national policy dialogue and strengthened government accountability to citizens for the achievement of equitable, inclusive, and quality education.

The **purposes of the evaluation** set out in the GCE Terms of Reference (TOR)[4] are to:

- reflect on the intended and unintended outcomes achieved by CSEF
- examine the relevance of the CSEF objectives and Theory of Change (ToC)
- map the contribution of CSEF to GPE objectives
- identify lessons to support the future of the GCE Movement
- map the contribution of CSEF to GCE goals
- assess transition to Education Out Loud (EOL)[5]

In the inception meeting, it was agreed that these purposes should be approached through the following two **overall evaluation objectives** and approaches:

- To **reflect on the outcomes achieved** by the CSEF programme, both intended and unintended, through a quantitative and qualitative outcome harvesting (OH) approach.
- To **derive lessons learned** for the GCE movement going forward through a qualitative process and learning evaluation approach**.**

1.2　Structure of the Report

This report's structure is set out below.

- **Section One** provides an introduction to the evaluation.
- **Section Two** summarises our understanding of the background and context of the programme which has informed the evaluation strategy.
- **Section Three** sets out the evaluation design, including the underlying principles, the evaluation questions, an overview of the methodology, and methodological limitations. Further details on methodology can be found in Annex E.

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[4] See Annex A.
[5] The TOR refers to what was then the Advocacy for Social Accountability (ASA) fund and is now EOL.

- **Section Four** sets out the findings for each of the evaluation questions, grouped as: programme relevance; programme achievements; effectiveness and efficiency; and sustainability.

- **Section Five** identifies the key conclusions from the programme findings.

- **Section Six** identifies lessons learned, both for the transition to EOL and more broadly to the future of the GCE Movement and our final recommendations.

2 Programme Background

2.1 History of CSEF

Commonwealth Education Fund (2002-2008)

CSEF grew out of the DFID-funded 2002-2008 Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF). CEF had the overall objective of strengthening national civil society education coalitions (NECs) to support education policy and practice towards Education for All (EFA). The project was managed by ActionAid, Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK, operating in 12 Commonwealth countries in Africa and four in Asia. Capacity building and networking activities in these countries were undertaken by the African Network Campaign for on Education for All (ANCEFA) network, the Pamoja Africa Reflect Network, and the Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE).

CEF supported GCE to undertake advance planning for major campaigns and to have a longer-term approach to staffing, thus increasing its effectiveness including gaining a seat in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO's) High Level Group, the EFA Working Group and the Steering Committee of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) – forerunner of the GPE.

A major 2006 needs analysis report "Funding Change"[6] noted the need for *"the creation of CSEFs as an effective way for CSOs to support and monitor national education plans in FTI countries and potentially in other countries faced with challenges in achieving the EFA goals".*

CSEF I (2009-2013)

In the light of the Funding Change report and the positive findings of the evaluation of the CEF, GCE, working with ANCEFA, ASPBAE and also Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE) in Latin America, with the support of the three CEF managing international non-government organisations (INGOs) and others, developed a proposal to FTI to fund the CSEF as a successor to the CEF, with the GCE as manager. ANCEFA, ASPBAE and CLADE would form the three regional partner offices for CSEF and Oxfam in Africa, Education International in Asia and ActionAid in Latin America would ensure sound financial management.

This first phase of CSEF from 2009 to 2012 covering 45 countries received US$17.6 million of funding from the World-Bank-managed FTI Education Programme Development Fund (EPDF). The external evaluation of CSEF I showed that it had contributed to more credible NECs in most countries*; "the continuity of the CSEF programme should focus on developing capacities in terms of both advocacy and strategic management, strengthening and democratising civil society networks … and providing core financial support to NECs' strategies.*"[7]

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[6] Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2013.
[7] Verger et al, 2012, p7.

The CSEF I evaluation also recommended:

> *A supervisory entity that wants and can play the supervising role in a proactive manner. The World Bank has discarded assuming this function, and the GPE secretariat would prefer to not relate to the GCE as a supervisory entity in strictu sensu. In CSEF II, a bilateral donor (preferably a member of the GPE board) could play this role.[8]*

CSEF II (2013-2015)

In CSEF II, UNESCO played this supervisory entity/ grant agent role. CSEF II extended to 54 countries with a budget of US$19.5 million, adding the Middle East and Eastern Europe (ME&EE) region with the Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA) as the regional partner.

The external evaluation of CSEF II showed the important impact, relevance and effectiveness of the programme, though significant weaknesses in the efficiency of the grants programme and sustainability remained 'a critical issue'.[9] The evaluation noted that:

> *UNESCO has played an important role in strengthening the CSEF programme's accountability and has contributed to strengthening the management practices and quality of reporting outputs of the CSEF programme…the process of establishing the role of UNESCO as Supervising Entity was inefficient and resulted in delays.[10]*

The GPE Board had by then approved GCE as the CSEF III Managing Entity:

> *In this process, GCE will take over the role of supervisor from the Supervising Entity. The principle of such an approach has strong but not universal support, including the CARDNO reviews[11], although there are concerns about the capacity of the GCE Secretariat to fulfil the obligations…It will be extremely important to ensure the establishment of systems and structures, and the filling of all designated positions, early in the process if GCE is to be successful in performing this function.[12]*

The evaluation also recommended a realignment of the structure to separate the programmatic and grant-making functions, and to lay more emphasis on the Theory of Change (ToC) and Results Framework.

CSEF III (2016-2019)

The third phase of CSEF extended the programme to 63 countries in the four regions with a budget of US$29 million and with GCE as Grant Agent. The Mid Term Review (MTR)[13] of CSEF III undertaken in February 2018 noted the overall strength of the CSEF design, including the CSEF III structure, ToC and Results Framework. The MTR noted, *inter alia,* the challenge of balancing the need to document measurable outputs whilst emphasising the long-term trajectory for policy

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[8] Verger et al, 2012, p102.
[9] I4DI, 2015, pviii-xi.
[10] I4DI, 2015, p47,48.
[11] Cardno Emerging Markets was contracted by GPE to do a Quality Assessment of the systems and structures of GCE and recommended a number of improvements to the finance and administration. Institutional Capacity Assessment 30 September 2014.
[12] I4DI, 2015, p49
[13] Grijalva and Izenberg, 2018.

outcomes. It found that CSEF III was on-track to meet its three objectives and recommended that Secretariats now start to focus on using data (rather than just data collection and analysis) to plan for capacity building, strengthen cross-regional lesson sharing and growth, develop long-term knowledge management systems, and develop stronger linkages between international dialogues and national coalitions.

The 2018 Oxford Policy Management (OPM) evaluation of CSEF III[14] was commissioned by GPE to inform the strategic and operational integration of the CSEF successor towards GPE's new Financing and Funding Framework (FFF). This evaluation largely endorsed the design and effectiveness of CSEF III, in particular the regional structure. However, it noted that the Results Framework and ToC tended to be seen as a constraint rather than a useful guide for coalition activities. It found some confusion about the role that CSOs play in Local Education Groups (LEGs). The most significantly reported unanticipated CSEF result was the brand value of the CSEF III, which enabled national coalitions to have greater legitimacy within the country and attend and sit on the relevant technical and policymaking bodies. Another was that CSEF engagement had the benefit of bringing national coalitions into regional and international networks of education policy and advocacy beyond those included in the CSEF III architecture.

The OPM evaluation noted that GCE's role of Grant Agent in CSEF III was widely critiqued and red-flagged as problematic, both on the grounds of potential conflict of interest, and because of capacity constraints in financial management.

Education Out Loud

The EOL fund for advocacy and social accountability (ASA)[15] was set up by GPE, partly as a successor to the CSEF, in the light of GPE's new FFF and the Grant Agent issue raised in the OPM evaluation. EOL is managed by Oxfam IBIS, based in Copenhagen, with regional units in Ghana, Uganda, Nepal and Mexico. EOL is designed to contribute to GPE's mission through:

- education policies that are more responsive to people's needs

- increased political and civic support for education

- stronger voice from the most marginalized communities

- improved, more informed and responsive education sector planning, implementation and monitoring

- good governance of education systems leading to better alignment and better outcomes

EOL has three operational components (or funding windows):

- The first component replaces the CSEF grants to NECs. It offers grants of between US$100,000 and US$300,000 over two years to former CSEF recipient NECs in countries that are, or eligible and seeking to be, part of the GPE partnership, in order to strengthen national civil society engagement in education planning, policy dialogue and monitoring.

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[14] OPM, 2018.
[15] https://educationoutloud.org/

- The second window provides support to other national civil society organisations to strengthen civil society roles in promoting the transparency and accountability of national education sector policy and implementation.

- The third window is to support global and regional civil society alliances (potentially including GCE and the regional CSEF partnerships) to create a stronger global and transnational enabling environment for national civil society advocacy and transparency efforts.

EOL does not have the same global-regional-national capacity-building and networking structure as the CSEF. Coalition-building is provided in the initial 'Year Zero' by EOL-contracted 'Learning Partners' whilst networking is supported by networks that are recipients of the fund.

2.2 Global Campaign for Education Goals and Structure

GCE is a global civil society movement, originally set up in 1999, largely under UNESCO auspices, in the run up to the Dakar 2000 EFA Framework for Action. Its purpose was to strengthen and coordinate the 'Movement' of civil society voices towards the EFA Framework for Action. Its current goal is to:

> *Exert credible and informed influence on national, regional and international education policy, through leading consistent advocacy processes aimed at ensuring that governments and the global community fulfil their commitments to deliver the right to education and achieve the SDG Goal 4 of the Education 2030 agenda.*[16]

GCE membership comprises over 120 national civil society education coalitions and international and regional organisations that advocate for quality public EFA.

The GCE structure comprises:

- **the World Assembly**: The most recent being the 2018 6th World Assembly in Kathmandu.

- **the GCE Board:** Elected by the World Assembly to provide oversight and strategic direction.

- **the GCE Secretariat**: Accountable to the Board and tasked with implementing the strategic vision of the World Assembly and supporting the work of the movement.

At the 6th GCE World Assembly in November 2018, GCE adopted a new four-year strategic plan. This includes four strategic areas for support to local and regional coalitions:

- equality and non-discrimination

- transformative education

- education in emergencies

- education financing

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[16] https://www.campaignforeducation.org/

GCE is implementing this by:

- strengthening the Movement

- fundraising and decreasing reliance on single income sources

- developing sustainability

- monitoring and evaluation (M&E) against GCE's results framework

2.3 Global Partnership for Education Goals and Operation

GPE was launched in 2002 - initially as the EFA Fast Track Initiative - as a catalytic, multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank. The aim was to provide a financing response to the EFA Framework and in particular the education and gender Millennium Development Goals.

Building on the evolving sector wide approach to international education development, the fund helps low-income countries to implement their Education Sector Strategic Plans (ESSPs) through Sector Development Programmes (SDPs). An additional EPDF was established in 2004 to provide technical assistance to help develop these SDPs. The local donor/development-partner group has been the main channel for appraising the quality of applicant countries' SDPs and ESSPs and supporting their applications. The present country-level focal group for support, implementation and monitoring is the LEG, which involves all education partners including government and civil society.

GPE now has 73 partner countries, including middle income countries. GPE partners include Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as well as recipient governments, donors, foundations, the private sector and others. The GPE structure comprises the Secretariat and Board of Directors. Three of the 19 seats on the GPE Board of Directors are reserved for CSOs.

In 2016, GPE introduced its new strategic plan, GPE 2020, with its vision corresponding to the education SDG: *"to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"*.[17]

The corresponding goals are:

- improved and more equitable learning outcomes

- increased equity, gender equality and inclusion

- effective and efficient education systems

The objectives to achieve these goals are to:

- strengthen education sector planning and policy implementation

- support mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring

- ensure efficient and effective delivery of GPE support

- mobilise more and better financing

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[17] GPE, 2020.

- build a stronger partnership

2.4 CSEF Structure

The management structure for CSEF III is shown in Figure 2.1 below. This is essentially the same as the structure employed in CSEF I and CSEF II except that, whereas in CSEF II there was an external Supervising Entity (UNESCO) as an intermediary between GPE and GCE, this is replaced by the internal GCE CSEF Global Oversight Committee.

The **Global Secretariat** (GS) is responsible for the overall CSEF programme coordination and financial oversight; monitoring, evaluation and learning; and liaison with GPE and the CSEF International Partners Group primarily comprising the INGOs that implemented the Commonwealth Education Fund.

The GS reports internally to the CSEF **Global Oversight Committee** (GOC), comprised of GCE Board members from constituencies not eligible to receive CSEF grants. The GOC ensures a strict separation of GCE's roles between on the one hand programme management and on the other hand oversight and accountability, thereby increasing transparency and lines of accountability, while also reducing potential conflicts of interest.

The Global Secretariat operates, as with CSEF I and II, through regional bodies in its support for the **national civil society education coalitions** (NECs). These regional bodies operate in the following four regions: Africa; Asia and the Pacific (APAC); Latin America and Caribbean (LAC); and the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe (ME&EE). They comprise in each case:

- **Regional Secretariats** (RSs) provide regional coordination and information management, technical capacity support for, and monitoring and oversight of national level CSEF implementation.

- **Regional Funding Committees** (RFCs) evaluate NEC proposals and approve funding amounts and make recommendations on capacity-building support. These Committees are teams of experts who are not in receipt of CSEF funds.

- **Regional Financial Management Agencies** (RFMAs) are responsible for fund management and technical capacity building in relation to financial management. These were intended to be agencies external to GCE. Two of the RFMAs were external throughout: Oxfam IBIS covering Africa and Action Aid Americas covering LAC. Initially the CSEF III RFMA for APAC was also external, but by 2018 both this RFMA and that for ME&EE were managed internally by GCE.

Figure 2.1 Management structure for CSEF III
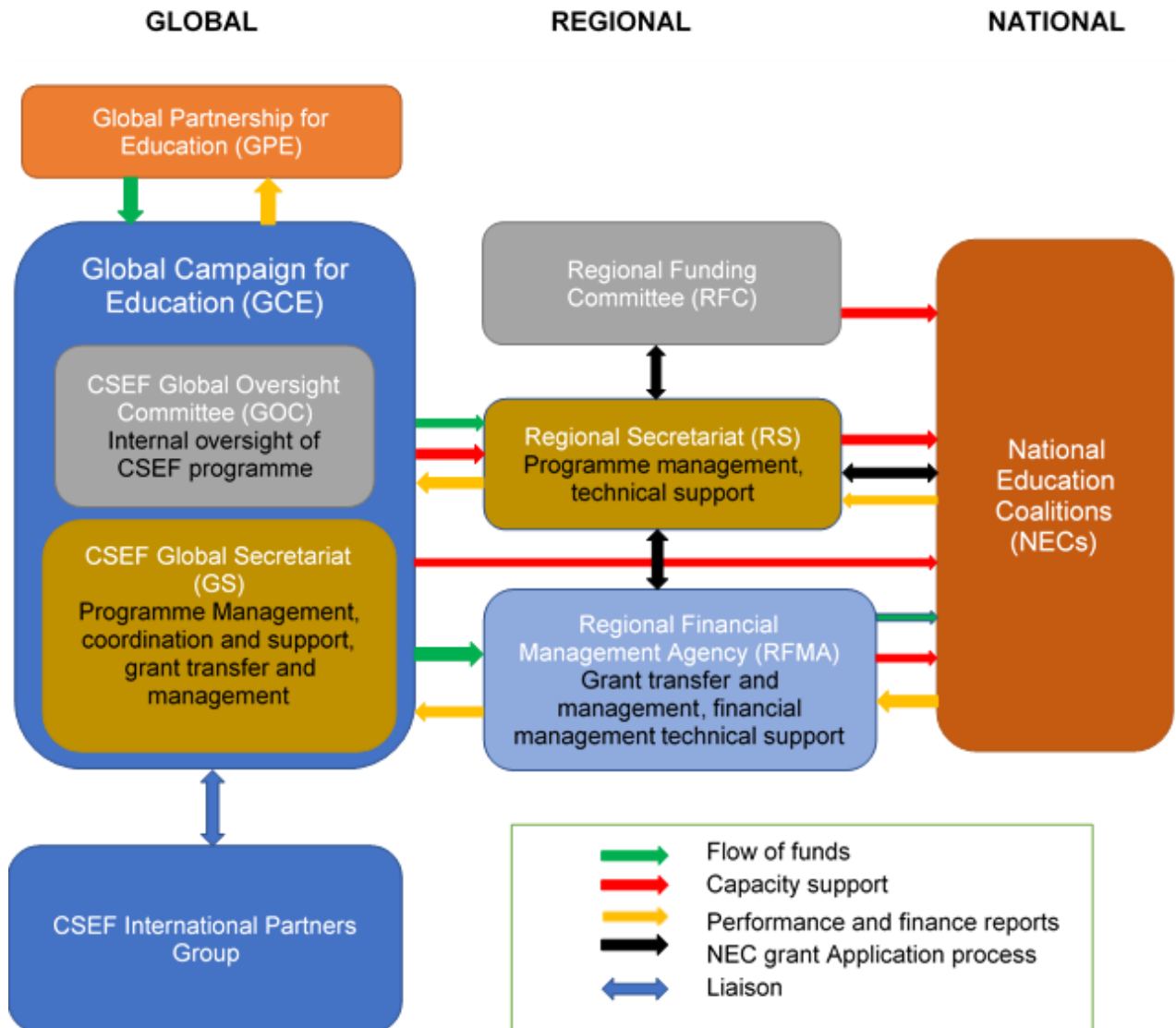
2.5 CSEF III Theory of Change

The overall programme goal or desired impact of the CSEF III programme is to: *better informed national policy dialogue and strengthened government accountability to citizens for the achievement of equitable, inclusive and quality public education* which contributes to the wider SDG4 and GPE goal: *Inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.* The programme has three overarching objectives:

1. To support effective civil society representation and engagement in sector policy dialogue

2. To support active public outreach and citizen engagement in the generation/use of research and evidence on quality, equity, financing and education system reform

3. To ensure global and regional processes relating to GPE and SDG4 better inform – and are better informed by – national and local civil society

CSEF III ToC diagram (Annex B) provides a visual outline of the theory of how the programme will contribute to the achievement of the objectives and goals. The ToC also outlines how CSEF III will contribute to GPE objectives through supporting civil society to:

- Effectively inform policy and practice on equity and inclusion
- Effectively inform policy and practice and quality teaching and learning
- Build stronger and more accountable education systems

CSEF III supports the achievement of these objectives by providing funds directly to NECs and by providing the following inputs:

- operational guidelines and monitoring tools
- capacity development through resources and workshops, learning and sharing events, and facilitating feedback loops
- technical support and accompaniment
- facilitation of linkages between national and global and regional levels

2.6 CSEF III Results Framework and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The CSEF III Results Framework (see Annex C) sets out eight Outcome Indicators (OIs) that support the programme to monitor progress against the three objectives and six outcomes set out in the ToC. CSEF has a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework and system. The CSEF III Programme Document elaborates the elements of the MEL function as:

- monitoring national coalitions and regional partners against their plans, budgets and the RF through physical and financial quarterly reports.
- evaluation to identify and investigate examples of best practice and challenges and provide feedback to implementing partners. This includes the mid-term and the present evaluations.
- reporting, including biannual reports on progress and achievements to meet stakeholder needs.
- learning, as referenced in the Results Framework, including gathering information to develop relevant tools and guidelines and support coalition learning.

A summary of the programme's progress against each of its outcomes, as reported in global reports, can be found in Annex D.

3   Evaluation Design

The objectives for this evaluation are set out in Section 1. This section provides a brief summary of the design of the endline evaluation of the CSEF III, including the evaluation questions which guided the evaluation, a brief overview of our methodology, and the challenges and limitations of our evaluation design that should be considered when interpreting the findings of our evaluation. A full discussion of our methodology can be found in Annex E.

3.1   Evaluation Questions

We use eight evaluation questions to achieve our evaluation objectives, which set out the scope of activities, and are organised according to the OECD-DAC criteria. The evaluation questions elaborate on the purpose and scope of the evaluation as set out in the original TOR. Phrasing of the questions were refined and agreed with GCE during the Inception Phase. Our Evaluation Framework (Annex F) provides a description of the evaluation questions and outlines how we answered each, as well as the linkages to the original TORs. Our eight key evaluation questions are set out in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Key evaluation questions organised by OECD-DAC Criteria

OECD-DAC Criteria	Evaluation question
Relevance	1. Are the CSEF III theory of change and programme objectives relevant and valid, now and moving forward, for the achievement of equitable, inclusive and quality public education?
Effectiveness	2. To what extent did CSEF III achieve its objectives, as set out in the CSEF III results framework?
	3. How and in what ways have different CSEF III stakeholders supported the achievement of the CSEF III objectives?
	4. How and in what ways has the structure and operation of the Global and Regional Secretariats supported the achievement of the CSEF III objectives?
Efficiency	5. How efficient were the Global and Regional Secretariat structures in the use of resources towards the timely achievement of CSEF III objectives?
Impact	6. What are the intended and unintended changes, at global and regional levels, brought about by CSEF III and in what ways has the programme contributed to these changes?
	7. What are the intended and unintended changes, at national levels, brought about by CSEF III and in what way has the programme contributed to these changes?

Sustainability	8. How and in what ways will the benefits of the CSEF III for CSEF partners continue, especially in terms of lessons learned and contributions to the Movement going forward?

3.2 Summary of the Evaluation Approach and Methods

We used two core components to meet each of these aims: the **Outcome Harvesting (OH) approach** and the **Process and Learning approach**.

- **The OH approach** of our evaluation was designed to primarily respond to the first objective of the evaluation, which reflects back on the achievements of CSEF, both intended and unintended, to understand how it has contributed to the overall goals of the programme, and to wider GPE goals.

- **The Process and Learning approach** responds to the learning aims of the evaluation, and to the OECD-DAC criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Sustainability in parallel to the OH approach. This approach relies on document analysis, interviews, and a set of questions used in the expanded online survey. This approach explored the process by which CSEF III was implemented, in order to generate data and lessons learned and provide recommendations to support the GCE movement going forward as well as for GCE members of CSEF's successor programme, EOL.

> **Outcome Harvesting** is a participatory evaluation approach. It uses multiple data collection methods and stakeholder engagement to surface and validate intended and unintended outcomes and works backwards to understand how a programme has contributed to these changes.

The Evaluation Framework in Annex E sets out to which evaluation questions each of these components respond, and how.

3.2.1 Evaluation steps

We employed a phased approach to our evaluation, which follow the six traditional steps used in OH:

1. **Design**: During the inception phase, we engaged GCE to verify and validate our understanding of the needs of the evaluation through remote consultations and a design presentation.
2. **Document review**: used to harvest relevant outcomes and gather information pertinent to the learning aims of the evaluation from relevant documents.
3. **Engage with stakeholders**: We delivered two three-hour OH workshops to present and refine a consolidated list out identified outcomes and conducted Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with global, regional and national stakeholders to explore the process and learning objectives of the evaluation.

4. **Substantiate outcomes**: We further substantiated the identified outcomes using an online survey with national and regional stakeholders explored a selection of outcomes via six remote case studies (described in Annex L).

5. **Analyse and Interpret**: In the final phases of the evaluation we analysed all data collected against the evaluation questions (presented in Section 4),

6. **Support use of findings**: During the analysis phase, we conducted an emerging findings session with GCE and RSs to present and discuss emerging themes.

3.2.2   The impact of Covid-19 and adaptations to our approach

During the implementation of the evaluation, the Covid-19 pandemic coincided with the CSEF evaluation data collection phase, causing the evaluation programme to adapt several strands of work following global travel restrictions. In particular, this had a direct impact on the approach to conducting the planned outcome harvesting workshop, online survey, and the in-country case study visits.

The rapid changes as a result of Covid-19 have had the following impacts:

- The OH workshop approach and timings were adapted several times and the eventual decision was taken to replace this with two virtual workshops.

- Due to global travel restrictions, it was not feasible to conduct in-country case study visits, which necessitated an adaptation of scope. Our revised approach relied on desk-based document review and remote consultations with selected case study NECs.

- As a result to the changes in approach to the OH workshop and case studies, the online survey was adapted and expanded to ensure it captured additional data from national coalitions.

3.2.3   Data collection

In our evaluation, we employed **five data collection methods**, including:

In our evaluation, we engaged with and collected data from stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels as part of the evaluation.

- **Documentary analysis**: a list of the documents reviewed can be found in Annex G.

- **29 KIIs**: a list of the interview respondents can be found in Annex H and a copy of the interview guides can be found in Annex I.

- **Two remote OH workshops**: information on the OH workshops can be found in the OH Report in Annex L.

- **Online substantiation survey shared with all 63 NECs and four RSs**: the survey was administered in five languages (Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish). A copy of the English survey can be found in Annex K.

- **Six remote case studies**: more information on the case studies can be found in the OH report in Annex L.

Table 3.2 Summary of data collection methods

Tool	Purpose	Sampling criteria and considerations
Documentary review	To inform the initial harvest of outcomes and to investigate the CSEF ToC and programme design, programme effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and challenges.	• Documentation covering programme design, implementation (progress reports at global, regional, and national levels), additional learning documents, previous CSEF evaluations and other external evaluations.
OH Workshop	To support the validation of the harvested outcomes from documentary review	• CSEF internal programme stakeholders at the global, regional, and national levels
KIIs	To understand different perspectives on the process and implementation aspects of the programme for programme learning.	• CSEF internal programme stakeholders at the global, regional, and national levels; also includes external programme stakeholders. • Stratified sample of NECs that included: regional representation, contextual representation (e.g. presence in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS)), coalition age, and length of participation in CSEF.
Online survey	To quantitatively substantiate the outcomes harvested as part of the OH approach to understand programme impact.	• All participating NECs and RSs.
Case studies	To qualitatively substantiate the outcomes harvested as part of the OH approach to understand programme impact.	• Based on online survey results, coverage across the different harvested outcomes achieved and not achieved, as well as regional, contextual, age, and length of programme participation.

Each of our five data collection methods required a slightly different sampling strategy. In general, we used purposive sampling throughout the evaluation, balancing representation and inclusion at a variety of levels and across geographies and stakeholders where possible. We confirmed the individuals and coalitions of relevance for participation in data collection with the GS and RSs. We have derived our sample sizes based on the generally accepted guidelines on saturation[18]. More information on our sampling approach can be found in Annex E and a summary of the sample achieved is set out in Table 3.3 below.

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[18] See: Ritchie and Lewis, 2003;

Table 3.3 Samples proposed and achieved

Tool	Respondent types	Intended sample	Achieved sample
Documentary review	n/a	~ 50 documents	81 documents (of which 54 were used for OH)
OH Workshop	GS staff RS Coordinators NEC Coordinators	1 in-person workshop with ~ 25 participants	2 remote workshops with 27 participants
KIIs	GS staff RS Coordinators NEC Coordinators and staff Global stakeholders	~ 30 respondents	29 respondents
Online survey	NEC Coordinators RS Coordinators	All 63 NECs All 4 RSs	94% of NECs 100% of RSs
Case studies	NEC Coordinators and staff	4 case studies (in-country)	6 case studies (remote)

3.3 Limitations to the Evaluation

It is important to note the limitations that result from the evaluation design and the use of OH as an approach. Here, we also note the mitigating efforts that we undertook.

1. **Scope of the evaluation and time frames**: The duration of the evaluation was approximately nine months, including the Inception Phase, data collection, analysis, and reporting. The evaluation time frames were designed to ensure that the findings and learnings can be applied to GCE's work and members' participation in EOL moving forward. However, within these time frames, we were unable to validate or report on some of the longer-term outcomes of the programme identified in the course of the outcome harvest (such as those that go beyond the length of the programme and our evaluation period). We note this as a limitation to our evaluation as we recognise that outcomes that result from policy advocacy and capacity building efforts can take longer to materialise. Although we were unable to validate long-term outcomes, where possible and relevant, we have acknowledged the longer-term outcomes that may arise from the short-term outcomes we have validated.

2. **Understanding attribution**: Given the complexity of civil society advocacy processes, we were unable to use methods that allow us to make claims about sole attribution and causality. Instead, we employed OH, an approach that emphasises multiple and participatory methods to systematically understand the contribution of the programme through plausible explanations for the outcomes achieved and how they might have been brought about. This also further helps us serve the learning aims of the evaluation.

3. **Biases towards particular outcomes**: As a participatory methodology, OH relies on both programme documentation and stakeholders for the identification of outcomes. This may

result in some bias of outcomes which are limited to those of which the programme stakeholders are aware of and on which they have reported. To mitigate against this, we used a phased approach to the evaluation. This allowed us to undertake several stages of validation and triangulation to surface new outcomes and to broaden and deepen our understanding of the outcomes. This also enabled us to adapt data collection when unforeseen circumstances brought about by the global pandemic Covid-19.

4. **Challenges to sampling and participation:** As noted in the evaluations of CSEF III predecessors and in the MTR of CSEF III, the wide geographic scope and breadth of the CSEF III programme poses a challenge for any evaluation. This was addressed by using purposive sampling techniques for selecting KII respondents and case studies, as well as augmenting these with online surveys to ensure a breadth of perspectives. Furthermore, we conducted surveys and KIIs in the five CSEF languages to encourage diverse participation.

5. **Use of CSEF MEL data to inform findings**: We draw on data accessed via the CSEF MEL system for our analysis in Section 4.2. We note that there are limitations to our analysis of the M&E data. We compared the static data reported in global progress reports against our analysis of the dynamic M&E data from the MEL system. As such, there are differences in the figures reported, as the data and the definitions for calculating OIs have evolved over time. Therefore, where relevant, we note these discrepancies in our report.

6. **Travel restrictions due to Covid-19**: The emergence of Covid-19 in early 2020 caused significant disruption to evaluation plans, including the necessary cancellation of the planned two day OH workshop in country[19] and in-country case studies. This prohibited opportunities to engage in face-to-face discussions with NECs and wider stakeholders in-country. While we believe that face-to-face data collection would have offered the opportunity to collect the richest data, we have adapted our approach to mitigate this and to instead offer other advantages. We utilised remote data collection for KIIs and case study interviews and expanded our approach for the online survey. Therefore, while our remote interviews were unable to offer as much depth as fieldwork-based case studies, we have instead expanded the breadth of who could be included in other evaluation activities by expanding sample sizes (such as in workshops and interviews – see Table 3.3 above) and of the data collected from the online survey.

