

## REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY EDUCATION FUNDS – CSEF

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### *EVALUATION REPORT*

Antoni Verger (coordinator), Xavier Rambla, Xavier Bonal, Noemi Bertomeu, Clara Fontdevila, Àlex García-Alba, Míriam Acebillo, Brent Edwards, Claudia Talavera, Theo van Koolwijk

[Globalization Education and Social Policies (GEPS). Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona]

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Antoni Verger. [Globalisation, Education and Social Policies \(GEPS\)](#)

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## FOREWORD(s)

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development
ANCEFA	Africa Network Campaign on Education for All
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association of Basic and Adult Education
AUSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
CLADE	Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSP	Capacity Support Plan
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education For All
EFA FTI	Education For All - Fast Track Initiative
EI	Education International
EPDF	Education Program Development Fund
FC	Funding Committee
FIFA	International Federation of Football Association
FMA	Financial Management Agencies
GAW	Global Action Week
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HDI	Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LEG	Local Education Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCSEF	National Civil Society Education Fund
NEP	National Education Plan
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
RC	Regional Coalition
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
ToC	Theory of Change
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEF	World Education Forum

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Regional and National Civil Society Education Funds (CSEF) project** aims at providing support to the core work of civil society education coalitions, also known as national education coalitions (NECs), so that they can fully engage in the promotion of the Education for All (EFA) goals in those countries where they operate. NECs are networks of civil society actors that articulate local NGOs, teachers unions, women's organizations, international NGOs, parents associations and grassroots' organizations. According to the CSEF project, developing an active, well-organized and well-articulated civil society – linked together regionally and globally – that advocates the right to education and progressive policy change is one of the best ways to ensure that all children will have access to relevant and quality education.

In its first stage, the CSEF project operated during two years, between mid-2009 and mid-2011, and US\$17.6 million were allocated to it. The project has been funded by the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, currently, the **Global Partnership for Education (GPE)**, and runned by the **Global Campaign for Education (GCE)**, the biggest and most active civil society transnational network advocating EFA.

The CSEF was executed through the building of a **multi-scalar organization**. At the