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[19] The OH workshop was initially planned for February 2020 in Senegal, before moving to March 2020 in Tanzania. Both planned workshops were cancelled due to Covid-19 concerns and travel disruptions and the discussions were moved to a virtual setting.

4 Evaluation Findings

4.1 How relevant to stakeholder needs was the CSEF III programme?

Evaluation Question: Are the CSEF III theory of change and programme objectives relevant and valid, now and moving forward, for the achievement of equitable, inclusive and quality public education?

Main findings

- The CSEF III objectives were relevant and strongly aligned to the changing priorities of key stakeholders. There was greater emphasis on the objectives within CSEF III than in earlier CSEF phases.
- The ToC logic is valid and relevant in most respects for most countries though not all. There are issues with some of the assumptions. Apart from being assessed in the MTR and OPM evaluation, it has not been a 'living document', monitored and adapted to better fit the context of all NECs.
- The CSEF III objectives remain relevant to EOL and the future of the Movement. The ToC is also relevant and valid for the future with amended assumptions and adjustment to the national context.

This section starts by considering stakeholder views on the degree of alignment and relevance of CSEF III objectives to the evolving objectives of GPE, GCE and NECs. We examine the ToC, by looking at the way it has been used in the programme. We then examine the validity of the ToC logic and assumptions in the light of the importance attached by interviewed and surveyed stakeholders to the inputs and the achievement of ToC outputs and outcomes. Finally, we examine the relevance and validity of the ToC for the future of the Movement, with respect to the EOL ToC and the alignment between CSEF III and the EOL.

4.1.1 Alignment of CSEF III objectives to the changing priorities of key stakeholders

By aligning to SDG4, the objectives of CSEF III remained relevant to those of programme stakeholders (GPE and GCE)

The CSEF programme was unique in combining the strengths of:

- GCE, the largest, South-based[20], global civil society campaign network for SDG4 whose members are over 120 national coalitions and international and regional organisations, and operating for CSEF through four of the most developed and extensive regional civil society networks, and

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[20] 'South-based' and 'North-based' are used here, as they were by those interviewed in this evaluation and in UN publications, to represent respectively donor and recipient countries in relation to development aid.

- GPE, the largest global, multilateral education funding partnership involving most major donors and supporting governments in 70 developing countries.

The CSEF III objectives target SDG4 to which all of the key CSEF stakeholders are committed. SDG4 is seen as a major support to the Movement's alignment. Some KII interviewees noted an increased emphasis on meeting CSEF III objectives as compared with a focus on capacity-building outputs in previous phases:

> *In CSEF phase one and phase two, there was a high level of emphasis on coalition-building and in phase three there was more emphasis on advocacy. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

The CSEF III objectives were fully aligned to GPE 2020's national level objectives and explicitly included CSEF's contribution to GPE processes. This is not surprising given that, as noted in the 2018 OPM evaluation, the ToC on which the CSEF III objectives are based was designed by GCE with input from the GPE Secretariat:

> *The CSEF III objectives are also fully aligned to GCE's Advocacy Strategy which states that GCE should exert credible and informed influence on national, regional and international education policy, through leading consistent advocacy processes aimed at ensuring that governments and the global community fulfil their commitments to deliver the right to education and achieve the SDG Goal 4 of the Education 2030 agenda.[21]*

The GCE 2019-2022 Strategic Plan includes goals that are not explicit in CSEF III objectives and ToC; however they are implicitly included in CSEF programme. For instance, regarding Transformative Education and Education in Emergencies, there is an implicit alignment through the CSEF objective of support to SDG4, as GCE's definition of 'transformative education' is essentially covered by SDG4.7 (Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship), whilst Education in Emergencies is a component of the overall SDG4 - 'Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

The CSEF III objectives were broad enough to be relevant to and allow tailoring for the individualised objectives of NECs; however, some priorities of NECs went beyond the scope of CSEF

Alignment between NECs and CSEF III was ensured by requiring NECs to align with the programme objectives in order to receive CSEF III funding, and updated national plans and proposals submitted on an annual basis which ensured continued alignment between CSEF objectives and national priorities overtime. The requirement to align with CSEF objectives was not perceived to imply a denial of other NEC priorities, apart from ensuring an emphasis on policy-focused advocacy rather than service delivery. One NEC respondent noted that they viewed the move from service delivery to advocacy as positive:

> *[The NEC] found that service delivery alone cannot solve the problem. So, it changed its course of action, emphasising advocacy… [it] changed to advocating for a right to education, which is*

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[21] https://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/what-we-do/policy-and-advocacy/

supported by policy research and capacity building of its members and partner NGOs. (KII, National Stakeholder)

The CSEF objectives – and the GPE 2020 strategy – are concerned with strengthening sector reform in general, rather than specific areas or levels of education, and are thus sufficiently general to meet the differing and changing needs of programme stakeholders across a diverse range of contexts. NECs selected different priorities for using CSEF III resources, but these were all within the framework of the CSEF III objectives. Some KII interviewees welcomed this generality as making CSEF III more relevant to the national context than other funds:

I think the CSEF programme was very flexible and we're getting a lot of support for us to be able to adapt to the changing environments in [our country]. (KII, National Stakeholder)

Some KII interviewees noted differences between their priorities and GCE or GPE priorities. These included Education in Emergencies or Transformative Education not being part of NEC priorities; or public-private partnerships, privatisation and decentralisation of education being priorities for the NEC but not a direct priority for GCE. However, these differences in priorities between NECs and GCE do not imply a lack of alignment between NECs and CSEF III. Moreover, "*GCE's Advocacy Strategic Framework aims at identifying, complementing and supporting the regional and national members' own agendas and priority areas.*"[22] This was reflected in the annual national proposal and planning processes, in which NECs worked with the RS to identify relevant national policy priorities which were aligned with CSEF objectives.

KII interviewees noted that some cross-cutting issues were stressed more in CSEF III than in earlier phases of CSEF, notably gender and inclusion, though these are an integral part of supporting the SDGs in any area of education. Another KII comment was that the generality of SDG4 enabled CSOs to speak to neglected areas.

Overall, the results of our online survey demonstrate that CSEF III partners perceived a high degree of alignment of CSEF III objectives to those of NECs (90% on average), GCE (89.8% on average), and GPE (90.2% on average), with little variation between regions. The KII interviewees at all levels – global, regional and national - similarly reported alignment between the CSEF objectives and those of NECs, GCE and GPE.

4.1.2   Relevance and validity of the CSEF III ToC in relation to CSEF III support

A refined ToC was adopted at the start of CSEF III and assessed in the MTR and OPM evaluation; however, the ToC has not received any further review and adaptation

The CSEF II evaluation recommended a refinement of the CSEF intervention logic and this was undertaken at the start of CSEF III with input from the GPE Secretariat. The CSEF ToC is described and explained in the CSEF MEL strategy (2016-2018), but the MEL strategy does not refer to monitoring or adapting the ToC. The 2018 MTR closely analysed ToC, with specific attention to its underpinning theories, assumptions and mechanisms. It noted that the ToC "*is designed to endure a long shelf-life*" and is "*likely to remain relevant across various contexts and*

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[22] https://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/what-we-do/policy-and-advocacy/

time periods" but suggested some areas for amendment[23]. Additionally, the OPM evaluation also recommended a testing of the assumptions or review and adaptation of the ToC on a continuous basis.[24]

However, in practice there has been no further review or amendment of the ToC. KIIs suggested that this was because of the time pressure on a number of stronger priorities in CSEF III management, given the limited duration of CSEF III after the MTR and OPM evaluation, and the approaching close of the programme.

The templates and guidelines for NEC proposals asked NECs to provide narrative summaries and submit their diagrammatic ToCs. The online MEL platform currently hosts diagrammatic ToCs; we were only able to identify ToCs for 32 NECs (51% of NECs), and only six appear to link closely to the broader CSEF III ToC (though they are compatible with it). Furthermore, support on the use of ToCs at the NEC level was less prioritised by programme MEL support, which was focused instead on supporting coalitions to contribute data towards programme-wide outcome indicators.

The ToC logic linking inputs to outputs appears to have had a high degree of validity and relevance to NECs as a whole, except for some of the stated assumptions

The validity at input-to-output level was confirmed by responses to the survey and KIIs. For each of the five inputs identified in the ToC (funding, operational guidelines and monitoring tools, capacity development through learning events, technical support, and national, regional and global linkages), the survey responses across NECs were almost unanimous in confirming their value in contribution to coalitions' strengthened skills and capacities for advocacy work, with 95% or above of respondents rating each input as having high or medium value.

However, there are some issues with regard to the assumptions. ToC assumptions are intended to help explain the connections between levels in the ToC, for example, inputs and outputs, and how and why we expect the lower layer lead to the higher level. Assumptions are expected to articulate the necessary conditions to achieve the next level of the ToC, thereby supporting the identification of the major risks to achievement. The current ToC assumptions do not show why the individual inputs are needed or expected to lead to the outputs.

As with the MTR, we found that the contexts in which coalitions operate have changed with time, notably with regard to social media and other mass communication channels and the extent to which government and other actors take CSO voices and evidence seriously. This is explored in greater detail in Section 4.2. However, our OH also found that CSEF input was able to improve the latter (i.e. increased CSO credibility).

One assumption that could have been included is that *NECs would use the inputs to improve their achievement of the desired outputs (e.g. effective engagement in education sector policy, and active public outreach and generation and use of research and other evidence)*. The analysis of programme results (see Section 4.2), the results of the OH (see Section 4.3 and Annex L) and KIIs

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[23] Grijalva and Izenberg, 2018, p27.
[24] OPM, 2018

all suggest that this assumption is valid in practice, with strong statements of CSEF's contribution to outcomes.

There is a major difference in the ToC assumptions that are relevant to recently created NECs and those relevant to long-standing NECs, including those that pre-date CSEF. Whilst individual NECs were expected to develop their own ToCs, we understand from GCE that some, especially new coalitions, had difficulty doing so. Support for the development of ToCs per se does not seem to have been part of the capacity development programme or for there to have been any relevant guidelines, although support was provided by RS more generally for NECs to develop their strategic plans.

The ToC outcome-to-impact logic and assumptions are valid for many countries, but not necessarily all

The ToC logic assumes that the policies that have been improved by NECs will be implemented by governments with the help of GPE, which is "*resourced to deliver effectively on an ambitious strategy that makes a key contribution to SDG4*"[25]. This is a reasonable assumption for most countries where there is a GPE grant that is providing effective support to government. However, the ToC does not hold in situations where there is no GPE grant or where central government has limited scope for ensuring the implementation of education policy, such as:

- FCAS situations government may be unable to implement education policy effectively, and in some cases, as pointed out by a KII interviewee, there is no effective government, or there may even be more than one 'government'.

- Decentralised countries where policy implementation is primarily the responsibility of regional or local government with limited ability of the central or federal ministry to ensure policy implementation.

This has not prevented CSEF from contributing to the progress of SDG4 in these countries. It does, however, imply an increase importance of the role and perhaps a change in the nature of the NEC. As noted by one global KII interviewee, "*the LEG is not necessarily the be all and end all*" for achieving SDG4. Another National Stakeholder in an FCAS country noted the need to keep education high on the agenda during the time of political turmoil.

In relation to decentralisation, the May 2020 synthesis report on country-level evaluations of GPE noted that in some "*countries (Nepal, Nigeria and Pakistan) the GPE operational model had not been adapted to fit the context of federal states and decentralised education sectors.*[26]" A subsequent blog by evaluator noted that:

> *The GPE funding model has been built around providing support to planning, dialogue, monitoring and implementation through agencies that in many cases had a strong relationship with the national government, but little consistent presence or influence at the sub-national level. In countries such as Nepal, Kenya and the DRC, the increasing transfer of responsibility to decentralised governments*

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[25] From the CSEF III Theory of Change.
[26] Universalia, 2020.

has challenged the effectiveness of GPE's financial and technical inputs, particularly its support for improved planning, dialogue and monitoring.[27]

In such cases, as noted by one KII interviewee, NECs can play a key role in assisting policy implementation by local government and by providing a strengthened linkage between decentralised implementation and central policy and strategy development. The above mentioned blog also noted that: *"support to civil society coalitions such as ECOZI in Zimbabwe or the Elimu Yetu Coalition in Kenya through the CSEF grant was fundamental to their growth and established them as key voices in advocating for improving education system."*[28]

Further findings relating to the validity of assumptions in different contexts is set out in Section 4.2.1.

4.1.3 Relevance and validity of the CSEF III ToC and objectives for the future of the Movement

The CSEF III objectives are consistent with those of EOL and the CSEF III ToC is largely relevant and valid for the future of the GCE movement with amended assumptions and adjustment to the maturity of the NEC and the national context

CSEF III partners completing the survey perceived a high degree of alignment of CSEF III objectives to those EOL (84.4% on average), and the EOL objectives build on the CSEF III objectives.

The CSEF III objectives as such do not specifically refer to government or to GPE or LEGs. The objectives are sufficiently general in this respect to contribute to be relevant and valid for all countries, including those where EOL is not operating, where there is no GPE grant, where decentralised government rather than central or federal government is responsible for policy implementation, or in FCAS countries with ineffective government.

The EOL ToC is similar to that of CSEF III except that the EOL Fund Manager – Oxfam IBIS – does not directly undertake the capacity-building role adopted by the GS and RSs in CSEF III. Coalition-building and learning and knowledge exchange, which could be said to cover the other four CSEF inputs, are seen as outputs from the fund which includes the support from EOL-contracted 'Learning Partners'. In 'Year Zero' prior to NECs implementing their EOL-funded programmes, Oxfam IBIS works with these Learning Partners to offer and provide intensive capacity support to selected EOL applicants for the development of sound theories of change, monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies, and capacity development in core areas for grantees

Overall, the input-to-outcome logic of the CSEF III ToC continues to be relevant and valid for the future of the GCE Movement. The outcome-to-impact logic also continues to be relevant and valid in most countries receiving GPE support. However, does not appear to apply to non-GPE and FCAS countries and those with strongly decentralised education policy implementation as indicated above. We explore this further in Section 4.2.1 and in Section 4.3 more broadly. The

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[27] Turner et al, 2020.
[28] Turner et al, 2020.

CSEF III ToC assumptions do not take into account the diversity of contexts in which CSEF partners operate, particularly in light of the shifting space for civil society participation and in light of other changing international scenarios, including the present Covid-19 context.

4.2 What did the programme achieve in terms of results?

> **Evaluation Question**: To what extent did CSEF III achieve its objectives, as set out in the CSEF III results framework?
>
> **Main findings**
>
> - CSEF achieved most of its objectives as set out in the results framework and demonstrated strong progress and improvement through the course of the programme.
> - In spite of the shrinking global civil space, NECs have been supported to strengthen their coalitions' inclusion and diversity, their ability to engage in public outreach, and consequently their ability to engage with both national-level policy makers and in global education debates to the extent that they are able.
> - The programme struggled at times to reach its targets around strength of inclusivity, strength of government engagement, and production of research pieces. This can be attributed to the fact that some of the assumptions in the ToC did not hold and limitations in validity of the Outcome Indicators selected.
> - The MEL framework has provided rich qualitative evidence against the outcome indicator targets that can contribute further learning on the programme's outcomes.

This section examines the results achieved by the CSEF programme against its Results Framework, with respect to the achievements since the MTR. We examine the each of the programme's objectives and outcomes in turn to better understand whether CSEF has achieved success against its planned targets as well as to help identify and assess the unintended outcomes (whether positive or negative) of the programme. We also reflect on the results achieved against the programme's broader theory of change. For analysis, we have examined the results as reported by the programme in global biannual and annual reporting, against the findings from the OH and analysis of the raw data collected from NECs as part of the MEL system in order to assess the programme's results and explain any variability.

4.2.1 Objective 1: To support effective civil society representation and engagement in education sector policy dialogue

This objective speaks to the CSEF principle that citizen participation and inclusion in citizen-based accountability mechanisms helps to 'close the loop' between service providers (e.g. governments) and their users, generating a more effective and relevant education system.

The objective is measured through two outcomes:

- The emergence of inclusive coalitions that actively engage and represent diverse actors and the most marginalised people.

- The emergence of CSEF- supported coalitions that actively participate in LEGs and in key sector policy and review processes (including where possible with parliamentary forums).

In the first of these outcomes, the active engagement is between the NEC and its members. The implicit assumption in this objective is that increasing NECs' ability to be inclusive and engage a

diverse set of voices will serve to increase effective civil society representation and engagement in education sector policy dialogue.

The MTR found that the programme was on-track to achieve targets set for the inclusion of diverse voices as part of NEC membership through strategically expanding membership and increasing the ability of its members to engage in policy dialogue. It was also on-track in applying a number of different strategies to engage with government processes. Notably, the MTR identified that there are NECs who face challenges in navigating changing and increasingly complex political contexts which limit their ability to progress against the targets set for this objective.

- **Outcome 1.1: Inclusive Coalitions that actively engage and represent diverse actors and the most marginalised people**

The programme has made notable improvements against Outcome 1.1; although targets were only partially met, progress was likely distorted by a change in measurement definitions

Outcome 1.1 concerns the increased efforts of NECs to increase their inclusivity and diversity. This has been a targeted outcome for the CSEF programme since its inception as CSEF I. This outcome is measured through OI1.1.1. using an 'Inclusivity and Representation Score', which assesses the 'strength' of a NEC's achievement (rated as strong, adequate, or weak) of inclusivity and representation. The score is a composite indicator, which examines the diversity of membership and the depth of membership engagement (frequency of consultation, frequency of communications, and sharing expertise through thematic groups), weighted equally.

The MTR reported that the programme had made progress against the OI, with a particular focus on NEC gains in increasing diversity of membership through the increase and retention of different membership groups. This trend has continued; global annual and biannual reports state that the programme has made steady improvements towards the targets set, reporting that the targets were partially met for most of the reporting periods. By the close of the programme, 70% of NECs were reported to have reached 'strong' while 26% were reported as 'adequate'. The programme as a whole met its target to achieve at least 95% of NECs as 'strong' or adequate' and to reduce the percentage of NECs rated as 'weak'. However, in global reports, for one period of programme reporting (Jan – Jun 2017), the programme rated its progress against OI1.1.1 as 'unsatisfactory progress' and overall, the programme was ultimately unable to raise the scores for as many NECs from 'adequate' to 'strong' as initially targeted.

Figure 4.1 Results reported against OI1.1.1 using the revised MEL data across the programme
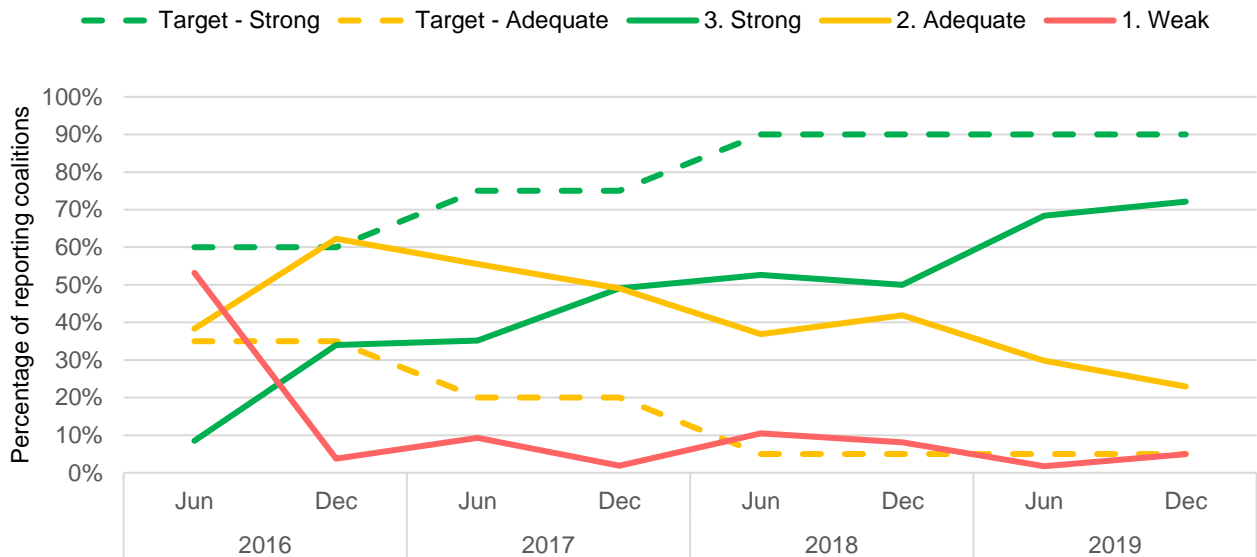
Part of this trend can be explained by a change in which the way that this indicator has been measured. The targets set at the start of CSEF III used as a 2014 baseline, 44.9% of NECs being rated as strong, 40.8% as 'adequate', and 7% as weak.[29] In 2016, the GS strengthened the quality of reporting against membership numbers through use of the online MEL platform, by supporting NECs to undertake membership audits[30], and by revising the definition of 'active engagement'[31]. NECs reported that as a result of the process of improving data quality of membership figures, they have a better sense of their membership base and therefore which groups to target to support diversity.

However, this change resulted in the initial decrease in scores in the June 2017 reporting period which is likely to have been the reason why the initially set targets were not achieved. The subsequent steady progress throughout CSEF III indicates that the targets would have been achieved but for this initial decrease. The overall change, as set out in the original target, is a 30% gain in NECs reported as 'strong'; the programme achieved an increase of 63% (from 9% in June 2016 to 72% in December 2019).

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[29] See the CSEF Theory of Change (Annex B).

[30] NECs have been required to enter comprehensive data on their members through the MEL platform at the proposal phase and during reporting periods. RSs have provided capacity building to support NECs to perform membership audits and have utilised the MEL data to identify and support NECs to develop strategies to target underrepresented groups. RSs have also accompanied NECs in targeted efforts to recruit members representing vulnerable groups, and have been strong advocates for inclusion in regional-level meetings with NECs

[31] The new definition of active engagement was: 'engaging and participating at least once per semester in an activity, discussion, and debate within the NEC or its general assembly, or proposes, conducts or participates in advocacy activities, or takes part in the governance of the NEC'

NECs have mainly improved their results against OI1.1.1 through improvements to membership numbers, rather than to membership engagement

Drilling down into the two scores which comprise the Inclusivity and Representation score (representing diversity of membership and depth of engagement), the main driver for the change in scores comes primarily from improvements to membership scores, rather than membership engagements. Results showed that engagement scores on average remained relatively constant throughout the course of the programme, a trend that was present across all four regions.

The total number of 'active' members engaged across CSEF grew considerably during CSEF. The revised sum of total active members across reporting NECs in June 2016 was revised to 881, and grew to 5172 by the end of December 2019. Yet this growth in membership scores was largely driven by the increased size of membership across African NECs as demonstrated by Figure 4.2 (below). This does not necessarily mean that NECs in other regions have not improved diversity and inclusion. However, NECs in APAC, LAC, ME&EE appear to show less progress on the indicator, simply because they did not increase membership numbers to the same degree.

Figure 4.2 Changes in the total number of members across CSEF, by region
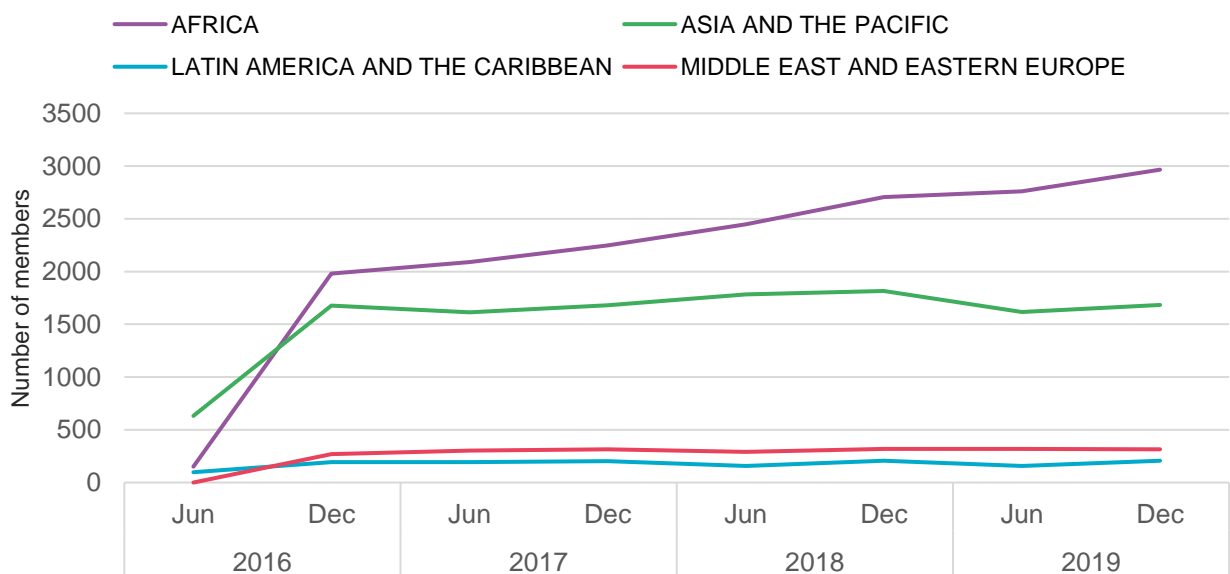
This suggests that the indicator used to measure progress against Outcome 1.1 appears to be driven more by increases in numbers and therefore may not be the best indicator to reflect the ways in which NECs are working to improve diversity and inclusion without necessarily increasing membership numbers. This opinion was confirmed through KIIs. Previous evaluations and the 2016 Annual Report have acknowledged that increasing diversity and representation across CSEF is not necessarily achieved through the expansion of membership numbers, nor is an increase in membership numbers always the most desired change.

Despite scores being driven by increases to membership, there are some important ways in which the representation of marginalised groups has increased across CSEF NECs

The membership score considers changes to membership across seven key membership groups:

- Groups targeting those seen as vulnerable, including: women, people with disabilities, and youth,

- Groups representing key education stakeholders, including: parents and teachers

- Groups representing sub-national levels and grassroots members.

By the close of CSEF III, there was increased representation in all seven targeted groups. Across CSEF, NECs had increased their membership of groups targeting youth by the greatest number (adding an additional 2,120 groups), demonstrating strong, targeted progress against a noted previous programme weakness.[32] The greatest percentage change was in members targeting people with disabilities increasing representation from six groups to 1413 groups by the end of December 2019. Figure 4.3 demonstrates the degree of change in each membership group, while the Figure 4.4 presents the composition of CSEF by membership group, as of December 2019.

Figure 4.3 Changes in CSEF membership from 2016 to 2019, by membership type and numbers of members

Number of members across all of CSEF
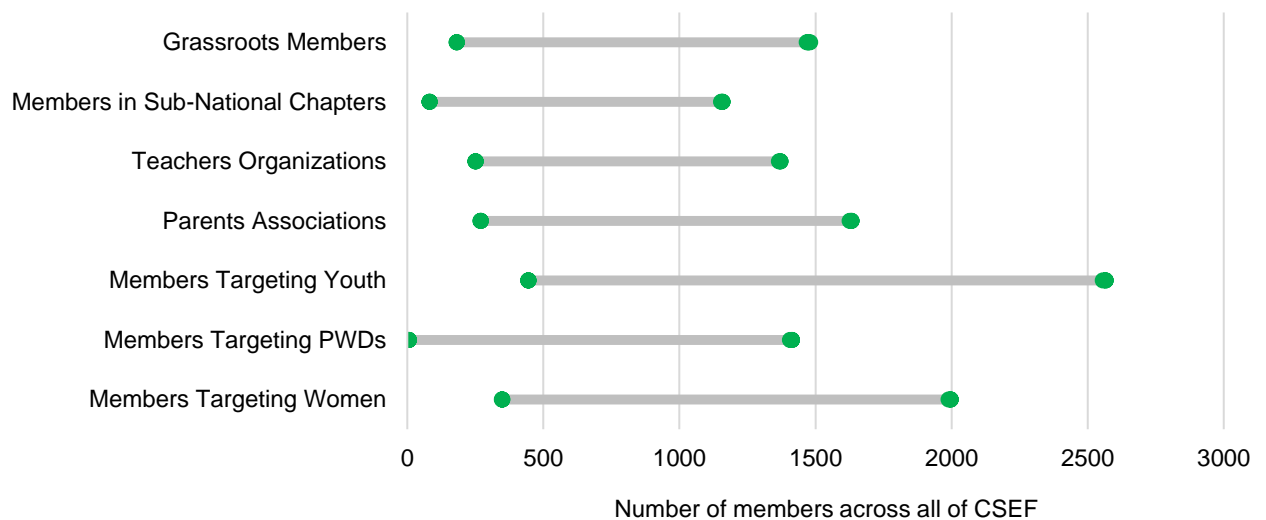
Figure 4.4 Composition of CSEF by number of and types of membership groups

The increased representation of different membership groups was reported to have supported NECs in multiple ways. NECs reported that new members contributed new ideas to the NEC, in particular, injecting fresh ideas or a new focus to NEC activities. New members allowed NECs to focus on or work in new thematic areas, such as inclusive education or work with people with disabilities. A similar outcome was to allow NECs to form new types of thematic groups that allowed them to raise particular positions in policy processes. NECs were able to gain larger geographical coverage and therefore of grassroots members as well. Finally, increased membership diversity allowed NECs to bring together multiple groups into a large, singular event to highlight a large and diverse set of voices.

- **Outcome 1.2: CSEF-supported NECs actively participate in LEGs and in key sector policy and review processes (including where possible with parliamentary forums).**

CSEF fell short of its targets on strength of engagement with government-sector dialogue (OI1.2.1), but made strong progress against increasing the number of NECs engaging in relevant parliamentary forums or committees (OI1.2.2)

Outcome 1.2 examines the progress made by NECs to participate actively in key policy processes. As with Outcome 1.1, this outcome is a long-standing goal, where CSEF III builds on the efforts of previous programme iterations. However, as the MTR notes, there are a number of important assumptions in the ToC forming pre-conditions for progress against this outcome. These include governments and other actors taking CSO voices and evidence seriously, that national governments are open to inclusive CSO engagement, and that desired GPE country-level processes are delivered in practice.

Outcome 1.2 is measured using two indicators. OI1.2.1 is a composite 'Government Engagement' score, balancing participation in (as defined by number of representatives and types of arrangement) and engagement (number of submissions and uptake of recommendations) with three different types of government processes: LEGs, Education Sector Reviews, and government policies more broadly. The programme reported mixed results against OI1.2.1 in global reports, generally achieving 'targets partially met' for five reporting periods, reaching targets in one (Jan – Jun 2017), while reporting 'unsatisfactory progress' in the first halves of 2018 and 2019.

Figure 4.5 Results reported against OI1.2.1
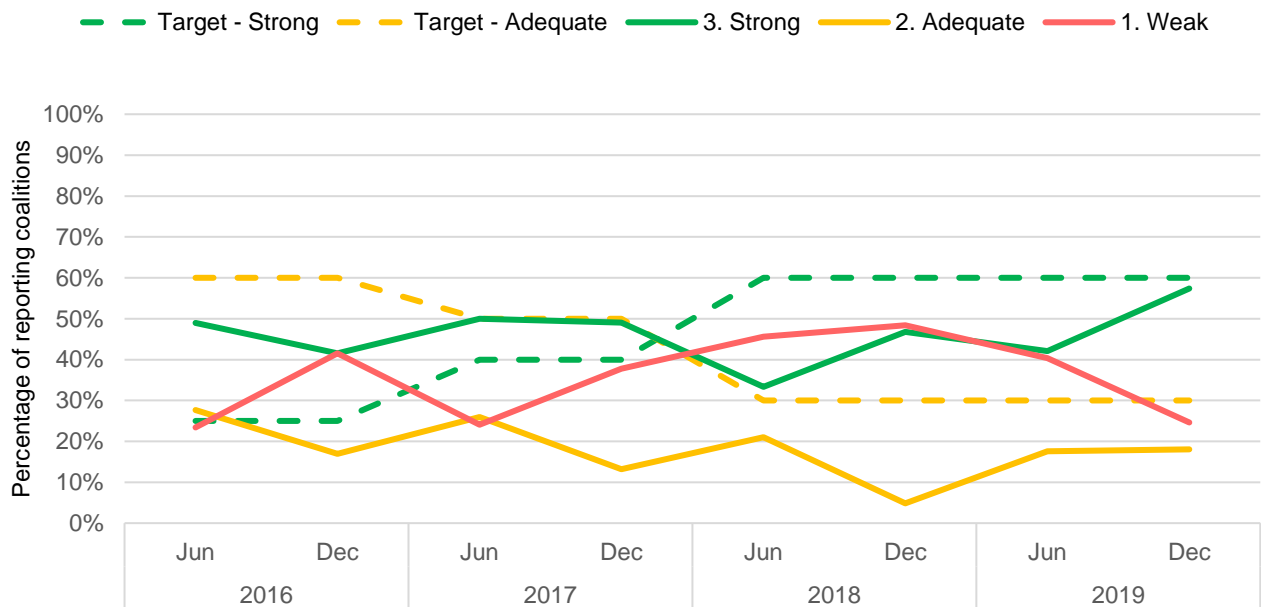
As Figure 4.5 shows, despite the programme falling just short of reaching its final target in December 2019, there is a general trend of relative stability, with some fluctuation, rather than of upward progression. While the figures for strong engagement in the global reports show a 19.5% increase from 37.5% in June 2016 to 57% in 2019, the 2016 figure in the MEL platform is 48.9% - an increase of only 8%[33] (an increase of 12 NECs). The percentage of NECs reported as having weak engagement increased from 23.4% to 24.6%, an increase from 11 NECs to 15.

The programme fared much better against the OI1.2.2, which tracks whether NECs are engaging with the relevant parliamentary forums or committees. In global reporting, the programme reported that it met or exceed its targets for all reporting periods except for the first half of 2017. This indicator does not track the depth of engagement (as rated as 'strong', 'adequate' or weak) and therefore, perhaps the indicator is less sensitive to the subtle requirements to improve engagement. However, Figure 4.6 (below) demonstrates a significant improvement in June 2019, which suggests that this is an outcome which requires a greater amount of time to realise, with NECs demonstrating greater progress towards this after several years of effort.

Figure 4.6 Results reported against OI1.2.2
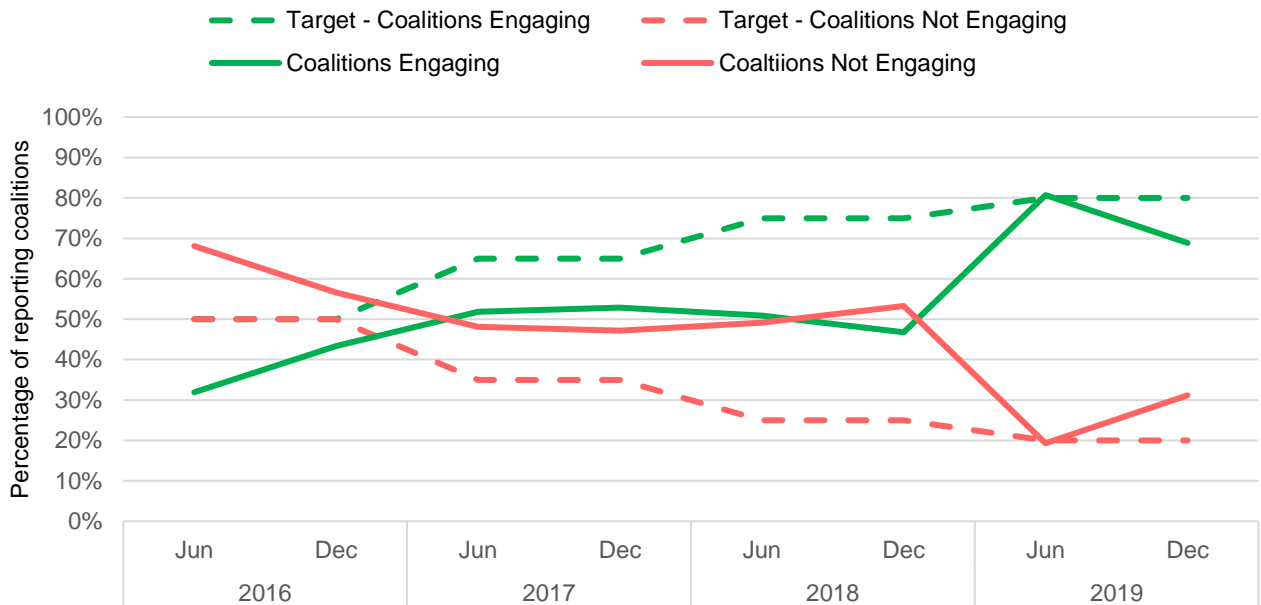
The relative stability of the Government Engagement scores can be explained by the strong performance of NECs at the outset and the persistence of weak scores for NECs unable to engage with their governments

This data also demonstrates that improving government engagement is not a linear process, particularly due to external factors. Looking at the baseline Government Engagement score[34], of the 30 NECs who reported strong engagement at the start of their CSEF journey, 22 of these maintained strong engagement to the end of CSEF III. Of the 15 NECs rated weak engagement, 10 remained with a weak engagement score, while one (Cape Verde) graduate to strong and four (Haiti, Mauritania, Vanuatu, and Lesotho) graduated to 'adequate'. This suggests that the programme has not significantly altered the ability of 32 of the NECs (just over half of the programme) to engage government: this engagement could not be strengthened nor weakened by the programme's support alone.

This suggests that there are larger external barriers to government participation, which are beyond the control of the programme. Figure 4.7 below demonstrates some of the contextual factors that may play a role in determining a NEC's government engagement score. NECs operating in FCAS environments have slightly lower average Government Engagement scores, as do nascent NECs (those established after 2016). Additionally, NECs who are new to CSEF III begin with higher than average scores, but their scores fluctuate significantly during the course of the programme and conclude slightly lower than NECs who have been engaged with CSEF for longer.

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[34] Not all NECs report in each reporting period; here we look at the scores from the first period in which a score was reported and the score from the most recent period.

Figure 4.7 Average 'Government Engagement' score across the CSEF programme, against NEC context (FCAS versus non-FCAS), year of establishment, and length of engagement in CSEF
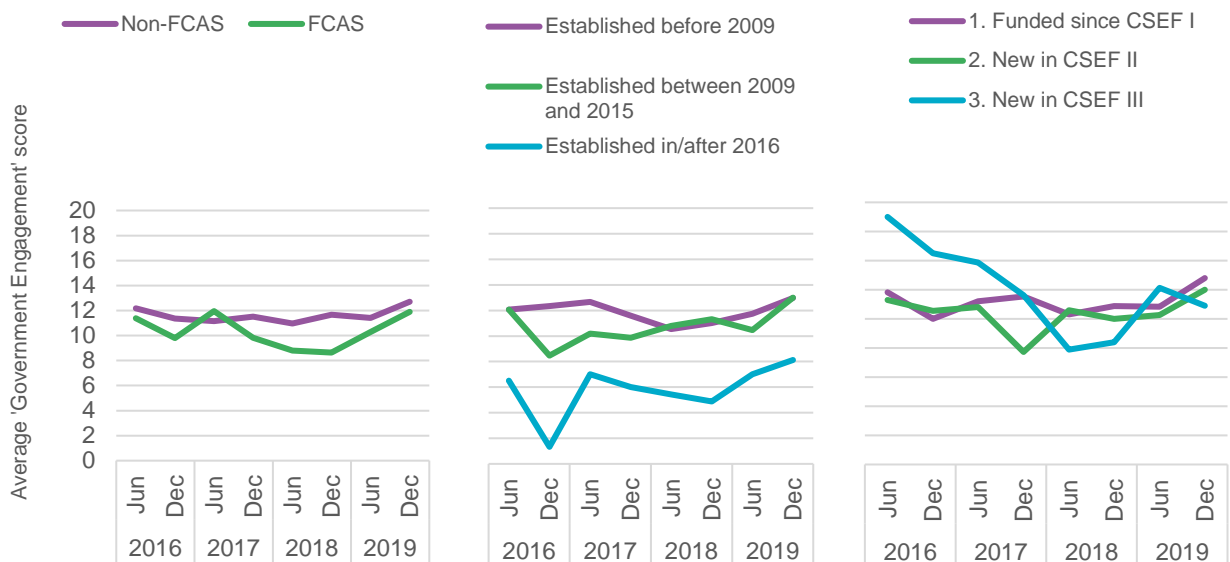
The MTR's analysis of NECs' government engagement highlighted factors such as fragile contexts in limiting the role or priorities of governments in delivering education services. It appears that nascent NECs, or those who are new to CSEF III, find themselves equally faced with additional barriers to government engagement, as their scores demonstrate greater fluctuation. Conversely, for NECs who appear to operate in more stable (non-FCAS) environments, who have been established for longer, or who have been engaged in CSEF for a longer period of time, demonstrate a fairly consistent score. This appears consistent with the idea that NECs who have been working to strengthen government engagement for longer have been more successful, as this is a long-term process. This is also consistent with the idea that NECs who already demonstrate strong engagement with government processes are not necessarily expected to improve their scores further.

The challenges to achieving Outcome 1.2 demonstrate that some of the programme's assumptions do not hold; despite this, NECs have found ways to strengthen their engagement

As acknowledged in previous evaluations and in the GCE Strategic Plan (2019 – 2022), the space for civil engagement appears to be shrinking on a global scale, with an increasing number of governments who are unfavourable to civil society participation in policy matters. This challenges some of the important programme assumptions on governments taking CSO voices seriously, being open to inclusive CSO engagement, and that desired GPE country-level processes are delivered in practice. These assumptions appear to be invalid for many of the NECs whose scores have remained as 'weak engagement'. In some cases, this is attributed to increasing political

instability and frequent elections or changes of government (such as in Burundi, Kyrgyzstan, Guinea Bissau, and Nicaragua). In other cases, this instable relationship between civil society and governments manifested in terms of NECs' relationships with their corresponding LEGs or other equivalent groups. In some cases, LEGs only became functional or NECs were only able to gain entry during the course of CSEF III (Haiti, Mongolia, Moldova, and Ethiopia), NECs were denied entry into the LEG (Myanmar), or there was an absence of a LEG (India, Indonesia, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Albania, Georgia, and Nicaragua).

Yet, despite the lack of formal engagement in a LEG or equivalent structure, or a lack of control over the formality or frequency of engagement, NECs reported numerous examples of the different ways in which they have found ways to engage in the absence of formal channels. These examples demonstrate that NECs who face the greatest challenges in increasing their formal engagement with governments appear to progress the least against targets, and have the greatest need for CSEF support in this respect.

For the remaining NECs, when engagement is possible, NECs have managed to strengthen their engagement. For example, the majority of the NECs which began with an 'adequate' engagement score (12 of the 17) graduated to a 'strong' score by December 2019. Figure 4.8 and 4.9 below demonstrate that percentage share of the depth of engagement, both in terms of the type of arrangement (ranging from not available or no formal arrangement to working towards or having a formal arrangement) and the number of representatives, in both LEGs and Education Sector Review processes, has increased throughout CSEF.

Figure 4.8 Percentage of reporting NECs by LEG agreement type and number of representatives
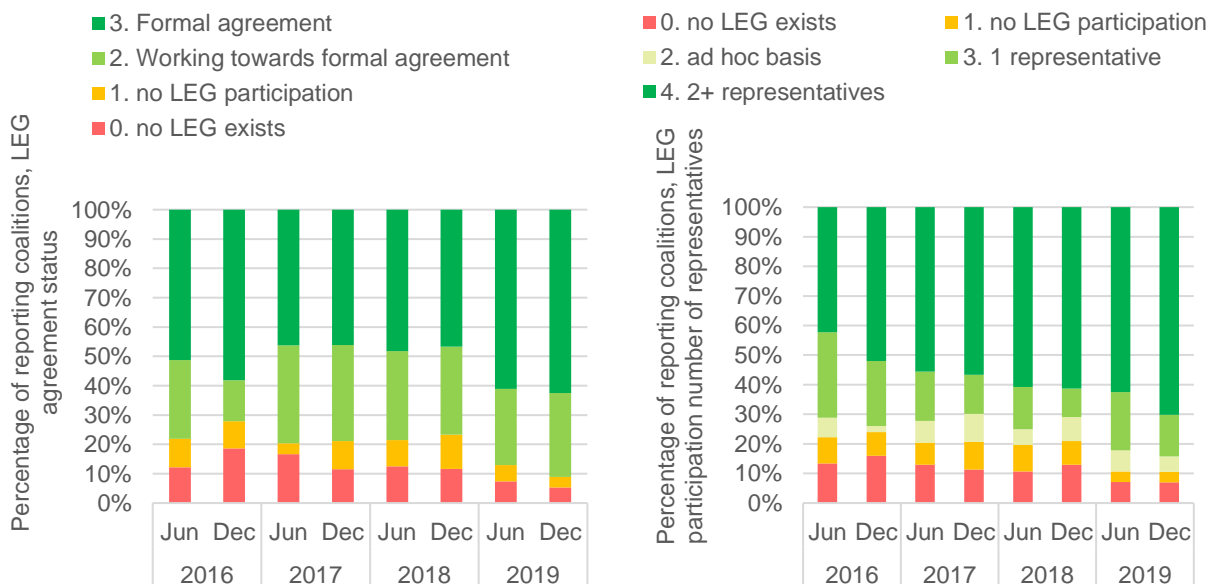
Figure 4.9 Percentage of reporting NECs by Education Sector Review arrangement type and number of representatives
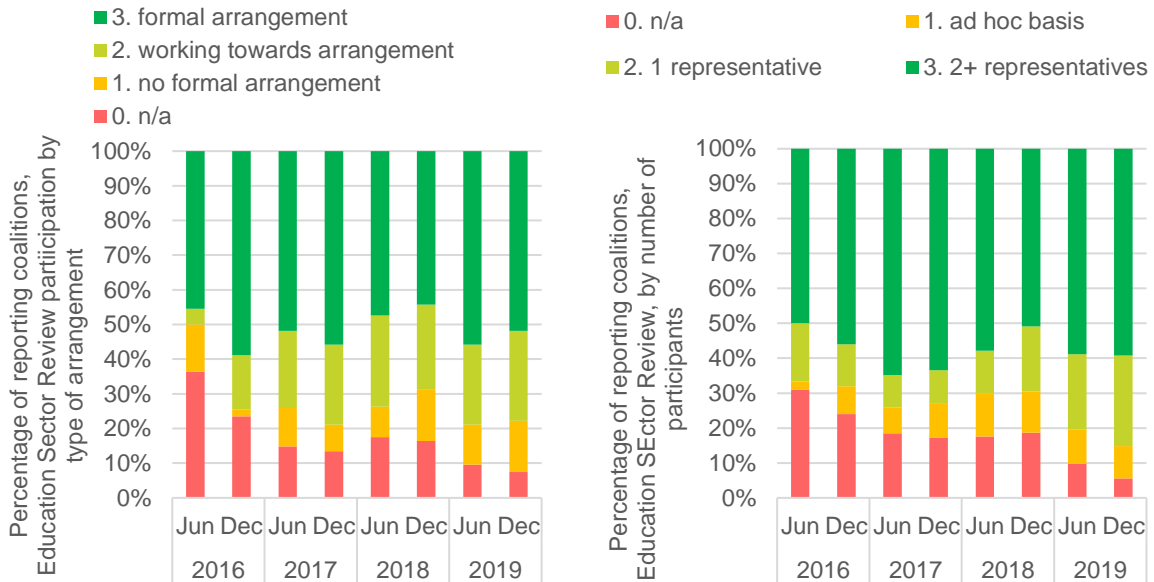
The results suggest issues with the validity of the OI1.2.1 measure

Although the programme was able to exceed OI1.2.2 and was close to achieving its target for OI1.2.1, the large variability within the results for OI1.2.1 for each NEC across years and the stubbornly low scores for NECs rated with 'weak engagement' suggest the indicator may have weak validity. Given that a number of the ToC assumptions that apply to this indicator do not hold, the indicator does not appear to have captured the breadth of the ways in which NECs have successfully worked towards greater participation in government policies.

The indicator as it stands is not sensitive or flexible enough to take into account the different priorities or strategies appropriate for NECs working in a wide range of challenging contexts. Nevertheless, within the MEL platform, NECs have provided a wealth of qualitative data on the strategies and techniques with which NECs found ways to engage policy processes. These provide insight into both the different challenging contextual factors affecting civil society working in education spaces as well as the innovative ways of NECs' engagement and the resulting outcomes.

4.2.2 Objective 2: To support active public outreach and citizen engagement in the generation/ use of research and evidence on quality, equity, financing and education system reform

Objective 2 examines two aspects of coalition activity that support its ability to both be representative of civil society as well as engage in education policy sector dialogue.

The objective involves two separate outcomes which seek to build coalition effectiveness and legitimacy:

These outcomes help ensure that the civil society engagement, as captured in Objective 1, is informed by and rooted in grassroots perspectives. This objective assumes that citizens have the freedom to express views and that mass communication channels (including social media) are available and accessible to civil society.

The two components of Objective 2 are long-standing outcomes of the CSEF programme. However, the framing of this objective more clearly articulates the interaction between citizen engagement and the credibility of research in CSEF III. The MTR found that the programme was generally making progress against targets on public outreach (OI2.1.1 on public outreach and mobilisation and 2.2.2 on citizen involvement in research); however, it was severely behind target on the generation (commencement or completion) of research pieces (OI2.2.1). Previous evaluations of CSEF have found coalition research to be generally credible and usable, and therefore effective, in terms of uptake.

- **Outcome 2.1: Coalitions that actively consult with, engage and mobilise the public, through the use of traditional and social media – education policies and programmes related financing, quality and learning, and equity and inclusion in the education system.**

CSEF has mainly reached its target for increasing the extent to which coalitions are engaging in active public consultation and engagement

Outcome 2.1 focuses on coalitions' efforts to engage the public through active consultation and mobilisation on issues related to the three GPE goals (financing, quality and learning, and equity and inclusion), through various forms of media. Progress against this outcome is measured through a composite indicator that examines the number of coalitions achieving strong or adequate public outreach through different media (the frequency and reach of traditional and social media) and community consultation and public events (the frequency and geographic reach).

Both the MEL data and the global reporting indicate that the programme met or exceeded its targets until the final year of the programme. NECs have improved their public outreach and mobilisation, or when it has been already strong they have maintained this. Using the MEL data (see Figure 4.10 below), the number of NECs rated as strong has generally remained high and above the target, while the number of 'weak' coalitions has steadily decreased over time; however, this has not necessarily translated into further gains in the 'strong' category as the number of NECs rated as 'adequate' has increased over time (rather than decreased, as envisioned by the target figures). It should also be noted that coalitions rated as 'weak engagement' continued to implement outreach activities to a lesser extent, or were not able to carry out activities due to delays in receiving funding.

Figure 4.10 Results reported against OI2.1.1, coalitions engaging in public outreach and mobilisation
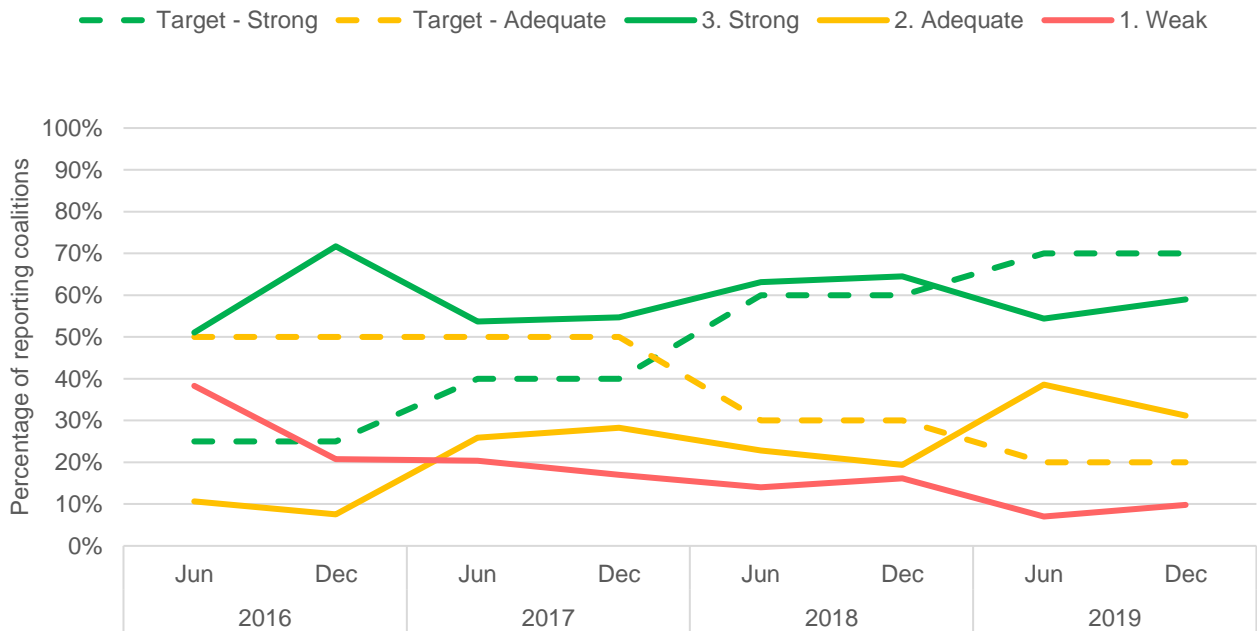
However, the indicators do not provide a great amount of detail about the results of increased public engagement, namely the changes to public awareness or attitudes. Instead, global reports and information from the MEL platform provide evidence on the subsequent coalition benefits, such as:

- Additional publicity has allowed coalitions to gain credibility in front of both the public and government bodies.

- Coalitions are able to generate new or further debate on issues such as privatisation in education.

- Coalitions are able to directly target and engage with under-represented stakeholders such as students or parents.

- A two-way exchange of information has been facilitated whereby with the dissemination of information to the public, coalitions are able to consult with and gather feedback of public opinion for further outreach, government engagement, or research purposes.

CSEF's improvements in public engagement was largely driven by the increase in the frequency of citizens meetings organised by NECs; however, the Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) was still a main calendar driver for public outreach

The strong performance against the indicator was mainly driven by the improved scores against 'community consultation and participatory events', whereas the score against media engagement experienced a sharp increase to December 2016, but a subsequent decrease and relatively steady numbers.

As coalitions gained legitimacy in the education sector, they were able to increase their media coverage, which in turn allowed them to more effectively mobilise the public and prompt policy debates on key issues. NECs were able to increase the frequency with which they held citizens meetings, although the geographic depth of consultation did not increase to the same extent (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11 Extent of community consultation in terms of frequency of citizen meetings and geographic reach of consultations
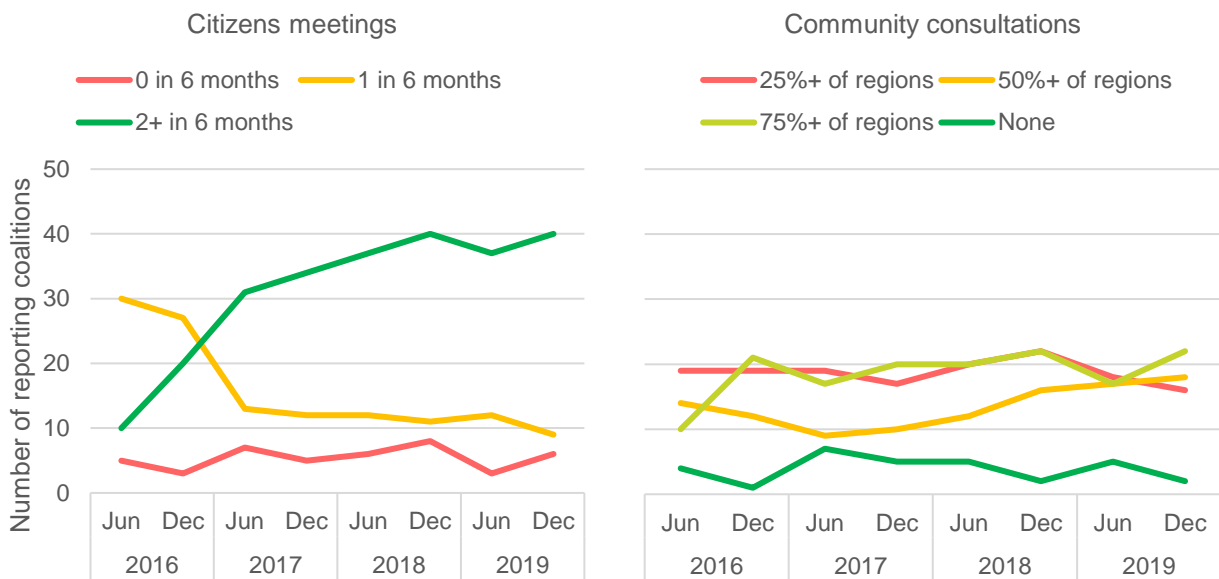
Still, based on an analysis of the different outreach opportunities and events, GAWE remained an important driver for public engagement. GAWE provided an important framework for public outreach activities, focusing on promoting awareness around issues with education financing, as well as other topics. NECs took advantage of GAWE by utilising different media and organising side events and focusing on both issues directly related to CSEF as well as other public interest topics such as the privatisation of education.

Despite the relatively steady media engagement score, NECs increased the depth of their media usage, with increases in the number of coalitions engaging in different media at least twice within six-month windows

NEC s appeared to be using traditional and social media to similar extents, preferring to maintain the use of traditional media (articles, radio or TV broadcasts) but increasing the use of social media throughout the course of CSEF (Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12 Extent of use of articles published, radio or TV broadcasts and social media campaigns by coalitions for public outreach
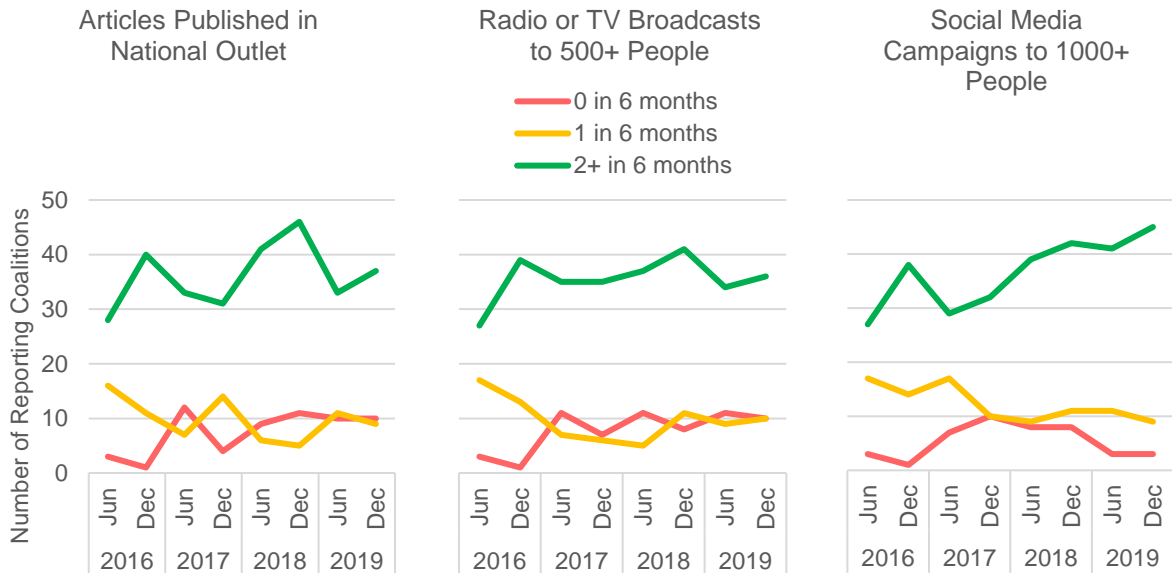
The MEL platform provides extensive and further examples of the innovative ways in which coalitions used social media to increase their local presence, engage with hard to reach communities, or engage the public in contexts where governments are less open to civil society engagement and thus block access to more traditional forms of media. However, for some NECs, traditional forms of low-tech media such as radio and TV remained important mediums by which to engage the large majority of people. NECs reported the importance and advantages of flexibly adapting different forms of media, based on changing political contexts. For example, in the last years of the programme some NECs reported greater use of demonstrations as an effective way to persuade policy-makers as well as the need for specific professional skills such as legal advocacy. CSEF III was successful in providing the different types of support that coalitions need in their unique contexts, mainly through the RSs.

- **Outcome 2.2: Coalitions that produce relevant documentation/analysis and/or engage citizens in original and credible research, data collection and evidence building – to inform sector policy dialogue on one or more of: a) domestic financing for education; b) equity & inclusion in education; c) quality education & learning; d) quality & inclusivity of education sector dialogue processes.**

The programme's results against Outcome 2.2 are mixed; coalitions have succeeded in engaging citizens as part of research, but the definitions applied for OI2.2.1 have meant that progress against the production of research is difficult to track

Progress against Outcome 2.2 is measured by two indicators:

- OI2.2.1: Number of coalitions producing civil society analysis, evaluations of government action, documentation of innovation and/or secondary research relating to education quality & learning, equity & inclusion, and/or financing.

- OI2.2.2: Number of coalitions involving citizens actively in producing credible and original research, data and /or reports tracking education expenditure/policy /service delivery with a particular focus on quality & learning, equity & inclusion and/or financing.

The targets for OI2.2.1 examine the frequency with which coalitions produce research outputs, and demonstrate a high expectation for how often coalitions produce a research output. The programme revised its targets set for 2019, noting the difficulty it has had to achieve its targets from the outset. The definition of OI was also relaxed, changing from 'producing research or papers' to 'demonstrating efforts towards' producing research pieces. Another important change was to broaden the concept of research solely for *public* engagement, instead encapsulating any kind of research that the coalition deems relevant to strengthen its work. The loosening of this definition has meant that the programme was able to achieve its targets set for 2019.

Coalitions were much more successful in achieving the targets for OI2.2.2. The global reporting indicates that the programme met its targets for all but the start of 2016 and 2018 (where it made satisfactory progress) and previous evaluations and the 2020 GPE evaluation[35] have indicated that this outcome is a strength of the programme. This indicator takes into account not only pieces of research and policy analysis produced but also training events and toolkits for members to engage in strategic policy analysis/research, data collection on relevant GPE pledges, and exercises related to tracking learning and service delivery. The percentage of coalitions involving citizens has doubled in the four years of CSEF III.

Figure 4.13 below provides a summary of the results reported in the global reports for OI2.2.1 and 2.2.2, which demonstrates the steady increase of coalitions completing or commencing research and actively involving citizens from June 2017 onward. The slowing of progress in 2019 can be attributed to the planned closure of the programme where coalitions have undertaken fewer activities.

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[35] Zuijderduijn et al, 2020.

Figure 4.13 Summary of results based on programme reporting against OI2.2.1 and 2.2.2[36]
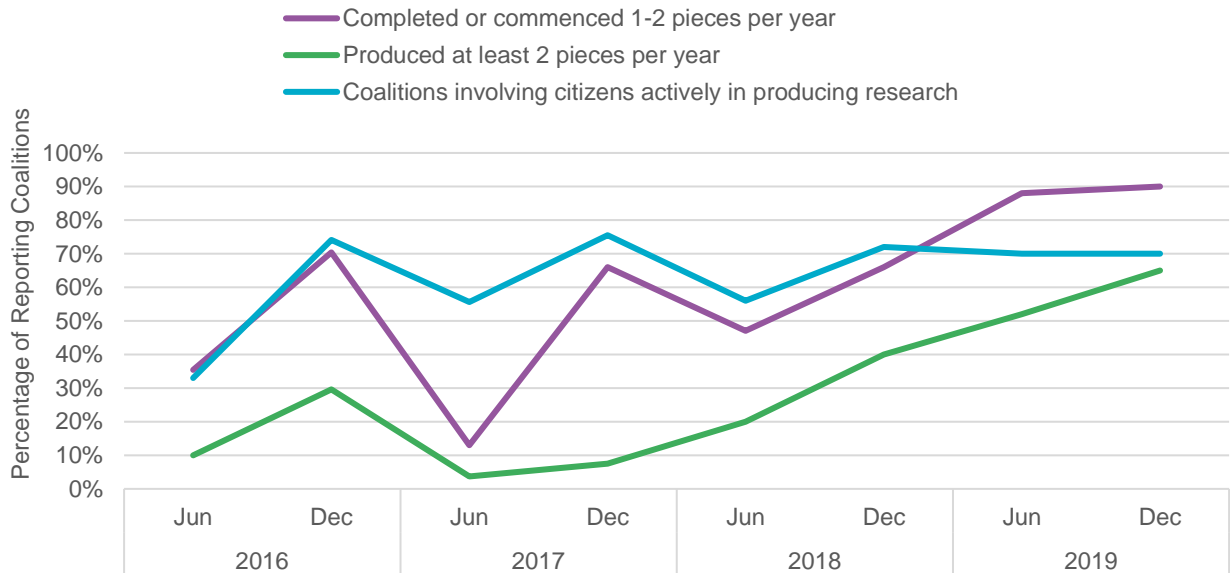
Failure of the programme to achieve these targets, despite progress, appears to lie in the ways in which research has been defined and in the mismatch between target timelines and those which drive the need for research, including yearly planning and external events

Global reports provide several explanations for the failure of the programme to reach these targets, particularly in the first year of the programme. As reported in the 2017 Global Annual Report, the programme was cognisant that coalitions were likely to under-report against this indicator due to different definitions as to what constituted relevant research, analysis, or evaluation work. Coalitions who did not report research as part of the indicator cited other types of documents produced, which includes reports on education budget monitoring, highlight reports on critical issues in education, monitoring reports on education sector plans or implementation of SDG4, education watch reports, codes of conduct for schools, and various score cards. Coalitions also produced research using other funding, which was not counted towards these targets.

For both indicators, there is also a noticeable difference in the results reported against mid-year targets versus end of year, suggesting that measuring progress against research outputs in six month intervals is difficult. This is particularly true for the first six months of the programme where many coalitions were preoccupied with transitioning to CSEF III and support from the programme was limited during this period. Coalitions operate on a yearly planning cycle as dictated by the funding proposal process, which appear to have a greater bearing on cycles for the commencement or completion of research. Other drivers for coalitions to produce research include important external events. For instance, in 2019 the majority of CSEF coalitions were presented

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[36] For OI2.2.1, we have opted to not use the data from the MEL framework to report against this outcome, as the ways in which coalitions define and report on research has evolved over time and thus is not necessarily comparable each year and with the results reported in the global reporting.

with opportunities to contribute to SDG4 Country Spotlight reports, which has also supported the programme in achieving its targets for 2019.

Further reasons why NECs were unable to undertake or complete research included insufficient funds due to delayed disbursements, delays to publication due to translation or the need to produce user-friendly briefs, or postponement of data collection due to instability or conflict.

Newer coalitions, or coalitions which are new to CSEF III, have improved the most in terms of both increasing engagement with civil society, while research that contained the perspectives of civil society provided the greatest value

Of the coalitions who reported engaging civil society in research, the greatest increase in percentage share was in coalitions who are new to CSEF III or coalitions who are nascent. This means that of the increases to the number of coalitions who are engaging civil society in research, a large proportion are new coalitions. This is fairly intuitive given that longer-standing coalitions or coalitions who participated in previous iterations of CSEF have had longer to engage in this long-standing aim of CSEF; therefore there are fewer of these coalitions who can increase their engagement. However, this is still a positive indication that CSEF has been able to improve the engagement of nascent coalitions, who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to engage civil society in research.

Figure 4.14 Percentage share of coalitions reporting engagement with civil society in research, by coalition age and participation in CSEF
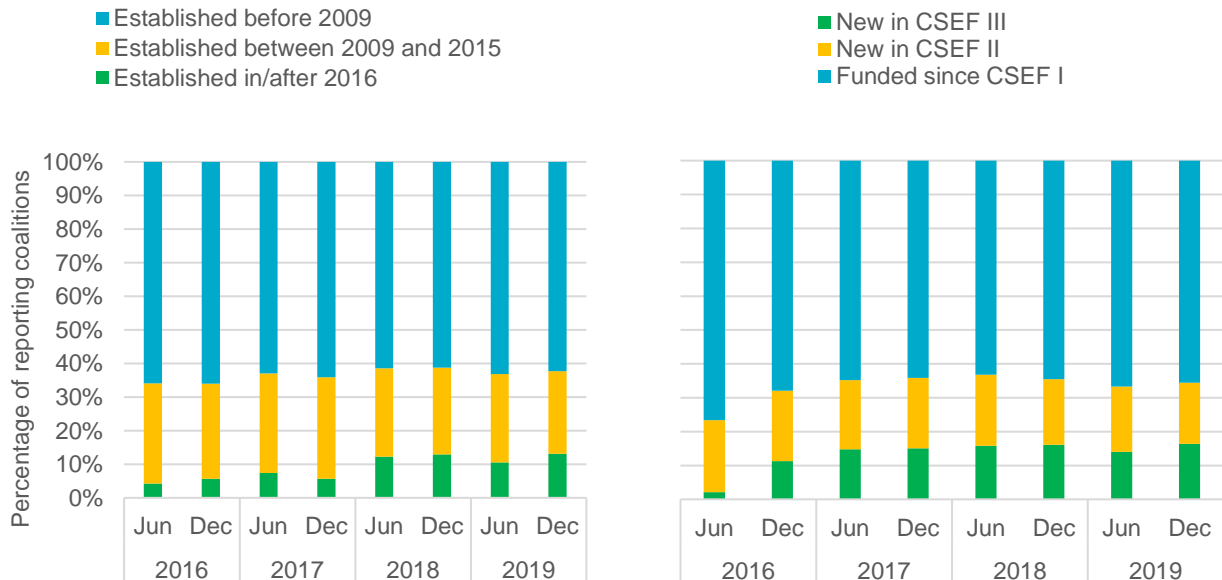
More broadly, the MEL system has captured details of the nature or thematic area of coalition research. A heavy focus of the research across the years has focused on education budget allocation and education financing. Other research involved capturing the perspectives of particular underrepresented groups (such as teachers or students) or consolidating civil society concerns from consultation meetings or survey data for submission as position papers to policy planning meetings. This input has been particularly valuable for coalitions (as validated through the OH process), where both coalitions and RSs have articulated the significance of making research more

participatory and inclusive to their work. RSs have been able to support NECs to do so either through particular capacity building sessions or through consolidating intra-regional research, allowing coalitions to learn from the experiences of others in their region.

4.2.3 Objective 3: To ensure global and regional processes relating to GPE and SDG4 are better informed by national and local civil society

The final objective of the CSEF programme is to bring together the work of national coalitions from Objectives 1 and 2 in garnering the perspectives of civil societies and ensure that this work is informed by and translated to global and regional processes concerning the work of GPE and on SDG4. As noted in the GCE proposal for CSEF III, this objective has been under-resourced in previous iterations of CSEF, which has meant that the programme has not been able to generate a multiplier effect with the impact of coalitions at the national levels. This objective has two outcomes which focus on ensuring that CSO views and recommendations are presented to the GPE board and committees and inform SDG4 implementation.

This objective was largely undertaken through the work of the RSs and the GS to provide capacity building and training to NECs, to create intra- and inter-regional learning across coalitions and to represent coalition voices in regional and global discussions. Finally, RSs and the GS ensured that grassroots level perspectives, in the form of NECs, were able to represent their own voices in national events by facilitating meetings and linkages for NECs to attend global and regional events.

The MTR noted that CSEF was on track has extensively documented its contributions at each level to the work of GPE and on SDG4. However, the MTR suggested that while there is strong evidence of the opportunity for and transfer of perspectives from NECs to global processes, there has been a lack of feedback the other way in terms of an understanding of the uptake or impact of this feedback. This is related to the ToC assumption that government and other actors take CSO voices and evidence seriously.

- **Outcome 3.1: CSO representatives to the GPE board and committees that are well informed by and actively represent the views of the CSO constituency**

CSEF III met all targets for Outcome 3.1, ensuring that civil society is actively supported to engage in GPE fora

Unlike other outcomes, the target for OI3.1.1 does not increase each year. Instead, the outcome indicator tracks that CSEF holds true to its commitment to ensure that civil society perspectives are included in global GPE processes. CSEF's performance against this indicator is strong, as indicated by both the global reporting and the MEL data, demonstrating that it has reached its target during each reporting period (Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15 Results reported against OI3.1.1, examining percentage of reporting coalitions who participated in GPE CSO2 meetings or GPE policy activities
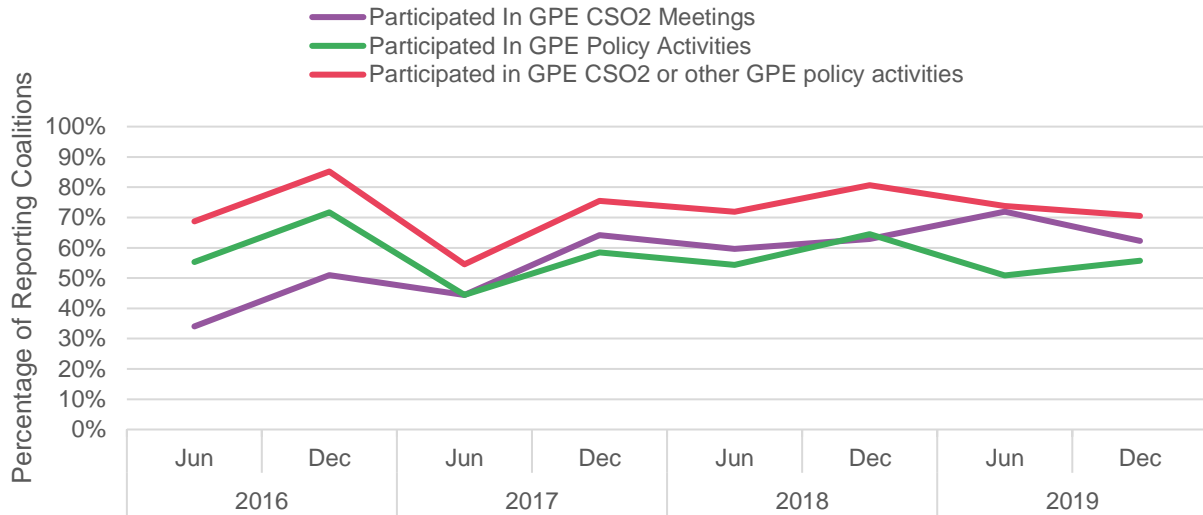
As Figure 4.15 demonstrates, for the majority of the CSEF III programme, the percentage of reporting coalitions who have participated in either a CSO2[37] or GPE policy activity ranges from 54.6% to 85.2%, with an average of 72.6%. As outlined as part of OI3.1.1, the aim has been to maintain a high standard of engagement rather than assuming that this can be steadily increased in the life of the programme. As with other indicators, the ebbs and flows across different reporting periods simply reflects that engagement is more dependent on the availability of external events, rather than the efforts made by coalitions. For instance, while coalitions were supported to engage in annual GPE board meetings (and in particular, through pre-board meetings), they had greater opportunities to engage in 2018 with two notable events GPE processes: 2018 GPE Replenishment Conference and ASA (now EOL) and KIX consultation events.

The strategies used to guide the activities of the global and regional secretariats to support GPE engagement were not necessarily explicit, which made monitoring progress difficult. One way to strengthen the monitoring of such an outcome going forward would be to track the progress against a planned strategy and outputs, rather than simply the outcomes for which progress may instead depend on external factors such as the occurrence of global events.

This progress can be attributed to the concerted efforts by the global and regional secretariats to increase the opportunities for coalitions to engage with GPE. This includes sharing information about GPE processes, communicating opportunities, sharing learning across countries, facilitating virtual meetings and consultation sessions, and representing civil society on behalf of national coalitions at regional and global meetings. A number of the efforts are done virtually, to try to broaden engagement across coalitions. Other evaluations (such as the MTR and the OPM evaluation) have emphasised the key role played by and the effectiveness of the global and

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[37] CSO2 refers to Developing Country Civil Society Organizations constituencies that serve on the Global Partnership for Education Board of Directors

regional secretariats in this. With a greater emphasis on this outcome (and Objective 3 more widely), this effectiveness can be attributed to the specific and new efforts CSEF has undertaken to support GPE engagement, namely putting together a specific CSO2 Constituency Board Coordinating Committee and ensuring resources for a dedicated staff member to provide support on coordination and communication.

However, some important limitations to engagement have been highlighted in global reporting. This includes: issues with language (whereby the dominant language of engagement in GPE processes has been English); connectivity, (whereby the online nature of a lot of meetings has meant that if their connectivity is poor, they cannot participate) and finally, coalitions reported that on occasion, they were not notified or notified on time about events. This happened primarily in the first two years of the programme.

Engagement in GPE processes brought capacity building and national-level engagement opportunities for coalitions; however, there is less evidence on the converse impact of civil society inclusion to GPE processes

The strong alignment between GPE goals, the CSEF goals, and NECs was noted in the previous section. This alignment helped to enable strong coalition engagement with GPE processes. CSEF programme reporting has documented that participation in GPE processes had particular value to coalitions, as coalitions received capacity building and training ahead of engagement events, both in terms of better understanding GPE processes as well as support and accompaniment to events. Participation in GPE events also provided coalitions with credibility and leverage with which to lobby their own national governments, such as while attending events and meeting with policy makers in 'neutral territory'.

However, while there is strong evidence that CSEF has supported high levels of participation of and consultation with civil society perspectives in GPE processes, there is less documentation on the extent to which civil society inclusion has had an impact on GPE processes. There is a lack of reporting on this in both GPE Annual Reports as well as the recent GPE 2020 evaluation, which suggests that from the perspective of GPE, this is a topic which has been underexplored. The OPM evaluation has also highlighted the narrow role of civil society in considering GPE's theory of change, whereby civil society only plays a role on GPE's second objective.

CSEF reported one notable victory from their engagement in GPE processes. In 2019, based on civil society positions, CSEF was able to change the language of the GPE's Private Sector Engagement Strategy, adding the clause 'no GPE funds can be used to support for-profit provision of core education services' and ensuring that the spirit of this continues through the strategy.

- **Outcome 3.2: Stronger links between national, regional and global CSO voices (including South-South) in key regional and global debates and events on implementation of SDG4**

Similarly, CSEF III performed strongly against Outcome 3.2, taking advantage of the timeliness of opportunities to contribute to discussions on global education goals

Similar to Outcome 3.1, the programme performed strongly against Outcome 3.2, which examines the participation of and linkages with civil society and SDG4 processes. The programme performed

strongly in almost all the reporting periods (reporting that it met its target for all periods except the start of 2017); however, a similar caveat applies about the difficulty of tracking progress against set time period intervals. Global reports and other evaluations have noted that the timing of the CSEF III programme has fit well with SDG4 processes, whereby the programme was able to take advantage of a number of opportunities to participate in SDG4 consultation. This is particularly evident in Figure 4.16 below, which demonstrates some of the peaks and troughs of the timing of regional and global events.

Figure 4.16 Results reported against OI3.2.1, examining percentage of reporting coalitions who participated in SDG4 events
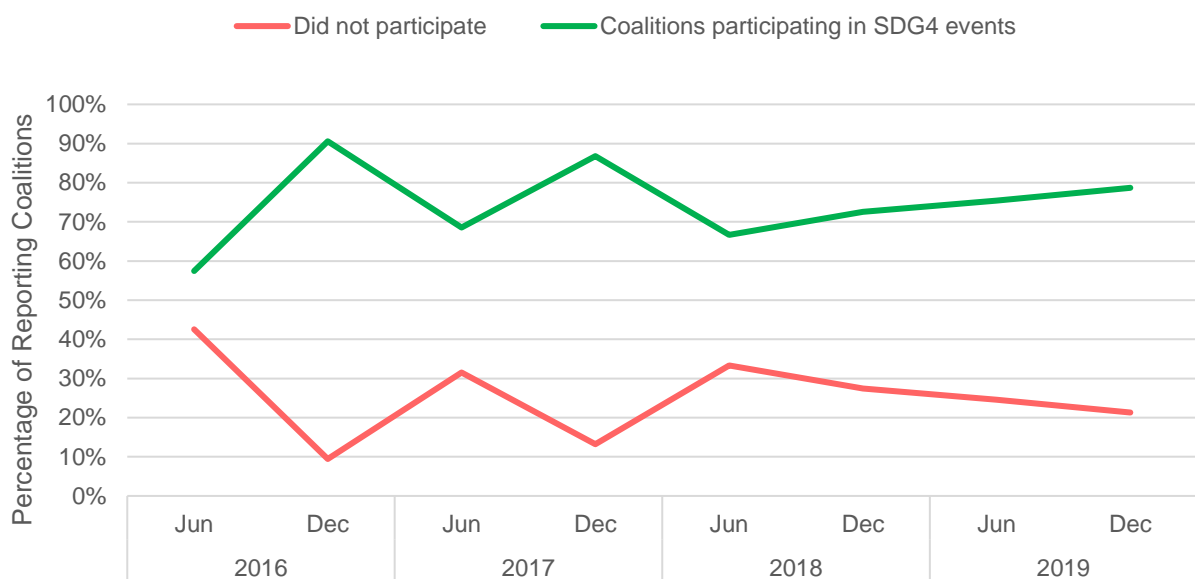
The role played by global and regional secretariats in connecting civil society perspectives to SDG4 processes is similar as with GPE processes. GCE's CSEF III proposal suggests two elements to the strategy for engaging with the Education 2030 agenda, which included supporting coalitions to increase their understanding of and engagement in processes, as well as contributing research and evidence to the SDG4 Framework for Action, focusing on the GPE strategic objectives of equity and inclusion, quality teaching and learning, and education finance. As with Outcome 3.1, global and regional secretariat efforts to do this involved facilitating national and regional participation in international events, strengthening coordination and feedback loops, developing and communicating the findings of research on specific policy themes. In particular, notable efforts were undertaken in preparation for the High Level Political Forum in 2019. Efforts on this outcome are continuous and on-going.

4.3 What are the changes at the global, regional, and national levels brought about by CSEF III?

> **Evaluation Questions**:
>
> What are the intended and unintended changes, at global and regional levels, brought about by CSEF III and in what ways has the programme contributed to these changes?
>
> What are the intended and unintended changes, at national levels, brought about by CSEF III and in what way has the programme contributed to these changes?
>
> **Main findings**
>
> - Our evaluation harvested a total of 17 outcome types, validated with programme stakeholders, at global, regional and national levels, which target changes within individual coalitions and the Movement more broadly; changes targeted at the general public; and changes oriented towards decision makers and key influencers
> - The results reported by coalitions of outcomes achieved further support the findings in Section 4.2 of the programme's progress against its targeted outcomes.
> - While the bulk of the outcomes focus on the achievements of NECs, the GS and RSs made significant contributions in their own right

This section is based on the findings of our OH and examines the impact, in terms of intended and unintended changes, of the CSEF III programme at the global, regional, and national levels. This is prompted by our key evaluation questions 6 and 7; for the purposes of this report we have combined them into a single section. We first present an overview of the outcomes harvested and then provide some insights into the outcomes that emerged as significant related to each level (national, regional and global) from our online survey and case studies. Further details on both the outcomes harvested as well as the methodology and process by which we harvested outcomes can be found in Annex L.

4.3.1 Overview of the outcomes harvested

Our evaluation harvested a total of 17 outcome types that have been validated with programme stakeholders

Using our outcome harvest process, we identified 204 individual outcomes that occurred across the CSEF programme. These outcomes were refined into 18 outcome types[38], which were discussed with programme stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels through a series of (virtual) workshops. As a result of the workshops, nine outcome types were validated, four outcomes types were refined, and two sets of two outcomes were merged (from four outcomes to two). One final outcome was not validated, while two new outcomes were surfaced, resulting in a final total of 17 outcomes.

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[38] It should be noted that our evaluation harvested 'outcome types' on the basis of analysis of individual outcomes harvested. Therefore, our harvested outcomes are not considered specific outcomes in the traditional OH sense, although we refer to them as 'outcomes' for simplicity throughout our analysis.

We used three different ways to categorise and analyse our outcomes:

- By 'level of change', which examines outcomes at the national, regional or global levels.

- By 'change target', which categorises outcomes by the group targeted for change. This includes changes directed at CSEF-partner level (e.g. coalition – whether national, regional or global), various groups that constitute the 'public' (citizens and civil society groups external to the coalition) and education policy or practice decision makers or influencers.

- By 'type of change', which categorises outcomes according to changes to knowledge/ awareness, attitudes/will or practice/action.

The outcomes are presented in the table below.

Table 4.1 Outcomes harvested in the CSEF evaluation

O#	Outcome Statement	Level of Change	Change target	Change type
1	The coalition and its members have strengthened skills and capacities for advocacy work	National	Coalition	Knowledge / awareness
2	The coalition and its members have strengthened their abilities to seek funding	National	Coalition	Knowledge / awareness
3	The coalition has strengthened internal operations and processes	National	Coalition	Knowledge / awareness
4	The coalition has strengthened its diversity and inclusiveness through increasing or maintaining its membership	National	Coalition	Practice / action
5	Cohesion and linkages between levels of the Movement (national, regional, global) are stronger	All	Coalition	Attitudes / will
6	The research and evidence generated for policy advocacy is more inclusive and representative of the perspectives of communities and vulnerable groups	All	Public	Knowledge / awareness
7	Cohesion across wider civil society is created through engagement with other advocacy groups or international NGOs	All	Public	Attitudes / will
8	Marginalised groups have increased legitimacy and capacities to participate in policy dialogue	All	Public	Knowledge / awareness
9	Citizens and key influencers are better informed to contribute to education policy dialogue	All	Public	Knowledge / awareness
10	Civil society has developed capacities to monitor and support the rollout of education policies	National	Public	Knowledge / awareness
11	The coalition creates spaces to participate in policy dialogue through non-formal channels and facilitated engagements	National	Decision-makers	Knowledge / awareness
12	Policy dialogue is more representative and participatory, through increased coalition engagement in government processes and working groups	National	Decision-makers	Knowledge / awareness
13	Decision makers increasingly view coalitions as evidence-based and credible organisations	All	Decision-makers	Attitudes / will
14	Decision makers consult with and consider wider civil society perspectives in education policies and proposals	All	Decision-makers	Attitudes / will
15	Decision makers increase funding and commitment towards global and regional education goals	All	Decision-makers	Practice / action
16	Decision makers modify national education policy or policy implementation in response to advocacy	All	Decision-makers	Practice / action
17	Global and regional education discussions are more inclusive of local, national and regional perspectives	Global, regional	Decision-makers	Knowledge / awareness

Five outcomes targeted knowledge/awareness and attitude changes at the coalition-level:

- Three outcomes targeted changes in knowledge/awareness at the national coalition-level, with regard to coalition capacities in technical areas such as advocacy or thematic capacities (O1), resource mobilisation (O2), and organisational areas such as coalition governance or management (O3).

- One outcome concerned the actions undertaken by NECs to strengthen membership diversity and inclusiveness (O4). This outcome corresponds with the CSEF Results Framework Outcome 1.1.

- One outcome targeted the attitudes and cohesion of coalitions more broadly (O5), whether across different countries (horizontal) or across different levels, such as regional and global (vertical).

Five outcomes targeted knowledge/awareness and attitude changes directed towards the public:

- Four further outcomes specifically targeted knowledge/awareness changes of citizens in a broad sense (O6, O9), specific marginalised groups within society (O8), or civil society groups who are not directly members of the coalition, such as advocacy groups working in other thematic areas or INGOs (O10). O6 roughly corresponds with Outcome 2.2, while O9 roughly corresponds with CSEF's Outcome 2.1.

- One outcome targeted cohesion across the public, with a specific focus on cohesion across civil society groups (O7).

The final seven outcomes target decision-makers at the national-level (such as policy makers or implementers or those who may influence education policy, including international donors) and at the global or regional level (such as those who influence or set the global education agenda).

- Within these, two outcomes target awareness changes in decision-making processes through the increased inclusion and participation of civil society, whether through formal channels (O12) or informal channels (O11). O12 corresponds with CSEF's Outcome 1.2.
- Two outcomes target changes in attitude of decision makers, including viewing civil society (and more specifically CSEF partners) as credible, evidence-based organisations (O13) and actively consulting civil society perspectives (O14).
- Two outcomes target tangible changes in education policy and practice, including commitment and funding towards regional and global education goals such as SDG4 (O15) and changes to national education policy or policy implementation (O16).
- The final outcome considers awareness changes to global and regional education discussions through the increased inclusion of more 'grassroots' perspectives, whether at the regional, national, or sub-national levels (O17). O17 relates to both Outcome 3.1 and 3.2 of CSEF.

These results reported by coalitions of outcomes achieved further support the findings in Section 4.2 of the programme's progress against its targeted outcomes

Our online survey was used to substantiate the outcomes by understanding the extent to which these outcomes were relevant to NECs and RSs across the CSEF programme. We examined

whether coalitions (both NEC and RSs) perceived that the outcome had materialised through their work and whether the outcome was an intended objective or aim of their work. Here, it is important to note that 'unintended' may indicate outcomes that were either unexpected or unplanned (with regard to coalition-level planning and policy targets). Figure 4.17 below presents the prevalence of the outcomes, as reported, across the CSEF programme.

Figure 4.17 Prevalence of outcomes across the CSEF programme, by percentage of reporting NECs and RSs

- ■ The outcome happened and it was an objective
- ■ The outcome happened and it was not an objective
- ■ The outcome did not happen and it was an objective
- ■ Not applicable (did not happen and was not an objective)
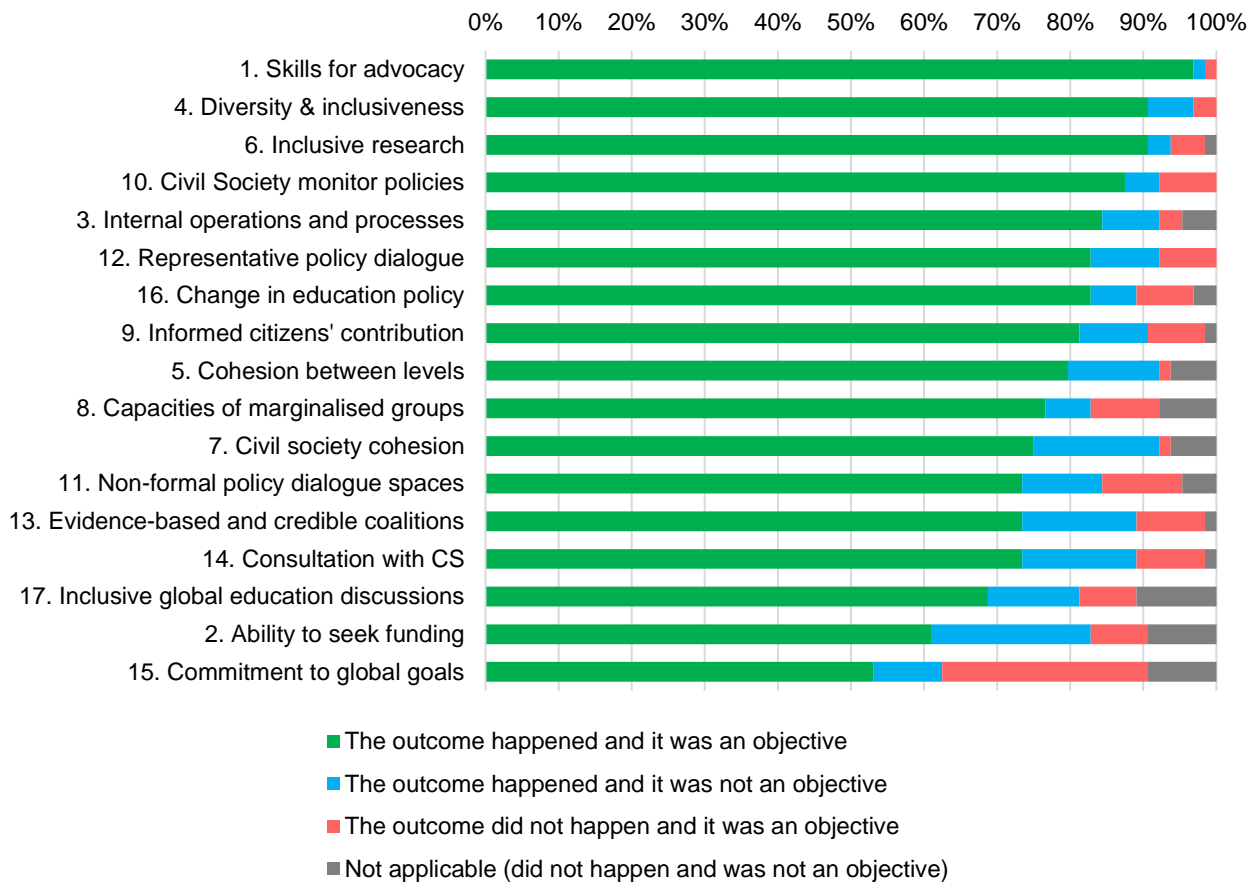
The most prevalent intended outcomes that coalitions reported to have achieved fall into two categories. The first focuses on the building of coalition capacities and strengths, including improving the technical skills of coalitions (O1 – 97% of coalitions reported that this outcome materialised), increasing the diversity and inclusiveness of coalitions (O4 – 91% of coalitions) and strengthening coalitions' internal operations and processes (O3 – 84%). Coalitions also reported success in generating research inclusive of grassroots perspectives (O6 – 91%), supporting civil society capacities to monitor education policy (O10 – 88%), increasing civil society's representation in policy dialogue (O12 – 83%) and in decision-makers modifying national education policy or policy implementation (O16 – 83%). These outcomes largely correspond to programme outputs (O1, O3) as well as planned Results Framework targets (O4, O6 and O12).

The most prevalent unintended outcomes include the increased ability for coalitions to seek funding (O14 – 22% of coalitions), greater cohesion across civil society across all or any levels (O7 – 17%) and attitude changes of decision makers of coalitions as credible partners (O13 - 16%) or of the importance of civil society consultation in policy making (O14 – 16%). O14 was not an explicit goal of the programme although coalitions received support from the programme to, where possible, support coalitions' financial sustainability.

The most prevalent unintended outcomes can be considered enabling outcomes to support other aims. Coalition financial sustainability was not a specific area in which the programme worked, although it was an area in which the GS and RS both supported coalitions where possible, recognising the importance of financial solvency for both the coalition's current effectiveness and sustainability beyond CSEF. While participation in LEGs and in key sector policy and review processes was a specific programme outcome (Outcome 1.2), O13 and O14 can be considered as outcomes that are precursors of, or conditions to be met (e.g. assumptions) for Outcome 1.2. This suggests that a small but significant proportion of coalitions had to first ensure that policy makers viewed coalitions as credible and see the value in consulting with civil society, before coalitions are able to meaningfully participate in policy processes. As we argue in Section 4.2, this was not always possible.

This point is reinforced by looking at the outcomes in which the greatest number of coalitions faced challenges to achieve. This included O13 (in which 9% of coalitions reported they were unable to achieve) and O14 (also 9%). Furthermore, coalitions also faced challenges in achieving outcomes related to convincing decision makers to increase funding and commitment towards global goals (O15 – 28%), creating informal spaces or channels for policy dialogue (O11 – 11%) and supporting the capacity of marginalised groups to participate in policy dialogue (O8 – 9). Unsurprisingly, when coalitions faced challenges in findings means to participate in policy dialogue, coalitions were also less successful in persuading policy makers to increase funding and commitment to global and regional education goals.

Coalition maturity (age of coalition) appears to play a factor, more than context or region, as to whether coalitions perceived the achievement of outcomes

While the context of coalitions (e.g. whether they were situated in FCAS contexts or not) did not appear to change the prevalence of outcome occurrence, the maturity of the coalition appears to have had some difference in prevalence of occurrence. Figure 4.18 highlights the proportion of coalitions who reported whether the outcome materialised, whether intended or unintended. Coalitions established during CSEF I and II were the most successful against most outcomes, while the newest coalitions (established during CSEF III) reported the fewest successful outcomes. This demonstrates that both coalition maturity (age of coalition) and the dosage of CSEF support (e.g. length of time participating in CSEF initiatives) appear to affect the effectiveness of coalitions. However, long-standing coalitions (pre-dating CSEF) appear to have had less success despite similar dosage to those coalitions established during CSEF.

Figure 4.18 Outcome prevalence by coalition maturity

O#	Outcome	Established before 2009	Established between 2009-2015	Established in/after 2016
1	The coalition and its members have strengthened skills and capacities for advocacy work	97%	100%	100%
2	The coalition and its members have strengthened their abilities to seek funding	91%	100%	67%
3	The coalition has strengthened internal operations and processes	97%	100%	86%
4	The coalition has strengthened its diversity and inclusiveness through increasing or maintaining its membership	97%	100%	88%
5	Cohesion and linkages between levels of the Movement (national, regional, global) are stronger	97%	100%	100%
6	The research and evidence generated for policy advocacy is more inclusive and representative of the perspectives of communities and vulnerable groups	92%	100%	100%
7	Cohesion across wider civil society is created through engagement with other advocacy groups or international NGOs	97%	100%	100%
8	Marginalised groups have increased legitimacy and capacities to participate in policy dialogue	86%	93%	100%
9	Citizens and key influencers are better informed to contribute to education policy dialogue	89%	93%	100%
10	Civil society has developed capacities to monitor and support the rollout of education policies	95%	100%	63%
11	The coalition creates spaces to participate in policy dialogue through non-formal channels and facilitated engagements	89%	100%	63%
12	Policy dialogue is more representative and participatory, through increased coalition engagement in government processes and working groups	95%	100%	63%
13	Decision makers increasingly view coalitions as evidence-based and credible organisations	92%	93%	71%
14	Decision makers consult with and consider wider civil society perspectives in education policies and proposals	89%	93%	86%
15	Decision makers increase funding and commitment towards global and regional education goals	62%	100%	50%
16	Decision makers modify national education policy or policy implementation in response to advocacy	92%	100%	71%
17	Global and regional education discussions are more inclusive of local, national and regional perspectives	91%	100%	75%

The greatest variation is amongst O2, O10, O11, O12, O13 and O16, suggesting that coalition maturity plays a role in determining coalition success against resource mobilisation, as well as various efforts against some of the precursors to policy process engagement (such as engaging wider public capacities to participate in policy processes, in non-formal channels or in policy makers or in policy makers viewing coalitions as credible), as well as in engaging in policy processes or in affecting changes in education policy processes or in implementation.

4.3.2 Intended and unintended changes at the national, regional and global levels

NECs were able to build capacities in technical advocacy skills, resource mobilisation, organisational management and governance, which supported coalitions to take action to strengthen the diversity and inclusion of coalition membership

Three of the harvested outcomes focuses on building the capacities of NEC staff, organisations, and those of their members, with regard to: skills and capacities to conduct advocacy work (O1), ability to seek funding (whether technical proposal or resource mobilisation skills) (O2) and organisational operations and processes (O3).

One of the main focuses of the programme, in terms of activities, was to build the technical capacities of NECs to conduct advocacy activities. This was the most prevalent outcome of the programme, with 98% of coalitions reporting that this outcome was intended and 98% reporting that it materialised. Different capacities were built by different programme stakeholders, including support from the GS on growing technical and thematic understanding of and alignment with global goals and RSs to provide training to NECs and their members in both technical and thematic skills and knowledge. 91% of coalitions who reported this outcome believed that this would not have happened without the support of CSEF. In-person activities, such as training workshops, events and meetings, intra-regional learning opportunities and accompaniment, were key to building capacities.[39]

In addition to building thematic knowledge on key education issues (such as on equity, inclusion, education financing) and providing training on specific advocacy skills (such as budget tracking, building advocacy strategies), NECs also reported that the support received by CSEF programme staff also generated greater confidence to execute advocacy activities and a greater sense of ownership over advocacy techniques. NECs reported building capacities at all levels, including grassroots and local levels, and across memberships. For the coalitions that reported that this outcome materialised, this was one of the most sustainable outcomes; 85% reported that this outcome will be sustained.

NECs also received support to strengthen their organisational operations and processes. This was intended by 95% of coalitions and materialised for 94% of coalitions. These capacities include an understanding and execution of a set activities to strengthen coalition governance and management (including financial). In particular, this outcome contributed to the success of the programme in achieving Outcome 1.1; NECs were provided with training and support to improve membership administration and governance, which supported a greater number and diversity of organisations to work with the NEC. Strengthening NEC's internal processes also helped coalitions to be more broadly effective. However, in comparison to technical advocacy skills, only 79% of coalitions for who this outcome materialised reported that this outcome would not have been possible without CSEF and only 69% reported that efforts towards this would continue.

While strengthening the ability for NECs to raise funds was not a specific programme target, coalitions reported having built capacities in this area as a result of support from RFMAs and RSs. This outcome was intended only by 69% of coalitions while 83% reported that it materialised. In

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[39] Further information on the role of different CSEF levels to support capacities can be found in Section 4.4.

addition to technical resource mobilisation skills, the programme supported coalitions by building links to potential donors or funding streams. However, despite building these capacities, programme stakeholders stressed that coalitions did not develop financial sustainability, as different and greater sources of organisational income was not available. Financial sustainability is also further discussed in Section 4.7.

NECs were also able to actively increase the diversity and inclusion of their membership. The ways in which coalitions were supposed to increase membership diversity and inclusion, as well as in what ways, is discussed in greater detail in Section 4.2.1 as one of the main programme outcomes. For coalitions for which this outcome materialised, 69% reported that this outcome would not have happened without CSEF support; 88% reported that funding was the most instrument CSEF input towards this outcome while 75% reported that capacity building was crucial. Finally, while all coalitions reported that this outcome was to be sustained, 26% percent said only moderately or slightly likely, suggesting apprehension as a result of the key role played by CSEF facilitation and funding towards this outcome.

NECs dedicated efforts to generate awareness amongst and change attitudes of external or public groups through research, media, and events; these efforts also utilised a feedback loop to allow NECs to consult with and better represent the views of citizens, including marginalised groups

With regard to ways in which NECs engaged the public, NECs used research as a means to engage with and learn from, as well as to disseminate to and raise awareness across citizens (O6). As a targeted outcome of the programme, this outcome had strong coverage across respondents, where 95% reported that they worked towards this outcome while 94% reported that they had achieved it. Although, as discussed in Section 4.2.2, the programme did not necessarily meet their targets for Outcome 2.2, information in the MEL system demonstrates the extent to which coalitions were actively engaged in generating evidence-based advocacy either through generating new research data or with new or further analysis. These efforts were focused on filling evidence gaps on the status of education for marginalised groups. Furthermore, coalitions were not always directly involved in data collection or analysis, but facilitated linkages with other experts, such as in academia, by influencing the topics of study (such as by encouraging studies on issues of disability and education) and facilitating linkages to policy makers to increase the impact of the research.

For respondents who achieved this outcome, all cited CSEF funding as being a crucial contribution to achieving this outcome, while 62% valued the technical support from CSEF towards this. Furthermore, 77% reported that they would continue these efforts beyond CSEF, while 69% believed that this outcome would be sustained beyond the CSEF III programme. However, 46% of coalitions who reported achieving this outcome also believed that this outcome could have materialised without CSEF III. As a long-standing component to the CSEF programmes, coalitions appear to feel confident in their ability to generate evidence for policy advocacy.

NECs also worked towards increasing knowledge and awareness of education issues across citizens and civil society more broadly. This included through building the capacities of marginalised groups to represent themselves in policy processes and generating awareness of these groups in order to build their credibility in the eyes of decision makers (O8), more broadly

generating mass awareness in order to encourage citizens, as well as specific key influencers or groups, to participate in policy dialogue (O9) and specifically supporting civil society to develop capacities to monitor and support the rollout of education policies (O10).

O9 roughly corresponds with Outcome 2.1 in that they both aim to achieve mass awareness of a wider range of education issues, but Outcome 2.1 specifically focuses on the use of media and events to achieve this. NECs who achieved O9 used a broader range of measures. Of the surveyed coalitions who reported having worked towards this outcome, 91% reported applying the strategy of hosting or participating in events, 82% reported holding consultation meetings with coalition members, 82% conducted training, and 73% disseminated or submitted policy briefs or recommendations. As discussed in Section 4.2.2, events such as GAWE were particularly important awareness-raising events. Contexts in which face to face events were not possible, social media played a particularly important role. However, in other cases, these findings suggest that efforts to generate public awareness go beyond the use of media, which often doesn't allow for interactive feedback. Coalitions who targeted O9 valued the feedback loop that resulted from efforts to raise awareness; while coalitions increased the awareness and salience of key education issues, their awareness of the importance of particular issues by the community through was simultaneously raised.

In some instances, NECs built on the O9 to specifically build the capacities of civil society to monitor and support the roll out of education policies (O10). This included supporting key education stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and communities to monitor school budgets, assess teacher working conditions and effectiveness or access education service delivery programmes. This further extended the accountability mechanism by drawing on a larger range of stakeholders to collect data and also advocate for themselves.

Focusing more specifically on targeting marginalised groups, O8 utilised a similar process to that of O9. Here, NECs targeted marginalised groups such as girls, out-of-school children and pastoralist children, children with disabilities, and associated caretakers and stakeholders. By conducting awareness raising and capacity building with these groups, NECs were also able to use these opportunities as consultations in order to ensure that advocacy efforts reflect the voices of vulnerable groups with fidelity.

Lastly, NECs were able to generate cohesion with other civil society groups, whether they were other advocacy groups working in different thematic areas or INGOs. This was an important unintended outcome in the sense that it did not explicitly fall with planned policy targets or programme-level outcomes and that it did not directly have an effect on other planned outcomes.

Similar to the process of diversifying membership, this provided NECs with a multiplier effect that allowed them to gain access to more or increase their credibility amongst key education stakeholders, making existing efforts more effective.

NECs targeted decision-makers in three broad ways: by addressing policy makers' awareness through increased civil society participation in formal and non-formal policy processes, by changing the attitudes of policy makers with regards to the credibility and value of civil society voices, and by generating policy maker action through modifications to policy and policy implementation and commitments to global education goals

As demonstrated in Section 4.2.1, NEC efforts to engage decision makers, and in particular through LEGs and other key education sector spaces, was one of the most important and tangible targeted outcomes in CSEF III. We identified six outcomes that relate to this process, with outcomes targeting changes to decision-maker awareness of the role of civil society in policy processes, in decision maker attitudes towards civil society, and finally, decision maker practice. Generating awareness of and changing attitudes on the role of civil society in policy processes appears to go hand-in-hand as perquisites for greater decision maker action on education issues.

As discussed previously, O13 and O14 are related in that they both concern the ways in which coalitions sought to change the attitudes of decision makers, with regards to their view of coalitions as credible, evidence-based organisations (O13) and their willingness to consult with civil society in matters of education policy (O14). O13 follows from O6 in which coalitions have engaged in research that is more inclusive of the perspectives of communities and marginalised groups. While coalitions received training on key research skills and methodologies, it was really the ways in which research could be utilised to capture different and underrepresented perspectives in a credible way (such as the use of context analysis or using research to identify gaps in policy or knowledge, in particular in relation to issues relating to vulnerable groups) that has allowed O6 to transition to O13.

The corollary effect of the increased credibility of coalitions is that decision makers are more willing to consult civil society perspectives (O14). That is to say, that the voice of civil society is given greater value by decision makers. This is an important pre-condition to enable the engagement of civil society in policy processes in a meaningful way. Coalitions reported that this included a process by which in response to policy issue, they carried out situational analyses or consultative meetings with members to capture views, compiled these in the form of suggestions, proposals, recommendations, or position papers, and presented these to policy processes such as LEGs or education sector planning committees.

As noted previously, O13 and O14 appear to be two pre-conditions to engagement in policy areas. Building on the attitude of policy makers in which civil society is viewed as credible and an important contributor to policy processes, O12 encompasses the outcomes in which coalitions were able to engage, resulting in policy dialogue that was more representative and participatory. As with Outcome 1.2, this was a targeted outcome for 91% of coalitions regardless of success, while 92% of coalitions reported having achieved it, regardless of intention (see Section 4.2.1 for further discussion).

However, as discussed in sections 4.1 and 4.2.1, we identified several contexts in which the assumptions about access to policy engagement processes did not hold for coalitions, whether through the lack of formal education policy processes in place (such as LEGs) or through the decreased willingness of policy makers to engage with civil society. This was particularly evident in

the survey results, where for O12, 100% of the respondents reported that this outcome materialised in ME&EE and Africa, versus 81% in APAC and 83% in LAC. In these circumstances, coalitions have sought to pursue non-formal channels as a means of engagement (O11). In the absence of access to formal processes, coalitions:

- Rely more strongly on using public platforms for consultation with members and non-members to create pressure and raise important issues

- Build relationships with decision makers outside of formal government policy groups

For the most part, coalitions targeted particular individuals (such as particular government ministers, members of policy groups such as LEGs, or national government staff or administrators) rather than targeting attitudes at a systemic level. This could lead to concerns over the sustainability of these impacts; however, coalitions were optimistic for the sustainability of this outcome, whereby 91% of coalitions who realised this outcome believed their efforts towards it would continue beyond CSEF, while 89% believed that the impacts would be sustained beyond CSEF.

We identified two types of outcomes at the level of decision makers taking action, including decision makers increasing funding and commitment towards global and regional education goals (including those set out by GPE and SDG4 goals more broadly) (O15) and decision makers modifying national education policy or policy implementation in response to coalition engagement (O16). Although the achievement of policy change was not a target specifically set as part of the CSEF programme, this contributes to the GPE goal of CSOs effectively informing policy and practice on quality teaching and learning and on equity and inclusion.

For NECs, advocating for modifications to national education policy or implementation was of greater priority (O16, with 91% of coalitions reporting intention) than increasing funding or commitment to global and regional goals (O15 - 81%); NECs were also much more successful in the former (O16 - 89% of coalitions reported materialisation of this outcome) versus the latter (O15 - 63%). This is perhaps evident, particularly for more mature coalitions who have been working towards such outcomes prior to and outside of CSEF.

At the regional and global levels, in addition to supporting NECs and their own advocacy efforts, the GS and RSs built cohesion and strengthened the diversity and inclusion of the Movement which helped to amplify programme impact

Of the outcomes harvested in our evaluation, nine outcomes were deemed relevant to the global and regional levels in addition to national levels, while only one outcome emerged as specific to global and regional levels.

As with NECs, RSs and the GS were equally responsible for achieving outcomes such as building capacities of members (O1) and strengthening the diversity and inclusivity of its membership base (O3), while also having generated inclusive research and analysis (O6) and having supported civil society, and marginalised groups in particular, to develop capacities to monitor the rollout of education policies (O10) and participate in policy dialogue (O8). At the global and regional level, strengthening the diversity and inclusivity of its membership was also enacted upon by ensuring

that the diversity of their membership was able to impact on global and regional discussions by enabling national-level voices to be represented and heard (O17).

These efforts are also captured by the programme efforts towards Outcomes 3.1 (focusing on the GPE board) and 3.2 (focusing on events and debates related to the implementation of SDG4), which are discussed in Section 4.2.3. The targets for Objective 3 were not necessarily a quantification of efforts per se; the targets set for Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 instead required that the programme track the programme's efforts to ensure that CSO2 positions are presented to yearly GPE events or as they emerge and to generate position or analysis papers related to SDG4 at the rate of at least one global and one per region, per year. While these targets ensure that minimum progress is made against these efforts, global and regional reporting captures a huge range of activities and efforts undertaken on these areas that suggest that the GS and RSs appear to have well exceeded their targets. In addition to this, RSs have been the programme's representatives and advocates in a variety of regionally-based events.

These efforts were multiplied through the building of 'cohesion' across different levels of CSEF and the Movement (O5) and across wider civil society, such as with other advocacy groups or international NGOs (O7). Here, cohesion is meant to encapsulate a changing of attitudes or will across a group as the result of increased alignment. NECs generated cohesion by working with members and other external civil society groups to ensure thematic priorities aligned to create an amplified, unified voice. Similarly, this was achieved by the GS and RSs within the movement. Beyond ensuring the alignment objectives (largely achieved through a unified ToC and Results Framework oriented around GPE and SDG4 goals, discussed in Section 4.1), GCE worked to not only amplify coalition voices at global and regional events, but also to support coalitions to amplify their own voices at the national-level through the backing of the GCE and GPE names. NECs reported that this provided them with greater credibility, particularly in the case of nascent coalitions or as coalitions have worked to establish relationships at the decision maker level. In this sense, this was achieved through the recognition of the global status and efforts of the programme, but often more importantly through the efforts undertaken at the regional level which was often more closely relevant.

4.4 How effectively did CSEF III stakeholders support the achievement of objectives

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Evaluation Question: How and in what ways have different CSEF III stakeholders supported the achievement of the CSEF III objectives?

Main findings

- The GS was effective in steering the programme, ensuring alignment across levels, and creating space for civil society to participate in global and regional decision-making, with strong tailored support provided by RSs

- GCE took clear steps to build internal grant and programme management capacity, but it encountered some challenges in its expanded role as Grant Agent for a highly complex and diverse programme

- Regional stakeholders, in particular regional secretariats, provided tailored and context appropriate support which national coalitions valued and used to build their organisational and thematic and advocacy capacityto meet CSEF III objectives.

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This section draws on global and regional reporting, wider programme documentation, and key informant interviews with CSEF III global, regional and national stakeholders in order to explore the extent to which stakeholders supported the achievement of CSEF III objectives.

We consider the aspects of the roles played by each stakeholder that worked particularly well, while also reflecting on some of the challenges which may have hindered achievements. This section should be read in conjunction with Section 4.5 and 4.6, which look more specifically at the effectiveness and efficiency of the CSEF III structure and architecture as a whole in achieving programme objectives. A description of the CSEF III structure is provided in Section 2.

4.4.1 Global level stakeholders

In contrast to CSEF II where GCE reported through a Supervisory Entity accountable for the programme, in CSEF III GCE was ultimately responsible for the delivery of CSEF III as Grant Agent reporting directly to the GPE, which required strong oversight and leadership abilities.

The global level of CSEF comprised three core functions, as set out in Figure 4.19. The role of the GS was divided into two areas of focus, one grant management and coordination, and the second on programme management and support. The GS reported to the Global Oversight Committee, who were responsible for high level oversight and decision making.

Figure 4.19: GCE's roles as CSEF III Manager and Grant Agent

Global partnership for education (GPE)		

Global Secretariat		Global oversight committee (GOC)
Grant management and coordination • Liaise with GPE • Coordinate strategic planning • Manage MEL and reporting • Communicate deadlines • Coordinate programme implementation • Provide operational tools and support • Work with regional entities to ensure smooth implementation	**Programme management coordination and support** • Global capacity building, cross-country learning, and national and global linkages • Coordinate with International Partners Group (IPG) • Produce relevant tools • Create platforms for exchange • Support national engagement in global processes	• Oversight of grant and programme management • Financial and strategic decision making • Arbitration of disputes between implementing partners • Oversee grant review and allocation, financial and programme audits, and progress towards objectives.

The GS steered programme operations and improved internal grant and programme management capacity in line with independent recommendations; however, it encountered some challenges as Grant Agent for a highly complex and diverse programme

The GS served two broad functions which supported the achievement of CSEF III objectives. First, it provided a leadership, organisational and oversight function, which outlined the strategic and operational frameworks within which the programme operated. Second, it provided a high-level programme support function, creating links between global and regional structures and platforms, and opportunities for cross learning and two-way communications with global decision makers.

In order to provide effective programme management and oversight, GCE made considerable efforts to build internal capacity, most notably in response to recommendations made by Cardno Emerging Markets in 2014. This led to improvements such as the expansion of internal auditing and MEL resources and capacity; allocating additional budget and resourcing to regional oversight and quality assurance; and developing systems, policies and guidelines that met GPE requirements. GCE put in place the standardised systems and processes, informed by recommendations from the CSEF II evaluation, to ensure the smooth running of the programme. This included developing an online MEL and financial management platform, developing the annual proposal and reporting templates and approval process, and communicating requirements and deadlines. RSs were engaged in this process and provided inputs and feedback to inform the final tools and protocols, and ensure there was sufficient flexibility to apply to different country contexts.

While there were several notable successes, it's worth noting that some challenges were encountered in implementing these processes, and the roll out of programme management systems were not always completely smooth. The online MEL and financial platforms required several iterations and faced resistance at times. Feedback from interview respondents and coalition reporting suggests that initial training may not have been sufficient, however this issue appears to have been resolved between 2017 and 2018, when additional trainings were provided which was followed by a general improvement in the feedback provided in national reports.

The annual proposal and reporting processes were regularly flagged as a challenge in global and regional reporting. Several regional and national reports imply that the reporting and planning processes were time consuming, and coalitions regularly missed reporting and proposal deadlines. The regularity of issues relating to reporting delays may indicate wider planning or structural issues were not resolved. However, the programme had the difficult challenge of ensuring compliance with GPE reporting and due diligence requirements, in addition to ensuring continued alignment between NEC and CSEF III objectives, across 63 diverse contexts and varying NEC capacities, which is a notable undertaking. This issue is further discussed in relation to the wider structure of the programme in Section 4.5 and 4.6.

The GS ensured alignment across global and regional levels and harnessed the wider movement to influence global advocacy and support the achievement of programme objectives

As well as ensuring that the frameworks and organisational building blocks were in place to enable the programme to operate according to plan, the GS also undertook activities which directly inputted into the achievement of objectives. Feedback from the online survey indicates the majority of national coalitions (92%) perceive the GS as 'essential' or 'important' to achieving the overall CSEF objectives. Some of the main activities conducted by the GS to support the achievement of objectives included:

- Providing tools, guidelines and information to support NECs to achieve the objectives set out in the Results framework.

- Organising global events and campaigns to increase coalition visibility and encourage lesson sharing.

- Building coalition awareness of, and alignment with, GPE processes and SDG4 implementation by providing relevant toolkits, guidelines, and information, for example the Education Sector Planning and LEG monitoring tool, and "Financing Matters: A Toolkit on Domestic Financing for Education".

- Creating global platforms and spaces for CSOs to engage in global debates, including gathering through GPE board meetings, and gathering the experiences of coalitions (both CSEF and non-CSEF) to feed into HLPF discussions to monitoring and review of SDG implementation and progress.

Findings from the document review and KII responses suggest that the GS played a valuable role in identifying and creating spaces for CSOs to engage with the GPE board, and SDG4 implementation. CSO participation in GPE board meetings was enhanced through pre-board

meetings and side discussions at wider global events to prepare discussion points and agree priorities. Informal meetings between CSOs and GPE's Developing Country Partners (DCPs) strengthened those relationships. The co-development of reports and papers on relevant issues with regional and national stakeholders strengthened CSO voices in global debates around SDG4 implementation, and global events showcased coalition experiences, and encouraged meaningful CSO participation in global debates.

NECs provided less feedback on the importance of the GS during interviews compared with global and regional stakeholders, which likely reflects the less direct communications between the GS and NECs. However, those who provided feedback particularly valued the links with global level advocacy, which both informed coalition work and helped to strengthen their advocacy activities. Some examples of NEC feedback is provided below:

> *CSEF was very instrumental in enabling the coalition to build the capacity on advocacy, on organising ourselves to participate in key policy processes, Joint Sector Review, Sector Working Group, and various other technical committees. We even had the opportunity to participate in the Developing Countries' Partners' Meeting […] CSEF really enabled the coalition to get involved and get a better understanding of GPE support for the country and […] to monitor the funds that were given to the country from GPE. (KII, national coalition).*

> *We get very regular information [from the GS], especially on GPE issues around the GPE Board meetings […] They've supported us to carry out some activities directly. Tracking the GPE commitments, country commitments to the GPE […] We've also had the opportunity to participate in capacity-building on a number of things, education financing, the MEL system […] And then we have the World Assembly where we discuss issues around the CSEF programme progress. (KII, national stakeholder).*

The Global Oversight Committee was an effective mechanism which strengthened high level decision making processes and mitigated against risks of conflicts of interest

Global and regional KII respondents provided positive feedback on the role of the GOC, and generally valued the role as an effective mechanism to deal with potential conflicts of interest.

We briefly discuss questions of conflict of interest in Section 4.5.3, however, it is worth noting here that these concerns were not raised by national coalitions during the interviews, and most regional and global implementers felt that the role played by the GOC in conjunction with the Regional Funding Committees (RFCs) were effective in mitigating this risk:

> *I think [the independent role of the GOC] worked well because whenever issues within the project came up, then they'll deal with it not because they are part of recipient of this grant but they'll be looking at it generally based on how is it helping to support the implementation or driving the CSEF programmes forward. (KII, regional stakeholder).*

> *The Global Campaign for Education Board includes two members [elected] from each region […] but all of those regional bodies, national and regional, were major recipients for the funding of CSEF. So, we had to remove them altogether from any decision-making or oversight, and the Oversight Committee was made up of those who were not receiving funds from the CSEF and who could therefore referee the questions of how much is it reasonable for a regional platform to get relative to*

*the national platforms and how much should be shared between different regions (KII, global stakeholder).*

In addition to the risk monitoring and management function, regional and global implementers valued the inputs of the GOC in supporting the delivery of the programme, with one regional respondent noting the voluntary nature of the role and high degree of commitment from GOC members. Another global respondent reflected that the role of the GOC was an opportunity to ensure that CSEF was aligned and visible within the wider GCE movement, and generated buy in from the wider GCE board. By drawing in board members who were not part of CSEF III, it strengthened the position of CSEF III as part of the wider, cross-cutting GCE agenda, rather than as a standalone project:

> *The fact that the GOC members were at the same time Board members helped to sort of create that linkage between the [GOC], CSEF, and the [GCE] Board so that the Board did not only look at CSEF as one project, but it was an important thing that they also wanted to be involved in. (KII, global stakeholder).*

4.4.2   Regional level stakeholders

Regional stakeholders coordinated national level activities, collaborated with NECs to ensure they had the support and expertise to meet national level priorities and objectives, created horizontal and vertical linkages for effective learning and collaboration, and supported NECs to contribute to regional and global advocacy. The regional roles are demonstrated in Figure 4.20. As with the global level, a division is made between grant management and programme support a functions, and independent decision making is provided by RFCs.

Figure 4.20: Regional Level roles
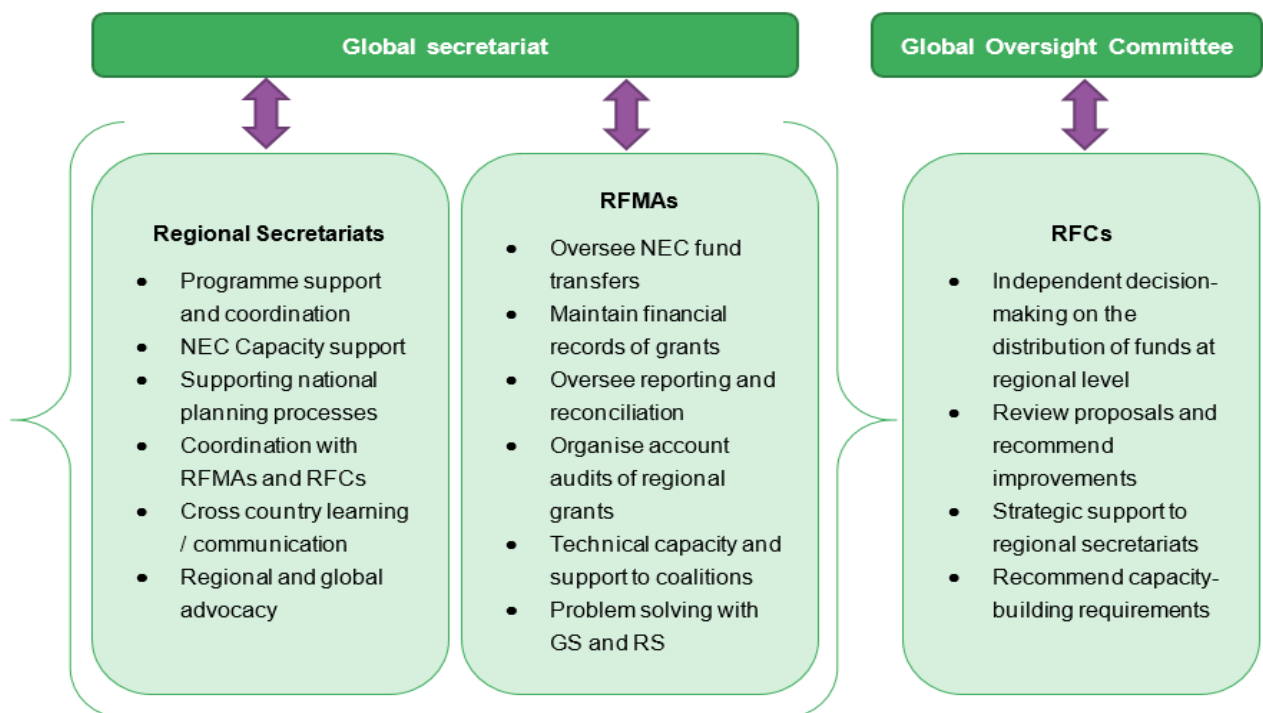
RSs built strong, close knit relationships with NECs to support the implementation of global level processes, although at times resources were stretched thinly

Regional Secretariats operated across the four regions, led by:

- The Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) in Africa
- The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) in APAC
- The Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) in LAC
- The Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA) in ME&EE

RSs played a multifaceted role, which balanced programme coordination and operational activities, with tailored support to coalitions to strengthen national, regional and global advocacy activities. Regional and global reporting between 2016 and 2019 demonstrated the extensive activities and responsibilities delivered by RSs for the duration of the programme. A summary of activities are broadly categorised and presented in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Summary of Regional Secretariat activities

Area of focus	Summary of activities
Management and Coordination	
Regional Level planning processes	• Input into global tools and process development • Develop regional level plans and budgets • Set out resourcing plans and highlighting gaps • Regional financial management activities
National level planning processes	• Support coalition proposal development and planning, including providing relevant information on regional and global trends. • Coordinate RFC proposal reviews, share feedback with coalitions, and support proposal refinement based on feedback • Engage RFCs, RFMAs, and the Global Secretariat to coordinate contracting process
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)	• Regular communications with coalitions • Attend and participate in coalition activities and meetings • Conduct regional staff meetings • Review draft financial and narrative reports, provide recommendations, compile final versions for GCE • Complete regional level reporting • Share lessons and good practice examples for input into global reporting • Participate in regional reflections and reviews.
Coalition capacity support	
Regional capacity support	• Organise regional coalition meetings to share global and regional updates • Provide training on the online MEL and financial system (with GCE inputs) • Link coalitions with wider global partners and initiatives • Provide customised capacity development events and trainings on relevant themes.

Area of focus	Summary of activities
In-country visits and capacity support	• Conduct 1-2 in person visits per year, per coalition where possible[40], to provide capacity support on a wide range of areas, such as organisational governance, administration, financial management, network building and strengthening, policy analysis, advocacy planning, event design and planning, and proposal and report writing. • Identify opportunities for learning across coalitions • Provide additional support for new or emerging coalitions
Regional communication tools	• Share information, guidance and updates through the provision of tools and guides of SDG4 indicators, information and lesson sharing in newsletters, and regular virtual meetings.
Case study sharing	• Coordinate, develop and share lessons and best practice examples from coalitions.
Facilitating national-global-regional links	
Strengthening coalition engagement in national, regional and global processes	• Support engagement in Local Education Groups (LEGs) • Sharing information on the work of CSO representatives on the GPE board, GPE replenishment, and on GPE staff visits • Support coalition participation in regional and global policy discussions • Coordinate consultations and information dissemination on SDG4 processes

RSs worked in collaboration with the GS to coordinate and organise the programme, and helped to maintain compliance with standardised global processes, while ensuring sufficient adaptation to national and regional contexts. The RSs fostered close knit relationships and regular communications with NECs to ensure this, and regional reporting demonstrates the lengths and efforts taken to support national proposals and reporting processes. This often required personalised support, problem solving activities, and the facilitation of effective communications with the RFMAs, RFCs and GS.

The diversity of support required, and the dedicated inputs from each of the RSs is reflected in regular regional reports. Each RS supported NECs with varying operational and governance capacities, and a number of NECs required additional or specialised support in these areas. For example, ASPBAE invested considerable time and effort supporting coalitions in the Pacific sub-region with lower capacities or resources. Although challenges remained, major improvements were reported in the governance structures in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. In LAC, one NEC faced a complex set of issues with their legal entity which created challenges in timely financial reporting and implementation. CLADE worked closely with them and with the RFMA over a number of years to strengthen the coalition and support them to continue to operate despite these challenges.

The strong relationships of trust between RSs and NECs, and the RS understanding of the coalitions and the contexts in which they operated, allowed the RSs to provide tailored and hands

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[34] In the event that security or visa restrictions prevented in person visits, Regional Secretariats provided online support, or used regional and global events as an opportunity to arrange face-to-face support to coalitions.

on support which targeted the specific needs of NECs. Several global stakeholders argued that it would have been difficult for the GS to provide this level of support directly.

While the coordination and management responsibilities of the RS were crucial to the functioning of the programme, balancing the workload of programme management activities, capacity support, and coordination of regional and global advocacy activities posed some challenges. Project reporting requirements were time consuming, and risked pulling RS resources away from important advocacy work, and added to the heavy workload of RSs. While this was true of all regions, it was a particularly notable challenge for those regions with higher numbers of coalitions. ANCEFA were supporting 32 coalitions, which made up just over half of the entire CSEF portfolio, operating across a wide geographical area in highly diverse political contexts, and navigating three different reporting languages. In addition to this, ANCEFA were proportionally managing more coalitions per Project Officer than any other region. Asia was the second largest region, with 19 coalitions making up 30% of the CSEF portfolio. For a period of time ASPBAE faced difficulties in recruiting and retaining a capacity advisor for the Pacific sub-region, where many NECs faced capacity challenges, which further stretched their resources until a permanent replacement was found.

RSs were essential to achieving programme objectives, due to their strong experience and expertise in regional advocacy and understanding of diverse regional contexts

When asked how important RSs were to achieving the overall CSEF objectives, the vast majority of surveyed coalitions (98%) perceived that the RSs were either essential or important for achieving CSEF objectives. Responses were positive across all regions, particularly in the LAC region, with 100% of coalitions rating the RS as 'essential'.

The RSs were highly valued for their experience and expertise in regional level education advocacy work, and their ability to understand the regional advocacy landscape. This not only enabled the RS to build the capacity of NECs for national advocacy, but also ensure they were supported to feed into regional and global advocacy. This experience, combined with a deep understanding and familiarity of coalition operations and national contexts, enabled RSs to pin point the specific NEC needs and tailor their support accordingly:

> *[The regional secretariats are the] capacity-builders and advisory hubs for coalitions and had to build very intense and very tight relationships with the national coalitions, not as just a project administrator. They were really sort of looking into creating the ability of the coalitions to make policy-influence a reality. But at the same time see to it that the infrastructure provided by CSEF is functional and provides the output that is necessary. (KII, global stakeholder)*

> *ASPBAE has a strength on multicultural communication and […] over the year[s] they have gained […] experience [of] how to promote people who don't speak. So, there is a systematic effort to identify people who are not speaking or who are not getting space to speak. (KII, national stakeholder)*

As noted above, the RSs were working with NECs in a diverse range on contexts, many of which presented complex challenges which required tailored support from experts with a strong understanding of the issues. In ME&EE, Yemen faced a unique set of challenges, and required tailored support from ACEA to identify relevant policy targets. In LAC, several of the coalitions

faced growing violent government oppression, particularly in Nicaragua. It required ongoing support from CLADE to work with NECs to identify strategies to mitigate these challenges and to continue progressing towards programme goals.

RFMAs were responsible for regional grant management and capacity support to NECs which helped to strengthen financial management capabilities

As well as RSs, each region included dedicated RFMAs responsible for fund disbursement and management at the regional level. The CSEF III programme document specified that RFMAs should be led by organisations with 'robust financial management and grant management systems'. The following organisations were responsible for providing this role:

- Action Aid in the LAC region
- Oxfam Ibis on the Africa region
- Education International (until 2017) / and then GCE in the APAC region
- GCE in the ME&EE region

Action Aid was in post since the first phase of CSEF, whilst Oxfam Ibis replaced Oxfam GB in the early stages of CSEF III. Education International was RFMA for Asia in the initial stages of CSEF III, but made an organisational decision to step down in 2017, requiring GCE to take over for the remainder of the programme. GCE was not able to identify an adequate organisation for the ME&EE region, and therefore filled the role directly.

A primary function of the RFMA role was to manage the disbursement of funds to national coalitions, including reviewing funding proposals, organising payments, reconciling financial reporting, and maintaining financial records. The RFMA role aimed to separate this grant management function from the programme coordination and support function conducted by the regional secretariats. There was recognition from RSs that this separation was necessary and useful, reducing the level of financial management support required from RSs, and avoiding the RSs being viewed as donors by the NECs.

> *[The Regional Secretariats] were delivering and supporting coalitions in [overall delivery of the project objectives], then the issues of how to deal with the details of the finances […] were really not a burden on us because there was the […] the team of experts from the RFMA. (**KII, Regional stakeholder**).*

However, some respondents questioned whether this role created bottlenecks due to the additional layer of review and approval, and suggested merging this function with the RS or GS. This is discussed further in Section 4.5 and 4.6.

Survey respondents responded positively when asked how important they believed the RFMA was to achieving the overall CSEF objectives, with 87% reporting that RFMAs were 'essential' or 'important' to the achievement of objectives. RFMAs provided support to build the financial management capacity of coalitions, which was particularly important for emerging coalitions and those with ongoing governance issues. Remote and in person support was provided on financial management and reporting, planning and preparing for internal and external audits, and working with coalitions to address audit recommendations. This function, combined with technical support

from RSs, had the additional benefit of strengthening the capacity of coalitions to prepare proposals and demonstrate organisational capacities to a wider set of donors. The move from Education International to GCE as the RFMA in APAC was noted by one coalition to have led to more holistic support:

There is a lot of improvement since the RFMA moved to GCE […] the RFMA team at GCE […] provided us with more holistic pictures on not just only financial reporting obligations but financial management and links to our governance structure[…] (KII, national stakeholder).

RFMAs played quite a good role in terms of not only just channelling resources but also building capacity of the national coalitions in terms of how to manage this funding, putting together audit committees which national coalitions rarely had before. There was a sense of systemisation, institutional strengthening, and also providing some of the capacity support. (KII, global stakeholder)

The RFCs were effective in reducing risks of conflict of interest and providing relevant advice to NECs and RSs, although the level of engagement varied across regions

As with the GOC, an important function of the RFC is to reduce real or perceived conflicts of interest, while also providing expert support and an independent 'fresh pair of eyes'. Advice and recommendations provided by the RFC appear to have been useful and relevant to the coalitions, and in some cases helped RSs to strategize with coalitions in order to help meet CSEF objectives, for example Global Annual Reports in 2016 and 2017 highlight how CLADE and ASPBAE used RFC feedback to work with coalitions to identify ways to increase the inclusivity and diversity of coalition membership.

This role appears to have worked particularly well in the LAC and APAC regions, were RFCs were highly active and engaged. There were some indications that the RFC role in ME&EE and Africa regions may have been less hands on, and faced some initial challenges. One respondent indicated that it took some time to clarify the exact role of the RFC in ME&EE, and there were challenges in coordinating the availability of its members. In Africa, regional reporting flagged that there were challenges due to the limited French and Portuguese speaking members.

[The RFC in LAC] had a very, very intense relationship with the coalitions and really […] without being paid for it, took it to their heart to visit coalitions, be part of the activities, and see how they implemented what they had proposed. That was a little bit more distant in the case of Middle East and Eastern Europe and in the case of Africa. (KII, global stakeholder).

We tried to put in place lots of these things which will keep decisions at an arm's length. So, in each region there was a regional council, individuals, not recipients of the funds, who would review the national coalition proposals and decide which ones were strong enough to fund, which ones needed further work, and so on. (KII, global stakeholder).

4.5 How effective was the structure and operation of CSEF III?

> **Evaluation Question**: How and in what ways has the structure and operation of the Global and Regional Secretariats supported the achievement of the CSEF III objectives?
>
> **Main findings**
>
> - The CSEF III structure and operations were effective in managing and tracking the progress of the programme overtime, but reporting requirements were time consuming and stretched resources, particularly at the regional level.
> - The structure of the programme ensured there were appropriate accountability mechanisms and that risks of Conflicts of Interest were reduced as far as possible, but the complex structure created bottlenecks that impacted on the timeliness of activities.
> - The tri-level structure is a strong and unique mechanism for enhancing collective advocacy across national, regional and global levels.

This section builds on the findings and reflections set out in the previous section, considering the effectiveness of CSEF III structure in achieving objectives. We consider the strengths and weaknesses of the structure in the smooth running of the programme and the ability to harness a strong and cohesive global movement that achieves the goals of the programme.

We consider the effectiveness of the CSEF III structure and operations in:

- Managing and coordinating a complex and diverse programme

- Implementing a transparent and robust grant management processes

- Delivering programme results and outcomes

We further consider the effectiveness of communications and coherence across each of these functions.

4.5.1   Purpose and aims of the CSEF III Structure

The tri-level structure of CSEF has been a unique and central element of the programme since the first phase in 2009. At the core of the CSEF architecture is its 'elevator' function, in which the national level are supported to build their capacity for national level advocacy, link with global and regional level platforms to strengthen global and regional campaigns and enhance collective advocacy, and build the credibility and visibility of national coalitions and of the GCE movement. Each level of the programme provided a specific set of experiences, connections and skills to strengthen the full movement.

While the broad structure of CSEF remained unchanged, the GCE continually adapted and strengthened the institutional design following the recommendations from external evaluations, while retaining the strong national-regional-global links that drive advocacy and enhance civil society voices across all levels.[41] These changes aimed to strengthen management structures to

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[41] GPE (2017) 'Civil Society Education Fund: Lessons Learned 2009-2015'

mitigate against conflicts of interest, improve accountability and transparency, and to create clearer delineations between grant-making and programmatic functions.

4.5.2 Effectiveness of programme management and coordination

National planning and proposal processes ensured strategic alignment with programme goals and national priorities, and was an important accountability mechanism; however, this was resource and time intensive

Revised budget proposals and plans were prepared by NECs on an annual basis. GS developed proposal templates and guidelines in collaboration with regional partners, and distributed them to coalitions via the RS. RSs worked with the NECs to ensure that local strategies and priorities were strategically aligned with programme goals, and coordinated with the relevant RFCs and RFMAs for review and approval. The RSs communicated RFC feedback to NECs, and supported them to respond to any queries or recommendations, and coordinated with RFMAs and / or the GS to arrange contracting and facilitate agreements to address any issues raised regarding coalition governance or finances.

The national planning and proposal process broadly worked as intended, and ensured nationally relevant plans remained aligned with global indicators and goals. The process was also necessary to ensure ongoing accountability and oversight of national level activities, and in order to comply with GPE reporting requirements. However, there were some common challenges and issues raised across all levels: the process was time consuming, coalitions regularly missed deadlines, and the review process required multiple layers of review before proposals and contracts were agreed. This was at times exacerbated by a perception that tools and guidelines were not provided by the GS with enough time to coordinate proposals and review processes, particularly where translated versions of the tools were required. As is highlighted in Section 4.6 below, this may have been exacerbated by inefficiencies and bottlenecks within the programme structure.

MEL processes were improved during the course programme despite some early challenges

A major focus in the early stages of CSEF III was on strengthening the MEL strategy as recommended in the external evaluation of CSEF II. A comprehensive MEL strategy was developed, and the RF and ToC significantly adapted to reflect the updated GPE strategy and recently established SDGs. As part of this overhaul, GS led the process of developing a new online MEL system, which aimed to improve the accuracy and timeliness of MEL reporting and provide the GS and RS with an overview of programme progress. The MEL system was also designed to be useful and relevant to the NECs themselves, by providing them with a system to store and track project performance data, and also as a platform to share learning across coalitions.

There were challenges in rolling out the MEL system which required several adaptations to ensure it was usable for NECs and providing useful and relevant information. Feedback provided by coalitions in annual and biannual reporting highlighted several common challenges with the system, including:

- **System design**: NECs found that the information requested overly repetitive, that scoring criteria was unclear, and that phrasing of information requests sometimes caused misunderstandings.

- **Practical issues**: NECs reporting in languages other than English complained about delays in receiving translated versions, and that the quality of translation caused confusion and lack of clarity. Several coalitions suffered from poor internet connectivity, which made the process of completing the form very time intensive, and several reported that they lost data and progress when connections broke. In the case of Sudan, they were unable to access the system at all for a period of time due to US sanctions.

- **Capacity issues**: the capacity to use the system to its full functionality varied across coalitions and regions, both in terms of the technical capacity to use the system, and the ability to complete it accurately and to a sufficient level of detail. This was exacerbated by staff turnover. Several coalitions requested additional training support.

These challenges affected each level of the programme: RSs found it time-consuming to coordinate and troubleshoot with NECs, whilst the GS spent considerable time reviewing, providing feedback, and collating the MEL system outputs to feed into global reports. However, there were notable improvements to the system over the course of CSEF III, and the feedback provided by NECs suggests that the system became less repetitive and more user friendly over time. Additional training was provided by the GS which was appreciated by coalitions. This suggests that the GS was responsive and flexible to the feedback provided, although some RSs commented that it was difficult to keep on top of changes and iterations made to the system.

Despite the challenges in rolling out and providing sufficient training on the MEL system, there were positive signs that the NECs found this to be a useful management and monitoring system, and that it was an improvement on the paper-based system. NECs reported in national progress reports that they were better able to follow their progress against plans and targets, identify gaps, and store data securely. Some NECs found the ability to use this platform to access the reporting and learning from other coalitions to be useful, although not all NECs utilised this function. Some interview participants at regional and national levels felt that the Results Framework focused too much on numbers and quantitative measures, and would have welcomed more opportunities for qualitative reflection, while one respondent expressed considerable interest in using innovative approaches to track outcomes and impacts overtime.

The MEL system was designed to track and monitor progress against the results framework, and it would not have been viable for this system, or for the GS and RSs, to track impact at individual NEC level without considerable additional resources, beyond the use of external evaluations. Furthermore, CSEF took steps to create qualitative reflections of coalition achievements through documented learning briefs and case studies, which draw on qualitative sources that NECs could attach through the MEL system. The comments noted above therefore may be linked to the 'scoring' they receive against the Results Framework, and demonstrate that there is appetite to from some coalitions to make further use of MEL to reflect on successes outside of the Results Framework. While this may happen already to some extent, it is possible not all NECs are aware of the potential uses of MEL and the MEL system, or that they currently do not have the capacity to

fully benefit from it. Nonetheless, the MEL system had considerable potential and was a worthwhile investment, and there is potential scope to build on this and continue to identify ways of using the system more fully in the future.

The CSEF III structure ensured strong coordination, oversight and accountability, although the multi-layered structure can lead to bottlenecks and delays at times

The multi-layered structure of CSEF III supported coordination and coherent management of the programme by providing strong layers of oversight and accountability alongside the supportive and consultative role of the RS. This meant that the GS, RFMAs and RFCs could focus on providing critical reviews of proposals, progress and reporting, while the RS were able to contextualise feedback and suggestions with the NECs, and work with them to overcome challenges. The regional levels were more strongly positioned to track progress and revisions, a task which would likely have been a major challenge for the GS to manage centrally given the diversity of contexts.

However, there were drawbacks to this multi-layered structure. The complexities in the structure were partially responsible for the delays in reviewing and signing off annual proposals and reports. It was reported by some RSs that getting the necessary people in the same room to make decisions about proposals was difficult to coordinate, in particular unpaid RFC members. The GS was often reliant on the RS and RFMAs to follow up with NECs on outstanding issues. This was in many ways a very useful mechanism, since they had stronger relationships with the NECs and had the linguistic ability to relay complex requests with non-English speaking coalitions. However, it was noted that this placed a lot of additional burden on already stretched regional resources.

> *[The CSEF structure] was really good on paper but perhaps it's just too complex […] or too many layers of reporting that caused that difficulty for certain coalitions to keep up […] maybe if we simplified somehow it would have really helped to also be more efficient (KII, global stakeholder)*

> *We have to deal with the RFMA, Regional Fund Management Agency and then we have to deal with [the Regional Secretariat], we have to deal with GCE. Sometimes it becomes a bit too much because you are getting communication from so many different sources. (KII, national stakeholder).*

4.5.3   Effectiveness of grant management

Grant management processes were strengthened in line with the Cardno recommendations to ensure accountability and transparency; however the added scrutiny on GCE as Grant Agent may have pulled focus from delivering activities

One of the perceived strengths of the programme structure was its ability to ensure high-level oversight at the global level, reinforced by deep dive reviews and targeted support at the regional level. The ability of the GS to effectively manage and monitor all 63 coalitions in a diverse set of contexts and with varying degrees of capacity within coalitions was not a feasible option. Within this structure, the GS were able to put in place the processes, procedures and guidelines, which were operationalised at the regional level by RFMAs, who were well positioned to conduct detailed reviews of coalition finances. Financial accountability was further strengthened by the role of RFMAs and RFCs in identifying areas of weakness within coalition operations, and providing targeted support and recommendations for improvement.

The internal audit function was strengthened during CSEF III including the appointment of an internal-audit controller to develop an internal-audit charter, review internal audit controls, and host training, checklists, tools and templates for RFMAs and for NECs and having them appoint an Internal Audit Committee. RFMAs and the GS worked closely with NECs to prepare and implement internal and external audits, and provided follow up support to address recommendations. This process was seen to positively impact on NEC operations in setting up audit advisory boards, which they had not previously done: "*The successes of having our internal-audit function the way it was, I think that's quite a helpful thing that could be taken on board in the future and that I think is one of our successes for CSEF*" (KII, Global Stakeholder).

The structure of the programme meant there were stronger layers of financial accountability and oversight which did not lose sight of individual contexts, however there was a tension between the need for detailed and robust accountability structures, and the ability of the programme to focus on delivering important advocacy work. This tension might have been magnified by perceptions of weak financial management capacities raised in previous reviews, which placed additional scrutiny on GCE as Grant Agent to demonstrate strong financial processes. The drawback of this is that the requirement for multiple levels of review and oversight led to delays in fund disbursements, which had a knock-on effect on the timing of national and regional activities. This challenge is discussed in more detail in Section 4.6.

The programme structure continued to mitigate against concerns around 'principal-agent' conflicts of interest, and there was limited evidence that was a major concern

The structure of CSEF was designed from the start in 2009 to minimise conflicts of interest in grant management processes, ensuring a clear division between grant-making and programmatic functions. The GOC was added to the structure in CSEF II along with a Supervising Entity (UNESCO) as additional accountability mechanisms. The removal of the Supervising Entity and transition of GCE to Grant Agent led to additional scrutiny for CSEF III. A clear separation of roles between GS and GOC at global level and between RS, RFC and RFMA at regional level aimed to harmonise the need for: robust financial accountability and transparency; effective grant management and coordination; and mitigating against any principal-agent conflicts in order to maintain a strong and cohesive civil society movement.

The specific concerns related to 'principle-agent conflicts' has been discussed in detail in previous evaluations. The CSEF I evaluation discussed principal-agent conflicts of interest, including problems caused for GCE by the World Bank as chair of the EDPF Committee whilst also being a recipient of EDPF that funded the CSEF[42]. In terms of avoiding conflicts of interest emerging within the CSEF, it recommended that:

> A single and global FMA could be in charge of the global CSEF finance system as a way to simplify and harmonise procedures, finance reporting and audit systems. This agency should coordinate with the CSEF Global and regional secretariat, but be directly accountable to the supervisory entity…in case this organisation is directly related to the GCE or to its members (via a funding or membership

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[42] Verger et al, 2012

relationship) clear mechanisms and rules should be in place to guarantee transparency in the procedures and to avoid conflicts of interest emerging.[43]

This led to the creation of the GOC at the start of CSEF II. The subsequent independent evaluation of CSEF II highlighted that the roles of the RFC and GOC were effective in mitigating against potential conflicts of interest, and any perceptions of this amount the membership[44]. The GCE-commissioned CSEF III MTR further reflected positively on the movement of GCE to the Grant Agent role, and concluded that the CSEF governance structure was well designed to reduce conflicts of interest.[45] In contrast, the GPE-commissioned OPM evaluation stated that:

> *A number of informants expressed the view that the GCE Secretariat should not have played the role of grant agent in CSEF III. This was widely critiqued and red-flagged as problematic, both on the grounds of potential conflict of interest and because of deficiencies in financial management capacity.[46]*

Despite this, our evaluation found limited evidence that conflicts of interest were a major concern. Where this issue was raised, the measures taken to mitigate against the risk of conflicts of interest with GCE as grant agent were generally seen as successful:

> *I think what you can see from the convoluted structure was the desire to avoid conflicts of interests and to ensure that there were checks and balances built into the system. So, whilst the Global Campaign for Education was the grant agent, it did not determine which grants got approved, it did not determine whether a particular coalition was managing its finances credibly enough in order to receive the next tranche, it wasn't doing the things which could compromise its grant-agency role (KII, Global Stakeholder)*

Only one interviewee expressed concern around potential 'principle-agent' conflicts, but no further evidence was found to corroborate this, and in fact most interviewees expressed that the RS-NEC relationship was seen as mutually positive and effective:

> *The support from regional level, from ASPBAE regional coordinators, I don't find I can have anything to complain about. It's really great. They really work with us. They will always be there when we need the support. But they always respect our independence as well. (KII, National Stakeholder).*

Risks of principal-agent conflicts of interest are inherent within any funding arrangement, including EOL, and it is clear that GCE took appropriate steps throughout CSEF to reduce this as far as possible.

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[43] Verger et al, 2012, p.98
[44] I4DI, 2015 p.47
[45] Grijalva and Izenberg, 2018, 2018 p.24
[46] OPM, 2018

4.5.4   Effectiveness of the CSEF III structure in achieving results

The tri-level structure of the programme provided NECs with holistic support which focused on building strong operational foundations, providing targeted support based on the needs of the individual NEC, and creating linkages and lesson sharing across levels

The structure of the programme provided coalitions with holistic support from global and regional levels, which strengthened NEC governance and operational structures, facilitated horizontal and vertical lesson sharing, increased the visibility and credibility of the coalitions, and provided ongoing targeted support to meet CSEF objectives and strengthen the GCE movement.

The support provided to NECs initially focused on building the foundations on which coalitions operated in terms of their governance structure, financial and operational management structures, building inclusive and representative memberships, and ensuring a strong understanding of, and alignment with, EFA and later SDG4 goals. In many cases, the RS went to great lengths to work with the GS, RFMAs, and RFCs to support coalitions with ongoing governance challenges and financial management weaknesses. This often required years of support, and demonstrated that CSEF was never quick to give up on those facing long term challenges.

Over the course of CSEF as a whole, support to well established coalitions was gradually adapted, focusing more on specific and targeted efforts to strengthen NEC ability to influence education sector policy. Some of the NECs who had been part of the programme since CSEF I reflected that that had become less reliant on regular support, and were able to focus more concretely on advocacy activities. In one case, the coalition felt the more experienced NECs were able play a role in strengthening newer coalitions by sharing their experiences:

> *We continue to consolidate our strengths and we are building on the lessons that we were learning in previous phases of the Civil Society Education Fund. […] during the phase of CSEF III, as a coalition, that's when we manage to achieve a lot in as much as advocacy is concerned. (KII, National Stakeholder).*

> *In CSEF phase I and phase II, there was a high level of emphasis on coalition-building and in phase III there was more emphasis on advocacy. […] As [our coalition] was started much earlier compared to others, one of [our roles] was to share our experience with other coalitions. So, whenever we participate in any meeting, we try to meet with the new coalition, talking to them, sharing our experience, help them to build confidence. (KII, National Stakeholder).*

> *At the beginning [of CSEF], [RSs] have three to four visits per year and, later on as…maybe depends on the situation of the coalition as we grow up, then they can cut it down to three or to two visits per year. But whenever they are in the country, they really try to understand the work from the ground as well as be with us in any important advocacy activity. (KII, National Stakeholder).*

The structure of CSEF aimed to enhance lesson sharing both vertically and horizontally, which was most often facilitated through the RSs. Inter-regionally, the RS facilitated opportunities for coalitions facing similar challenges to learn from each other. Regional workshops and training provided coalitions with opportunities to share insights and experiences, and strategize on specific themes or issues. The MEL system provided a platform on which coalitions were able to share lessons, research and information. Some NECs commented within their reporting that this was a

useful way of learning about what other coalitions were doing, although this was not always used consistently by all coalitions who mostly used the MEL system as a tool for transmitting reporting data.

The GS and RS facilitated communications and knowledge sharing between national and global levels. This included sharing and disseminating information and toolkits to ensure there was understanding of, and alignment with, GPE and SDG4 agendas. In some cases the RS was able to connect with GPE to share specific challenges and lessons from coalitions, as was flagged in the CSEF 2018 Global Annual Report, which reported how CLADE facilitated the introduction of the new GPE country support team to the Nicaragua coalition, which provided an opportunity to present challenges faced in civil society participation in the country, and to hear about GPE updates on the status of GPE support to the national government. In the CSEF 2016 Global Annual Report, ASPBAE reported how they were able to facilitate communications and linkages with GCE and GPE to get support in persuading the Myanmar government to include local CSO representatives in LEGs.

National level voices and experiences were channelled to the global level through various platforms linked with GPE processes and SDG4 progress monitoring. CSO2 board representatives were consulted ahead of GPE board meetings to ensure there was a clear understanding of the GPE board decision making processes, and to offer NECs opportunities to input into the agenda for GPE CSO2 constituency meetings. Ahead of HLFP events, both CSEF and non CSEF coalitions were consulted to feed into regional analyses and ensure that national level challenges were presented in SDG4 monitoring discussions.

The capacity support and inputs provided to NECs helped to build the visibility and credibility of coalitions, enabling them to meaningfully engage in national, regional and global advocacy activities, as well as be present in high profile global events and conferences.

The structure of CSEF was mutually beneficial across all levels, and created opportunities for collective advocacy across national, regional and global levels

By strengthening coalition capacity, credibility and visibility, CSEF was able to better harness a cohesive movement of national, regional and global stakeholders in order to move toward the achievement of programme goals. As noted in the OPM evaluation in 2018, there is a strong perception that the structure enables synergies between national, regional and global levels that is considered unique to the CSEF structure.[47]

This means that global and regional levels benefit the national level by supporting them to influence national policy, which then strengthens global and regional advocacy by presenting evidence based examples from a wide range of contexts. Each role within the structure is therefore seen as essential to the ability of the programme to achieve its objectives, and several respondents argued that it would have not been possible for the programme to succeed without these structural layers in place:

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[47] OPM, 2018 p.61

There was no way GCE would have been able to support policy work at all levels and to all coalitions and also ensuring that coalitions are keeping in mind the national and the global movement goals, without regions. And I think also the regions couldn't have been able to ensure that there's that strong linkage of whatever is happening at the regional level and the national level to the global agenda of which GCE has been responsible for coordinating. (KII, Global Stakeholder).

During an interview, one NEC provided a specific example of the way in which the multi-layered structure gave them exposure at both regional and national levels, which increased their visibility and credibility beyond the national level, which in turn further strengthened their credibility at the national level:

[our coalition] was admitted into the GPE Grants and Performance Committee. I represent the other civil-society organisations. It was through the exposure that it had gotten by the multi-layered structure of the CSEF funding. […] CSEF also helped the coalition to plug into the GPE processes. […] And also at national level it helped us to be very much visible to the government spaces. [We] now participate in the Local Education Group, representing the civil-society organisations. And also the LEG it is where a number of education-related decisions are actually made. And our being there was mainly facilitated by the Civil Society Education Fund. (KII, National Stakeholder).

This is not to deny the existence of issues with the structure which could be improved. Previous evaluations, and feedback provided in some of the regional reports, indicate that the requirement to feed into several resource intensive global campaigns and platforms, such as the GPE replenishment campaign and GPE board meetings, at times stretched regional resources, as noted in some of the regional reports, for example:

With the expanded number of staff at the CSEF Global Secretariat level, and increased (seemingly exponential) demand for participation in GPE related program developments, and reviews, and support for CSO2 Board members to be aware and responsive to the broad and voluminous GPE agenda, this has created additional pressure for regional staff since numbers have remained the same. (Regional Biannual Report, 2018).

This additional pressure on regional resources was possibly exacerbated by the less direct communications between the national and global levels, which relied heavily on the RSs to act as an intermediary. While it is a strength of the structure that the RS is able to play this role, some felt that this was an area that could be improved:

That's a huge problem we saw when, for example, communications went out and we asked members for examples to share their campaigning work with us on Global Action Week or activities they're doing for COVID-19 […] we don't get so many responses from them in that sense. […] we always need to draw upon the regional secretariats to help us with that mobilisation and engagement. […] It's really worked very well and we're very fortunate that we could count on all of them because otherwise, really, it would be just an extra step that we have to do which it also implies added hours, human resources, and it would be much more difficult to organisation. […] but I think that we also put so much pressure on them to support. (KII, Global Stakeholder).

4.6 How efficient was the structure of CSEF III?

> **Evaluation Question**: How efficient were the Global and Regional Secretariat structures in the use of resources towards the timely achievement of CSEF III objectives?
>
> **Main findings**
>
> - There were considerable benefits to the sophisticated and complex structure of CSEF, it created drawbacks in terms of programme efficiency and coordination, reflected by the difficulties in balancing robust accountability structures with streamlined processes and decision making.
> - The programme structure ensured effective accountability and transparency of funds, although there were bottlenecks in the grant management and annual proposal process which created delays in fund disbursements, which had the knock on effect of delay implementation activities
> - The structure of CSEF adds value through strengthened regional and global advocacy, which benefits NECs outside of CSEF

In this section, we explore whether resources dedicated to programme's structures and operations were used efficiently and in a timely manner in order to achieve CSEF III objectives, and the extent to which they added value to the coalitions and to the wider GCE movement.

It is not within the scope of this evaluation to conduct a full value for money or cost-effectiveness analysis, and therefore we have not extensively analysed financial aspects of the programme. We consider the efficiencies within the CSEF structure, in terms of resource efficiency, coordination, collaboration, and capacity strengthening. This section draws primarily on qualitative perceptions and feedback from programme stakeholders, in addition to detailed reviews of programme documents and reports.

4.6.1 Efficiency of programme management processes and activities

Costs associated with CSEF III structure and organisation of CSEF were justified and necessary to delivery strong advocacy work

The main cost driver of CSEF III were staff costs, which made up 60% of the management costs for the programme (USD8m), of which approximately 44% was budgeted for technical support, learning and communications, 35% allocated to management, monitoring, oversight and reporting, and 18% to finance and administration[48]. Interview participants generally agreed that costs associated with staffing were well justified due to the nature of CSEF work. Staff time was the main resource for advocacy activities, which involved convening a large number of countries and contexts:

> *There is sort of a forty-sixty distribution in terms of support versus the actual programme costs and all, which is considered very high. But, again, from my experience, I don't think we should be looking*

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[48] CSEF costed extension proposal budget 2019

at that from that sort of very mechanistic point of view because we are looking at advocacy projects where human resource is the most important element. (KII, Global Stakeholder).

Global and regional salary costs were reasonable and not overly high given the wide range of activities and responsibilities carried out, particularly at regional level. This is similarly reflected at the national level, where NECs received relatively small sums (approximately $50,000-$100,000 per coalition per year), which covered both operational time and delivery of activities. These funds in many cases meant that coalitions could continue to operate where there would have been limited opportunities for education advocacy funding available otherwise, and the long-term nature of funding provided a level of security to ensure continuity of activities that might not have been possible without core funding.

The complex layers of management in CSEF played an important function, but it also created communication and coordination inefficiencies and bottlenecks

As in previous evaluations, most global and regional stakeholders felt that the structure of CSEF was necessary to deliver its goals, and that the removal of any one element would have impacted the functioning of the programme. However, the need for a division between the RFMA and RS was more frequently debated. It was generally agreed that the RFMA role was an important function, but there was also recognition that this split led to bottlenecks and coordination challenges between the RS and RFMAs. Some felt that this division created unnecessary costs:

It would have been better if we could have just combined the RFMAs and the regional secretariats into one structure because there's no need to separate. If I am a beneficiary, I am a coalition. Whenever I am reporting, I know that I'm sending everything else to one organisation. While in the current CSEF context, the financial report was going somewhere else and the narrative was going somewhere else and it required these regional secretariats and the RFMA to coordinate the way how they will share that information. But also it meant that the programme costs were higher in terms of the overheads because we needed to have two structures that would look at different things that you can actually take and combine. (KII, Global Stakeholder).

While combining these roles may have an efficiency gain in terms of costs, this would have been offset by a decrease in objectivity and an increase in a risk of conflicts of interest. Additionally, the merge of functions would have required a significant increase in RS resources, which as highlighted in previous sections were often already stretched thinly. It is also unclear whether the RS would have had the robust financial and grant management expertise required for this role, which was not within their existing remit. A detailed review of the bottlenecks and inefficiencies across these roles may have helped to reduce this challenge and identify viable solutions.

The voluntary roles provided by GOC and RFC members were on the whole seen by regional and global stakeholders as a gain in efficiency given the valuable advice and oversight provided by the GOC and RFC volunteers. The voluntary nature of the role was considered not only as a cost saving for the programme, but a specific added value as these committees were made up of members with a strong vested interest and passion in seeing the programme achieve its goals. However, it was also noted that the unpaid nature of the roles often made it difficult to coordinate RFC members with competing demands. Equally, when committee members moved on, it was challenging to replace them in a timely manner. Nonetheless, as highlighted in Section 4.4, this

role was valuable beyond simply maintaining objectivity and ensuring accountability, and inputs provided by the RFC were valued and acted on by RSs as a useful fresh pair of eyes.

Inefficiencies in management coordination as a result of the layers of governance exacerbated time intensive reporting processes

The structure of CSEF created some inefficiencies in terms of programme management and coordination. As flagged in previous sections, the time spent coordinating, reviewing and approving reports and proposals was time consuming, requiring several layers of review, and drawing time away from advocacy activities:

> While we understand and appreciate the need for CSEF to have robust, high quality reporting systems, we are concerned about the massive amount of work that is being required both at the Regional Secretariat level and the coalition level […] We all need to keep in mind that MEL doesn't become the tail wagging the dog; that coalitions and regional organisations have time to actually do the work of policy influence and capacity building. (Regional Annual Report, 2017).

> What I think could be more efficient would be to not to have to dedicate so much energy to the monitoring processes, which were quite demanding. So, we had a monitoring strategy with a platform that was quite complex and maybe it took us longer than it should have and it distracted us from advocacy at times because we had to generate reports, collect information about ourselves. (KII, Regional Stakeholder).

Global stakeholders discussed the challenges of collating reporting, which required several iterations between the GS and RS to correct errors or request additional information. This overstretched the resources at both global and regional levels and caused delays in the proposal and contracting process that followed.

A significant amount of time and resources were invested in the development of the online MEL system, with the aim of improving accuracy and timeliness of reporting. The roll out of the system faced some challenges as outlined in Section 4.5, and it took longer than planned for the system to be fully operational. Feedback on the MEL system suggests that the tool became streamlined over the course of CSEF III, but reporting processes overall remained time consuming. The use of the MEL platform was not always fully optimised by NECs and regional secretariats, which is unsurprising given the challenge of rolling out to 63 NECs with varying degrees of technical capacity. It was also noted that RSs themselves required more support and resources to deliver MEL activities:

> For each system mechanism that the global secretariat was putting in place, it would have worked better if it was also taken down to the regions and there is someone at the regional level who is dedicated for M&E (KII, Global Stakeholder).

> It was always a struggle to get coalitions to engage with the [MEL] system and a lot of trainings that were provided to the regional coordinators and to their communications or MEL officers, that it still wasn't enough and that we always struggled with getting their reports on time and efficient or maybe responding to what we were asking specifically in the MEL reports. (KII, Global Stakeholder).

Despite the reported challenges, the MEL system was a worthwhile investment which improved on the previous paper-based system. Overall, many coalitions reported the forms had been simplified

and continually improved overtime. Coalitions reported that they were better able to track plans and progress, and access data stored in one secure location. It provided both regional and global levels with a stronger view of progress across the programme.

> *The MEL system was something which I think, after two and a half years of being applied, has shown its merits. We can use that and we're going to continue to use it whether in different forms. But it took us quite some time to have that developed and to have it approved and to make it acceptable by the end-users, the coalitions themselves, and see that as not an additional burden but something that can improve their work. (KII, Global Stakeholder).*

4.6.2 Efficiency of grant disbursement and management

The annual national proposal and planning process was time consuming, exacerbated by complexities in the CSEF structure, which led to delays in fund disbursements

As indicated in previous sections, delays in the proposal and budget development process often led to knock on delays in fund disbursements. There are numerous references to the protracted and time-consuming grant proposal and disbursement process, which was in part due to the need for multiple layers of review and feedback. This necessitated a high level of interaction between the three levels which slowed down the approval and contracting process. This was further exacerbated by the variable quality of proposal submissions from NECs, requiring significant revisions:

> *There would be a lot of back and forth. And in this scenario then having that three-tiered structure in place, because it would have to now go to the regional structures and then they would liaise with the national coalitions, it was a very time-consuming process to finalise those budgets and narratives. (KII, Global Stakeholder).*

> *I think the biggest delay was when we were signing new grants with national coalitions because the process required that the coalition should submit a proposal, the proposal was supposed to be evaluated by the RFCs, then back to the regional secretariats, and there was contracting, transfer of money, implementation. So, that process was really long. At times it would go more like six months or more, depending on how coalitions…because some proposals were sent back for revision, other proposal were sent back to be rewritten altogether (KII, global stakeholder).*

Regional reports across all regions referenced delays in the proposal and grant disbursement process, and most of the NEC interview participants felt that the programme was slow to release funds which impacted on the implementation of activities. NECs attributed the delays to the structure of the programme, both in terms of the approval process, and because the funds were being channelled through several levels and require various approvals before reaching them:

> *I think maybe the late disbursement of funds was also due to the structure of the funding. Because […the funds] come through the Financial Management Agency. Then the Financial Management Agency would then send to the coalition. And before it gets to the Financial Management Agency there are some due processes that were supposed to be done by GCE. (KII, national coalition).*

These issues highlight the difficulties of balancing robust accountability structures which meet GPE requirements, with streamlined processes and decision making. Global and regional stakeholders

noted that while the structure created inefficiencies, the review process was necessary and useful, highlighting important issues such as poor alignment between national proposals and programme objectives and goals, and ensuring a sufficiently thorough financial reporting. Without the multi-layered structure in place, the required level of quality assurance and accountability may not have been achieved.

It should be noted that a review of regional reporting found an improvement over time. Namely, delays in funding were more frequently reported during the first half of CSEF III, and reports of delays reduced somewhat in the second half of the programme. The Africa region was the exception to this where delays were reported in almost every review period.

GCE has followed advice to improve internal grant management capacities which have improved overtime, and are complemented by the strength of RFMA operations

GCE took clear steps to follow advice and recommendations set out in the Cardno eligibility review, and worked to strengthen its auditing function throughout CSEF III. As flagged in the 2018 OPM evaluation, progress in this area was initially slow, however reporting suggests that this has improved and the auditing functions of CSEF are now working smoothly. In addition, support provided to the RFMAs has helped coalitions to prepare for both internal and external audits, convene audit advisory boards, and effectively commission external audits directly.

RFMAs closely monitored and thoroughly reviewed coalition financial reporting and followed up on any issues with the coalition and the RS. Their proximity and familiarity with the coalitions enabled them to do this more effectively than the GS, and this function was therefore useful for strong financial oversight despite the additional time required:

> With sixty-two [sic] national coalitions, it's not going to be a perfect process. There are going to be some delays. But definitely having the RFMAs doing that thorough checking, resolving all those queries, it definitely minimised further queries and it definitely assisted with our global reporting. (KII, global stakeholder).

The capacity building and support role provided to the coalitions by RFMAs added additional value by improving coalition capacities in proposal writing, budgeting, financial management, and auditing skills. Some NECs further highlighted how the scrutiny of the CSEF financial management processes and support from RFMAs in this area helped them to demonstrate their organisational capacity to wider donors and win new work.

The RFMA role in Africa transitioned from Oxfam GB to Oxfam Ibis in 2016, and in APAC from Education International (EI) to GCE in 2017. In both cases this presented challenges in reconciling finances and transferring information across different institutional systems. APAC reporting in 2019 suggests that the impact on timelines and communications of the handover of information from EI to GCE was partly responsible for delays during the extension period in calculating the funds which should be distributed to NECs. The LAC 2019 biannual report also highlighted issues with defining the total amount of funds available at global level which led to delays in developing national plans and proposals.

4.6.3 Added value of regional and global advocacy

The CSEF structure was perceived to add value by harnessing a cohesive movement for collective advocacy across all levels

As discussed in Section 4.5, the structure of the programme ensured mutual benefits across national, regional and global levels, and harnessed a cohesive movement for collective advocacy. When discussing questions of efficiency, several of the global and regional stakeholders pointed to the added value of the regional and global levels, offsetting their relatively small overhead costs, in not only coordinating the programme, but directly conducting advocacy activities and influencing policy:

> It's a huge machine. It's sixty countries that we have been able to sort of cover and with, my opinion, modest resources and not too large an amount of overheads which is sitting in the global secretariat and the regional secretariats.[…] We are not just running a programme or a project but we are doing a lot of policy work at the same time, which is then informed by the work that happens in the coalitions, carrying that back into our discussions at Board level of GPE, or sort of influencing high-level policy fora or going to UNESCO and say you should rather do this and that, and having people sitting on the Indicator Technical Committees where indicators are being discussed and reviewed. So, I think there's a lot that was enabled out of all of the CSEF fund (KII, Global Stakeholder).

A regional stakeholder argued that a significant value add of the structure was that GCE was not limited to the boundaries of the programme, the CSEF programme was operating within a wider movement of organisations working towards the same goals, and was able to benefit those not eligible for CSEF support while also benefitting from the support of non-CSEF members. ASPBAE for example talked about how they were able to utilise resources and events from complementary non-CSEF activities to increase the opportunities for NECs to engage in discussions and regional advocacy on issues around education financing and youth engagement.

Equally, several CSEF initiatives fell within the wider remit of the GCE movement, enabling GCE to draw in support from a wider set of coalitions not eligible for CSEF funding towards the shared goals of GCE and GPE. An example of this was in GCE's advocacy for a robust indicator for SDG target 4.7 in which the voices of over 200 CSO through 50 coalitions (both CSEF and non-CSEF) were harnessed to successfully lobby for the inclusion of additional indicators.

> The amount of advocacy input that was made through our own campaign and policy colleagues who were partly paid from the programme enabled us to sort of really make inroads into the SDG and the SDG four formulation. I think it was a major win for GCE to have throughout the process from EFA to SDG really the most competent colleagues of ours and the most sort of driven colleagues to sort of sit in those Steering Committees and make sure that the formulations of the indicators is not watered down. (KII, global stakeholder).

4.7 What is the likely sustainability of the programme benefits?

> **Evaluation Question**: How and in what ways will the benefits of the CSEF III for CSEF and GCE partners continue, especially in terms of lessons learned and contributions to the Movement going forward?
>
> **Main findings**
>
> - CSEF III supported sustainability through a programme-embedded strategy that was largely effective and through supporting the transition to EOL.
> - CSEF III partners felt the programme has created a largely sustainable global, collaborative network of strong NECs advocating effectively for policy development towards SDG4. This was supported by a growing recognition of the value of civil society and working from the bottom up, as well as a spirit of solidarity.
> - However, there are concerns over the sustainability of some CSEF III features moving forward, including of the long-term, contextualised approach to advocacy and advocacy capacity building, the value of the tri-level communications, sharing, and learning approach and the MEL platform. These concerns are further exacerbated by uncertainty over changes to the future donor landscape.

In this section, we explore the likely sustainability of the benefits of the programme by first considering the strategies employed as part of the CSEF programme to strengthen the sustainability of programme impacts and evidence on its success thus far. We then examine the views of programme stakeholders with regard to the perceived long-term legacies of the programme as well as the strengths of the programme that stakeholders perceived may not be sustained moving forward.

4.7.1 Actions taken to strengthen the sustainability of CSEF III contributions to the global campaign

GCE established a strategy for sustainability at the start of CSEF III

Following the reference in the CSEF II evaluation to the lack of a sustainability plan, CSEF included a sustainability strategy as part of the design of CSEF III. This comprised of the following:

- capacity building and documentation plus dissemination of results to maintain and unlock future partnerships and funding

- incentivising NEC fundraising through caps on resourcing for those whose CSEF income amounted to more than 85% of their total funding

- as part of progress reporting, asking NECs to state their plans for sustaining the work supported by CSEF

- seeking to build and to strengthen direct partnerships with other funders through the International Partners' Group as recommended in the CSEF II evaluation, especially if no further funding were forthcoming

Given the extended grant period of CSEF III, there would also be scaled-up support to building partnerships with other funders in the final year, in particular if further global funding for the programme were not forthcoming.

NECs were asked each year to identify the sustainability actions they were taking and those they expected to take. These were on the MEL global indicators risk and sustainability register and showed a significant level of action on sustainability by nearly all NECs. The NEC actions on sustainability shown in the risk register included a number of partnerships providing funding support, whilst the KIIs highlighted in particular The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GiZ) and Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) as partners.

GCE designed and secured an extension of CSEF III from 31 March 2019 to 31 December 2019 to bridge the gap until the start of EOL. The extension maintained the same ToC and programme structure, but focused on:

- closure activities, with special attention to those coalitions that would be phasing out (i.e. not part of EOL), and including final reporting and commissioning this present evaluation
- preparing for the roles that it was envisaged the GS and RS would play in ASA/EOL, including contributing, in response to invitation, in the ASA proposal

There is a high level of confidence amongst NECs that they will continue to contribute to CSEF-related objectives moving forward as part of EOL; however, there is some apprehension that all NECs will be able to maintain their effectiveness beyond EOL

Our survey showed that all NECs expect to continue to contribute to CSEF III objectives: 15% to a moderate extent, 60% to a great extent and 25% to a very great extent. Most of the interviewed NECs expressed confidence in the sustainability of their NEC in providing an advocacy role through LEGs and in their contribution to a global movement, at least for the duration of EOL funding. One NEC that is not eligible for EOL funding was also confident about finding alternative funds. However, some NECs were less confident about the longer-term effectiveness of their coalition in the absence of core funding which, outside of CSEF and EOL, has been difficult to obtain. CSEF funding has helped leverage donor funding, while a lack of core funds leads to a less active NEC, which further renders the NEC less visible to donors.

One global-level interviewee believed that sustainability in the absence of EOL would be feasible if the NEC predated CSEF or came into existence other than as a result of CSEF; new coalitions created during CSEF would face more difficulty. In some cases, KII respondents referred to being totally reliant on CSEF funds, in one case estimating CSEF funds made up 90% of their costs, in another case 80% of staff costs. Two others reported that whilst the NEC would have survived without CSEF funding, it would not have been as productive in policy advocacy.

4.7.2   The main perceived legacies of CSEF moving forward

One legacy of CSEF III is that it has further built upon a collaborative network of strong, credible coalitions sharing a common agenda and able to advocate effectively for SDG4

CSEF III was seen by interviewees as being part of a change in thinking, bringing people of nations and creeds together and creating an overall set of human resources and ideas that would be sustained in future. CSEF was able to support coalitions over the course of its implementation, by building coalition capacities which may not have been possible without the combination of long-term funding and capacity support. Regional stakeholders expressed opinions about the long-term sustainability challenges faced by coalitions: "*Effective functional national coalitions…without CSEF we would still be doing very poorly in terms of that.*" *(KII, Regional Stakeholder);* "*There are two or three that I recall in Africa that without support from EOL…will not survive.*" *(KII, Regional Stakeholder).*

CSEF III supported coalitions to be more confident and credible, which in turn enabled more effective civil society advocacy and campaigning and working with government, and strengthened donor trust to get more funding. One NEC viewed that CSEF III was key to building its reputation, which previously relied on INGOs for providing the image. NECs are clearer on what they are working on and how to get information, and have more competent managers who can champion advocacy on national, regional and global levels, and being effective in LEGs rather than just attending. *"Without the CSEF we wouldn't have established a stronger coalition as it actually is." (KII, National Stakeholder).*

The strength of the CSEF name (and its association with GPE) and the inputs provided by the programme have provided leverage for NECs to garner government buy-in. One NEC provided an example of how CSEF's connections with GPE helped provide a means to reach decision makers:

> *In 2019 we advocated for a review of the Private Sector Engagement Strategy for the GPE. As a coalition, we led that process and we were being supported by other coalitions in the region. And we actually wrote a letter to our former Minister of Primary and Secondary Education who back then was sitting in the GPE Board and we copied all the other Africa Ministers that were sitting in the GPE Board. So, I think all that was made possible by CSEF III. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

NECs expressed the centrality of how CSEF has elevated the status of their coalitions in policy discussions:

> *Without CSEF, the media and also policymaker didn't see us. But because of CSEF we worked with the media, we worked with the policymaker, we worked with the civil society, and now our institution and our work became famous and also became credible. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

> *Right now, there's rarely a time where there's going to be a discussion around education policy that the coalition is not invited to be part. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

Regional stakeholders also commented on the legacy of CSEF III at the regional level. It helped boost the work of the ACEA, in the processes bringing together pre-existing regional coalitions. It

facilitated a regional memorandum of understanding with the Africa Union, though it was questionable whether this would be sustained. In the LAC region, it brought CSOs together to create a new regional space, The Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean sub region (CAMEXCA) which was applying for EOL funding.

CSEF III demonstrated the need for and value of civil society voices at global, regional and national levels in the establishment and promotion of SDG4

Respondents felt that CSEF III enabled greater recognition of the civil society role in education. This was also found through the outcomes harvested in the OH process (see Section 4.3). CSEF added value by ensuring that CSOs had a voice in donor coordination mechanisms and that they were invited into national policy processes.

> *Governments thought that civil society [was just] another offshoot of opposition. But they got to understand that it is more helpful to work with civil society because they bring a lot more fresh-ideas, very objective, they are not the type that would shy away from telling you where the real problems are. Because if the government or minister is relying on junior officers, those junior officers cannot report themselves by saying things are not working in their ideas… they'll be accused of not being the ones who will work. (KII, Regional Stakeholder)*

Interviewees saw that governments now recognised the constructive nature of CSOs, in contributing to building broadly-owned education sector plans whilst linking different countries and different cultures. They noted that long lasting education policy required the backing of civil society who support continuity, in contrast to governments that often have short term horizons. Providing steady institutional memory made coalition voices more effective at leveraging and influencing.

This was particularly so for raising the public profile of SDG4 and popularising SDG4 across civil society with some success at changing government policy (e.g. for free basic education):

> *CSEF III coincided with the development of the SDGs and there's a lot of work that was done regionally and globally together with the NECs to shape the global goals. So, I think that's a plus because we influenced that process. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

Respondents also recognised that CSEF enabled them to give voice to marginalised groups. CSEF allowed for flexible and creative ways to ensure that coalitions had representation of marginalised groups. One NEC explained that through CSEF, it was able to effect longer-term change, such as policy change, in work on education and disability rights, an area that was previously difficult to do so:

> *Under the support of CSEF we were able to achieve some change that will last, for sure, because it's a change in our revised education law, for example. It's an addition in our law on disability, like inclusion of autism as a type of disability that they should entitled to the support, to the social supporting scheme to people with disability. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

These achievements have also helped to reinforce confidence within coalitions, creating a positive feedback loop: *"I think it created a certain culture within the coalition that will actually help in terms*

of strengthening or in terms of helping the continuity of that same spirit. So, I can say that they will continue it even in the absence of Education Out Loud." (KII, National Stakeholder)

There are positive indications of continuing the spirit of solidarity at national level and working from the bottom up

CSEF III has contributed to the GCE Movement by further building a network with a common and shared political agenda. Stakeholders saw the benefit of working together, trusting and helping each other, and as one interviewee put it, building from the bottom up, as a key legacy of the programme. The trust, mutual understanding and goodwill of members leveraged the support they achieved. This included comments from NECs such as:

> *The lesson is that normally when people come together, they can achieve a lot. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

> *Civil society got a platform and …a network among the civil-society actors so that they can learn from each other and influence their policymakers. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

> *Working with a broad range of partners… enables different ideas, people with different strength in different areas to come together to support the issues we are pushing. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

> *… Strengthening coalitions so that they …become bigger than any individual in there [noting that individuals can have their own private agenda] and focus on the core work. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

In particular, the network allowed NECs to share experiences and thus how to deal with specific issues; with global and regional participation at local level, and with a focus on the global south. *"The good relationship at global level, especially with the GCE. We feel now we are one party. Our good connection with other regional secretariats…The connections also with many stakeholders at global level…we feel that we are part of a global movement." (KII, Regional Stakeholder)*

The ongoing spirit of solidarity at national level, with CSEF partners working as a team, was evidenced in one country that is no longer EOL-eligible, by the NECs members contributing to ensure the continuation of the NEC staff. Other NECs expected to be able to get funding from elsewhere even if there was no funding from GPE.

One regional stakeholder noted that the importance of working at the local level, or working from the bottom up, has been taken up by EOL. Another national stakeholder felt that NECs should be more reliant on in-country resourcing and were considering trying to replicate the experience of the global CSEF fund with a national fund: *"We may ourselves sit down and set up a similar fund at national level… from the global funds, we can think how to establish national funds for education and support vulnerable groups".*

Some interviewed national stakeholders seemed more confident than global and regional stakeholders on the ongoing contribution of NECs to SDG4 as part of a global movement:

Personally, I believe Education Out Loud [is just a] name change from the CSEF project, because only the management has changed. (KII, National Stakeholder)

I don't really find a huge difference - I think we can stay quite consistent with our own strategic plan…with CSEF and now with EOL, we don't find that we have to change. (KII, National Stakeholder)

Though we may have some difficulties adapting to the new change, to the change in EOL, I'm positive on continuing what we want to do in EOL and what we want to continue from what still needs to be continued from CSEF. (KII, National Stakeholder)

4.7.3   Potential risks to the ongoing sustainability of CSEF successes and achievements

There is concern amongst some CSEF partners that a short-term project approach may weaken the sustainability of CSEF III's solidarity and impact

CSEF partners reflected that building advocacy capacities and mobilising resources takes time, noting that advocacy is a process, and not a single event or a project with a specific end point:

Advocacy is a continuous effort and you cannot say that 'I succeed'. You can elaborate on the process, how you mobilise people, how you are vocal now, but you cannot make it as a rigid indicator. (KII, National Stakeholder)

As noted in previous sections, the outcomes of advocacy work are not always immediate, nor are they always pre-determined:

One of the lessons is …the need to sustain whatever we have started because I realise that [in] advocacy…rarely do you get your results immediately. (KII, National Stakeholder)

In many cases, this has to do with the nature of the individualised and contextual approach required for capacity building, as well as the time required to realise and apply capacities:

You constantly must keep on revisiting because, in as much as you would have expected that those coalitions have capacity to attract local resources to sustain their work ongoing, they will still require this kind of support. (KII, National Stakeholder)

As a coalition and as a campaign, we need to be contextual (KII, National Stakeholder)

As [coalitions] develop, we pass through different stages at different times…[it is] very critical to take into cognisance the stage of development of each and every coalition as you'll be providing support, not treating all the coalitions as if they are the same." (KII, National Stakeholder)

Coalitions [for whom] we have built their capacity over a period of time, some of them are very good and do good financial management. There are still those who would need you to keep supporting them 'til they grow out of their low capacity." (KII, Global Stakeholder)

Several KII interviewees expressed concern that future funding opportunities will not be like CSEF III, and are based on a more activity-based, project approach rather than system building:

And now the question how we as a civil society global movement can get again our soul as a global movement, not as a separate activity funding here and there. (KII, Regional Stakeholder)

Our plea all the time is that, moving away from 'projectising' things to build lasting processes just as we did with CSEF." (KII, Global Stakeholder)

CSEF III developed a wealth of tools, processes and systems that could support the Movement going forward; however, in the particular case of the MEL system, there is a risk of losing the major investment and learning if it is not sustained

CSEF partners highlighted a number of tools, processes and publications that resulted from CSEF III that could support the Movement going forward. This included:

- improved manuals and guidelines to guide the work of NECs

- learning and sharing platforms, which have been critical for capacity-building

- capacities to produce education scoping papers

- virtual forums and media events ('especially "breakfast consultations") that probably would not continue

- financial reporting tools and the internal audit system,

- the MEL platform, including the role of MEL manager to both manage progress reporting and as a repository for learning and sharing

However, respondents also noted that many of these systems are under threat for discontinuation. These concerns are highlighted by the uncertainty for GCE moving forward, whether to other programmes or in their role as part of EOL. This is particularly true of the MEL system, which as noted in previous sections, was very effective in supporting data collection and progress monitoring of the programme (see Section 4.2 and 4.5) but required a large effort and costs to set up and to ensure the right capacities have been built to support its use (see Section 4.5 and 4.6).

While this system will continue to have value to GCE and the Movement going forward, there appears to be some uncertainty as to whether these systems or tools may have value to CSEF partners as they transition to EOL.

There are concerns that the value and strength of communications gained through the tri-level structure of CSEF may not be sustained in future programmes

Building on GCE's global movement, one of the facets of CSEF III valued by CSEF partners has been the ways in which information and lessons learned are shared across the programme:

There is a network among the civil-society actors so that they can learn from each other and influence their policymakers. So, this is most important value. (KII, National Stakeholder)

One national stakeholder noted the value of shared platforms, critical for capacity-building. Another noted the benefits of learning from the experiences of other countries, for example through study

visits. One interviewee felt that CSEF provided best practices of consultation processes with civil society, helping to translate the global strategy and 2030 Agenda to local contexts.

Conversely, one respondent believed that this could have been strengthened under CSEF III, but nevertheless valued lesson sharing:

> *So, I think there is a need to invest more in learning and also in information sharing. I think that's what makes us stronger and that's what makes us realise where we're coming from and where we are going. So, I think that's a very important part that was actually lacking under the CSEF III programme. (KII, National Stakeholder)*

Moving forward, respondents voiced concerns about the efficiency of communications and sharing, and in particular, the duplication of structures moving forward into a new iteration of CSEF, in the form of EOL:

> *And in this EOL mechanism, the grant agency… go directly to the coalition, they have separate [channels], they work with the coalitions, they work with the regional secretariat, they work with the global secretariat, which mean that they kill the soul of the networking among all the global movement and they push again civil society again to think about the funding. (KII, Regional Stakeholder)*

> *So, there's a duplication of effort but also communication issues that national coalitions tend to communicate more with the Regional Management Unit of Oxfam [IBIS], because they are the ones that are giving them contracts, without necessarily communicating with the regional secretariat where the movement is based… Oxfam has been contracted to deliver on a project, that we understand, we have got no issues with that. So, they wouldn't look at it in the very same way GCE would look at it. But GCE is building a movement and how do we ensure that we balance these two? (KII, Global Stakeholder)*

Interviews suggest that there remains some confusion about the envisaged the roles the GCE partners (such as the GCE secretariat and regional partners) will play in EOL.

The limited funding landscape and lack of available donor funding may present an effectiveness and possibly existential risk for some NECs not eligible for EOL funding

Global and regional level interviewees noted the constrained scope for future funding, therefore, donor funding remains essential. A few NECs have been reliant on CSEF funds for their existence and others said that whilst they would have survived without these funds, they would not have been productive in policy advocacy. Therefore, for at least some NECs, ongoing donor funding remains essential.

However, interviewees noted a reduced appetite for GPE to provide core funding *"with no end in sight" (KII, Global Stakeholder)*. Interviewees were also concerned that other donors would be reluctant to provide funding for NEC salaries and other core costs. There is a concern of an overall shrinking donor landscape in the education sector and that EOL itself may be affected by funding issues down the line, especially with the impact of Covid-19.

Nevertheless, there is still a determination to move forward and build on what has been achieved, whatever the future holds:

> *I recommend that we as movements will continue what we harvest from CSEF III: how to work together, how to trust each other, how to make a joint position regarding whatever raised on education, and how to support the national coalitions if we have or we don't have a project. (KII, Regional Stakeholder)*

5 Conclusions

The CSEF III programme was highly relevant to the needs of its stakeholders

The programme adopted a well-designed strategy to promote SDG4 involving objectives and a ToC that were valid and relevant in most respects for most of the countries involved. Aligning with SDG4 ensured that CSEF III objectives were strongly aligned to the changing priorities of GPE, GCE and the NECs involved in the programme, which was confirmed by survey results across NEC and regional partners.

The successful strengthening of NECs achieved through CSEF I and CSEF II allowed for a greater emphasis in CSEF III on the effective implementation of the advocacy objectives. Although NEC objectives were not fully aligned with CSEF in all cases, CSEF objectives were broad enough to allow for tailoring and adapting. The exception to this was in cases where several ToC assumptions on the nature of the engagement between governments and civil society did not hold.

The CSEF III ToC was largely valid, but not all assumptions held true in all contexts

The CSEF III ToC was largely found to be valid at the input-to-output level. The programme was able to offer inputs that NECs found relevant and helpful in their work to achieve programme outcomes and objectives. However, as coalition contexts changed over time (and in particular, with regard to political contexts), not all of the assumptions concerning outputs to outcomes held. This was particularly true with regard to assumptions concerning government relationships with civil society, such as that government and other actors take CSO voices seriously and that national governments are open to inclusive CSO engagement. NEC results against OI1.2.1 in particular highlighted that there were NECs who were unable to engage in relevant education policy processes due to a lack of capacity of government to maintain processes (such as political instability or frequent or significant changeover in government) or an unwillingness to engage with civil society (through either direct persecution of activists or more subtle ways of denying coalitions access or meaningful engagement in policy groups).

However, even under these circumstances coalitions have found ways to continue their advocacy work by working more closely to build public support and awareness, to find informal channels to advocate decision makers and to participate in global and regional advocacy activities. Further support mechanisms and efforts by CSEF global and regional partners to support diversity and inclusion at different levels have enabled and elevated the contribution of NECs in which national advocacy has not been possible.

Although the programme has been successful in ensuring that NECs are better informed of global debates and global processes include more diverse voices, there is thus far scant evidence of how these have impacted upon GPE processes.

By the close of the programme, CSEF III was successful in reaching most of its targets; including demonstrating satisfactory progress in areas

The CSEF III was successful in reaching most of its outcome targets throughout the course of the programme. The programme was most successful in reaching Outcome 2.1 (coalitions have actively consulting with, engaged and mobilised the public), Outcome 3.1 (CSO views are represented in the GPE board by CSO representatives) and Outcome 3.2 (Key regional and global debates and events on SDG4 include strong links between national, regional, and global CSO voices). The programme was still able to demonstrate strong progress against Outcome 1.1 (inclusive coalitions actively engaged and represented diverse actors and the most marginalised), Outcome 1.2 (coalitions actively participated in LEGs and other key sector policy and review processes) and Outcome 2.2 (coalitions engaged citizens in and produced relevant research).

The targets set for Outcomes 1.1, 1.2, and 2.2 were ambitious, using composite indicators to encompass a variety of different facets of success. The raw data from the MEL system provides evidence that coalitions made progress against a number of areas as part of these outcome indicators, but experienced barriers to reaching the targets set. For OI1.1.1, coalitions made strong and incremental progress over time, in particular in increasing the inclusion of members representing the most marginalised. However, the database of members was revised and refreshed to encourage strong record keeping on membership; the re-evaluated figures demonstrated that baseline membership figures were less than the programme initially thought, and thus the target set was perhaps too high.

Similarly, for OI2.2.1, the indicator definition was revised following the realisation that the narrow definition of 'research' did not account for the different ways in which coalitions were producing research or analysis, or account for the timing and timeframes required to produce research reports. Here again, there was strong evidence that coalitions were active in producing and using research, as well as engaged citizens as well as key stakeholders or policy makers.

For OI1.2.1, most coalitions were able to strengthen their engagement in government processes. In the case of this indicator, there were a small number of coalitions for whom the assumptions about the conditions of civil society-government relationships were not met, meaning that regardless of their progress in advocacy work, this was not reflected in this indicator.

During the course of the programme, there was some flexibility to redefine measurement definitions and calculations in response to programme learning about NEC work, but ultimately, targets were not updated. In these cases, the outcome indicators were not always effective measures of the achievement of objectives, particularly in contexts where ToC assumptions did not hold.

However, the outcome indicators used in the CSEF Results Framework still provided a useful guide to stakeholders to track progress towards achieving the programme's objectives. In many cases, there are reports of the ways in which RS and GS were able to use data to provide tailored attention and advice to NECs to address areas of slower progress. Therefore, the complex indicators allowed for programme stakeholders to understand incremental progress towards

outcomes and objectives, even if this progress was not always fully reflected in the ultimate outcome indicators.

The intended and unintended changes generated by across the programme at national, regional and global levels can be encompassed by 17 types of outcomes that demonstrate not only that the programme has hugely progressed against its objectives, but also has highlight some of the unintended but key mechanisms used by the programme to achieve its aims

Through our OH, we identified a total of 17 types of outcomes that emerged across the breadth of the CSEF programme and at multiple levels. These encapsulated changes focused at the national level, as well as those that applied to the global and regional levels. Outcomes targeted changes within individual coalitions and their membership, as well as the Movement more broadly. Outcomes were also targeted at the general public, which included marginalised groups within society, specific key education stakeholder groups such as parents, communities, teachers and students and civil society advocates more broadly. Finally, a set of outcomes was oriented towards decision makers, whether policy makers at the national level, key influencers of policy making or implementing processes, representatives of donor groups and those involved in the setting of international goals.

The outcomes harvested encompass the six programme objectives: O4 corresponds with Outcome 1.1, O12 corresponds with Outcome 1.2, O9 roughly corresponds with 2.1, O6 aligns with Outcome 2.2 and O17 encompasses both Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. Of the remaining 12 outcomes, three encompass changes at the output level and focused on building capacities of coalitions and their members on technical advocacy work, on resource mobilisation and on organisational governance and management processes.

The remaining nine can be considered as unintended (or not explicitly targeted) changes that have supported, enabled or multiplied efforts towards the intended changes. O8 concerns the building of capacities of marginalised groups to participate in policy dialogue while O10 concerns the building of capacities of civil society more broadly to monitor and support policy rollout. Both of these are related to O9 and Outcome 2.1 which focuses on generating a more active and engaged public to participate in policy dialogue.

O12 and O13 encompass the pre-conditions to which coalitions have worked to secure in order to support the achievement of increasing their engagement in policy dialogues (O12 and Outcome 1.2). These concern changing the attitude of policy makers with regard to viewing coalitions as credible, evidence-based organisations and valuing diversity and inclusion, through the representation of civil society perspectives, in policy processes. In some ways, these pre-conditions supported the achievement of O12; in other circumstances, coalitions were unable to achieve these and sought ways of working through non-formal processes to engage policy makers (O11). Ultimately, when successful, these resulted in changes to funding and commitment towards global goals (O15) and modifications to national education policy or policy implementation (O16).

While the bulk of the outcomes focus on the achievements of NECs, the GS and RSs made significant contributions in their own right. In addition to supporting NECs to contribute to global and regional dialogue, the GS and RSs conducted their own set of activities towards these by themselves acting as civil society representatives on behalf of the NECs and the Movement. Their efforts to strengthen the diversity and inclusivity of underrepresented civil society voices in global and regional fora was augmented by their efforts to create alignment and cohesion across the Movement as well as amongst civil society more broadly.

CSEF III global and regional stakeholders were effective in supporting the achievement of programme objectives; however, there were challenges associated with operating a highly complex and diverse programme

The GS provided oversight and put in place effective mechanisms to steer the programme, track progress, ensure accountability, maintain strategic alignment across levels and built on recommendations and lessons from independent evaluations and reviews. The implementation of those mechanisms was coordinated by regional stakeholders, in particular RSs, who both ensured compliance with global processes, but also helped to adapt tools to national contexts where possible. RSs had strong relationships of trust with individual NECs and provided them with a wealth of long term support. This was particularly valuable for coalitions with limited capacities or facing complex operational challenges. The RFMA role similarly maintained compliance and accountability through robust financial and grant management process, while also building the NEC financial management capacities through training, tools, and support. The GOC and RFCs provided independent decision making, risk monitoring, and conflict of interest mitigation, and RFCs were further valued for their advisory support and recommendations which provided RSs with a 'fresh pair of eyes'.

Both the GS and RSs directly supported the achievement of CSEF III objectives. The GS provided tools, guidance, information about GPE processes and SDG4 implementation and created spaces and opportunities for CSO participation in global decision-making platforms. This was further enhanced by RSs, who worked directly with NECs to improve their ability to contribute to both global and regional debates and platforms, while also strengthening national advocacy efforts. Where NECs faced complex contextual challenges, RSs worked with NECs to strategize creative solutions and helped to connect them with relevant influencers. This support often involved long-term and incremental efforts over several years.

There were understandable challenges related to overseeing and coordinating a highly diverse and complex programme, in particular the heavy workload assigned to RSs in balancing programme management activities, capacity support, and coordination of regional and global advocacy activities. Project reporting, annual planning and proposal processes served an important function, but were time consuming and at times risked diverting RSs efforts from important advocacy work.

The global-regional-national structure and operations were effective, although there were some bottlenecks and inefficiencies; however the tri-level structure, which was built on the GCE movement, was a strong and unique mechanism for collective advocacy across levels

Overall, the structure of the programme provided NECs with a holistic set of support from global and regional levels, which increased their visibility and credibility. This in turn supported the achievement of CSEF III objectives and strengthened the wider GCE movement. In this way, the tri-level structure was mutually beneficial across all levels and was possible due to the existing spirit of solidarity built through the cohesive GCE movement.

In terms of operations, programme management and grant management functions were strengthened based on previous independent evaluations and reviews and were broadly effective. They helped to maintain strategic alignment and monitor progress and accountability. However, the CSEF III structure created bottlenecks due to the multiple layers of review and approval related to the proposal and reporting processes, which resulted in delays to funding disbursement and implementation and added to stretched workloads.

The MEL strategy was strengthened in CSEF III, following recommendations from the external evaluation of CSEF II. Despite reported challenges in the roll out of the system, which took longer than planned to operationalise to its full extent, the online MEL system was a worthwhile investment which improved on the previous paper-based system. Overall, many coalitions reported continual improvements overtime. Coalitions were able to use the system to better track plans and progress and access and store data in one secure location. There may be further scope to improve the usability and utilisation of the MEL system for NECs beyond regular progress reporting.

The programme continued to strengthened grant management capacities and accountability structures, but the CSEF structure led to some drawbacks in terms of efficiencies and bottlenecks

As the Grant Agent, GCE took steps to improve grant management functions in line with independent recommendations. This included strengthening the auditing function throughout CSEF III. As flagged in the 2018 OPM evaluation, progress in this area was initially slow; however, reporting suggests that this has improved and the auditing functions of CSEF were working smoothly by the close of CSEF III. RFMAs continue to provide valuable financial accountability and reporting at regional levels. They provided capacity building and support that added value by improving coalition capacities in proposal writing, budgeting, financial management and auditing skills, which in the process increased NECs capacity to win and implement work with other donors.

Albeit not as significantly as in previous CSEF phases, the time required for the introduction of new systems meant that challenges continued in coordinating annual proposals and reporting. Regional and national reporting implied that the reporting and planning process was onerous and time consuming and coalitions regularly missed reporting and proposal deadlines. The continuation of these delays in the annual proposal process led to knock on delays in contracting coalitions and disbursing funds. In part, the structure of CSEF created additional inefficiencies and bottlenecks,

due to the various levels of review and approval required in order to meet the accountability requirements of the programme.

The perceived legacy of CSEF has been to: build on the existing GCE movement to create a legacy of collaborative networks of stronger NECs with a common agenda; demonstrate the need for and value of civil society voices at global, regional and national level; and create a spirit of solidarity that worked from the bottom up

The main perceived legacy of CSEF III has been the creation of a collaborative network of strong, credible NECs sharing a common agenda and able to advocate effectively for SDG4. This includes the development of a wealth of tools, processes and publications that have the potential to help the movement going forward, including the MEL online platform. This supported the creation, sustaining and strengthening of NECs and the establishment of a network with a common agenda, which built on the existing GCE movement of education coalitions.

CSEF III was perceived to have demonstrated the need for and value of a civil society voice at global, regional and national levels in the establishment and promotion of SDG4. CSEF III coincided with the development of the SDGs and, together with the NECs, supported work that was done regionally and globally to shape the global goals and ensure the effective inclusion of education in the SDGs.

CSEF III helped to translate the global strategy and 2030 Agenda to local contexts. It added value by ensuring that CSOs had a voice in donor coordination mechanisms and were invited into national policy processes. It also helped to give a sustainable voice to marginalised groups. CSEF III was seen as having been part of a change in thinking, bringing people of different nations and creeds together and creating new ideas.

There are some perceived risks and concerns related to the sustainability of the CSEF legacies and achievements

Moving forward for the GCE Movement and its partners, there remains some uncertainty over the sustainability of some of the key features of the CSEF approach. CSEF partners have valued the long-term, contextualised approach which has internalised the understanding that building advocacy capacities and advocacy work itself is a process, not a single event or project. A change to a short-term project approach to funding and activities may put this at risk.

There were questions raised about the long-term sustainability of some of the tools and systems built by GCE during CSEF III, including in particular the online MEL platform. Although GCE will try to maintain these going forward, there is uncertainty over the role of these systems for CSEF partners moving into EOL. Moving into EOL, CSEF partners were further concerned about the value of the communications channels built through the CSEF tri-level structure; there may be inefficiencies in communications between parallel EOL and GCE structures.

Finally, the future of funding, with a shrinking donor landscape and the threat of Covid-19, has brought further concern for the future of NECs, in particular nascent coalitions and those who are ineligible for EOL funding.

6   Lessons Learned and Recommendations

In moving forward, our evaluation's findings offer several lessons learned and recommendations, which are presented below.

Multi-donor fund support for advocacy through a global-regional-national civil society network is an effective way of achieving a range of positive outcomes and impact towards the achievement of SDG4

CSEF III, combining the strengths of GCE, GPE and regional networks in support of NECs, has been highly successful in achieving intended outcomes at national level. It has also been highly successful in creating a collaborative network of strong, credible NECs able to advocate effectively for SDG4. It has demonstrated the need for and value of a civil society voice at global, regional and national levels in the establishment and promotion of SDG4.

- **Recommendation 1:** GCE and GPE should seek to build on the strengths of their global and regional partnerships under CSEF, especially through the operation of the EOL fund. GCE should also look for other funding partnerships to support the GCE Movement in sustaining and benefitting from the CSEF achievements.

Advocacy and mobilising resources take time and requires a sustained approach

Support to strengthening advocacy[49] requires a long-term process to be effective. For instance, mobilisation and the development of human and other resources takes time. This raises problems for donors who need to justify to their home constituency the achievement of short-term results and an exit strategy. Donors often prefer direct, short-term projects, albeit with sustainable impact. Previous research also points out the issues arising from the tensions between donors' desire of aid effectiveness, with its focus on measuring impact, and the desire to develop and support a diverse, vibrant and stable civil society[50].

The need to demonstrate short-term, concrete achievements was seen by those interviewed as a move to a project approach, requiring an emphasis on activities as opposed to the building of sustainable systems and long-term processes. The problems caused by a project approach and the need for a sustained approach were raised by programme stakeholders. CSEF has operated as a series of relatively short-term projects in each of which a significant time has been taken up with agreeing and mobilising financial, human and other resources; this has been exacerbated by changes in Grant Agent/Supervisor Entity arrangements that have added to administrative workload competing with time for the advocacy objectives. In CSEF III, the development of the MEL system and new financial arrangements both required groundwork to support NECs to effectively fulfil CSEF objectives. They have not had time to achieve their full benefits and these processes may be made redundant with the start of new two-year EOL projects.

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[49] Advocacy is used here to contrast with service delivery, and encompasses all CSEF objectives.
[50] Giffen and Judge, 2010.

- **Recommendation 2:** Future initiatives to strengthen and support civil society advocacy in relation to SDG4 should take a longer-term, sustained approach to build capacity, systems and processes and with less emphasis on short-term activities. Adequate time should be allowed for mobilising and fostering human and other resources and to allow for systems developed by the initiative to become fully embedded and sustainable in order to gain their full benefit.

The need to modify approaches according to context rather than employ a fixed global approach

CSEF III employed a fixed, global ToC and Results Framework and a global approach to project resourcing and support. However, GCE encouraged adaptation of programme design and implementation which was flexible to national needs and context by supporting NECs to identify priorities which were aligned to the global framework, including developing NEC-specific policy targets and ToCs aligned to the global ToC.

Whilst this local adaptation of a global approach was in many ways successful, it had some drawbacks. The heavy requirement for global and regional planning and reporting was often resource intensive which some NECs found challenging. The global ToC and assumptions were not fully applicable to NECs in all countries, for example in FCAS or highly decentralised countries or to those without a GPE programme, or where there was shrinking spaces for CSO engagement.

The CSEF III ToC does not seem to have been perceived or used at global, regional or NEC level as a vital, living document for ongoing adjustment to the programme design and planning for changing contexts (for example from an emphasis on policy development to policy implementation) and for differing NEC contexts.

The Results Framework contained indicators and targets which were at times too narrowly defined to allow the programme to capture the full achievements of coalitions, particularly in contexts where certain assumptions did not hold true. Furthermore, targets did not take account of changes in indicator definition and measurement, which distorted the progress against targets in some instances.

- **Recommendation 3:** Future initiatives of this nature should continue to emphasise adaptation to the local context and an approach that is responsive to the varied and changing needs of different coalitions.

- **Recommendation 4:** ToCs should be treated as living documents, designed to the meet the differing needs of the stakeholders in different contexts. Formatively reflecting on these helps to equip the programme with a better understanding of whether the designed approach is working, for whom it is working, and in which contexts in order to allow necessary adaptation.

- **Recommendation 5**: As with ToCs, Results Frameworks should also be used as living documents, in which targets can be adapted or amended in light of changes external factors affecting the potential for target achievement, or to provide more meaningful

measures of programme achievement. The use of proximal indicators such as output indicators may allow for more flexible targets and a more granular picture of what is working, where, and for whom, which supports a fuller picture of programme progress, a more nuanced approach to course correction and support and a better understanding of the programme ToC.

The value of regional support and expertise supporting a contextually-relevant, responsive approach

RSs played a key role in supporting NECs. NECs strongly endorsed the importance of RSs in the achievement of CSEF III objectives. This was in the light of the RSs' deep understanding of the NEC context and greater ability to provide capacity development, technical support and 'South-South' lesson-learning than would have been possible with a purely global-national programme.

- **Recommendation 6:** Global funds should take into account the value of working closely with or through regional networks that are able to provide continuity of capacity development, technical support and 'South-South' lesson-learning.

The importance of building a spirit of global solidarity and trust

CSEF III was a fund that supported NECs through a complex and well-designed interlocking global-regional-national structure. However, more than this, the programme has built on the previous work of GCE to further the spirit of global solidarity and trust.

An important outcome of the programme was the cohesion of civil society and across the different levels of the programme, which had a multiplier effect for the achievement of other outcomes such as credibility in the eyes of decision makers and the public. GCE was able to add value to CSEF III through its pre-existing movement of coalitions, which included both CSEF and non-CSEF members. CSEF drew upon the wider expertise and external relationships within the Movement to meet common objectives. There are some concerns about the risk of maintaining the spirit of global solidarity and trust, in EOL.

- **Recommendation 7:** Programmes involving global funds should take into account, not just measures to strengthen administrative effectiveness and efficiency, but also motivational and community-building aspects, in particular the establishment of a spirit of solidarity and trust between stakeholders.

The need for effective communications, lesson learning and information sharing on a 'South-South' basis

Communications, lesson-learning and information sharing – especially on a South-South basis – supported NECs to achieve the CSEF objectives. This was enabled through the structure of CSEF, which utilised roles and relationships across different levels for effective horizontal and vertical communications, as well as the use of the MEL platform as a global repository of information that could be quickly shared.

There are some concerns about the ability to continue to benefit from lesson learning and especially South-South information sharing to the same extent in future as the programme shifts to EOL.

- **Recommendation 8:** Future programmes, particularly those focused on supporting diversity and inclusion, should consider measures to ensure strong communications flows between global and national levels through the use of regional levels structures which provide long-term support and build strong relationships with the national level.

- **Recommendation 9:** Future programmes should ensure strong MEL systems, such as the one used in CSEF III, as a means to not only monitor progress across a number of short-term output indicators and longer-term, composite outcome indicators but also as a platform to strengthen communications and provide South-South lesson sharing.

Need for strong human resources within and supporting NECs

Future funders should take into account that capacity building and advocacy activities require sufficient levels of human resources and person time, and not simply activity costs. A major factor in efficient operation of the grants and provision of technical support by global and regional partners was human resources, a factor that did not have receive sufficient attention in the past.

The enhanced capacity of NECs to undertake advocacy work in line with the CSEF III objectives was strongly assisted by the ability of NECs to secure appropriate staff through the CSEF fund. The long-term funding of core staff time and resources allowed coalitions to remain active and therefore visible, adapt and take advantage of unexpected opportunities, helped to reduce high staff turnover and loss of capacity.

- **Recommendation 10:** Providers and potential providers of funds for capacity building networks and national-level advocacy coalitions should pay particular attention not just to funds needed to support activities, but to support the core costs of human resources needed to build capacities for, efficiently undertake or to augment these activities.

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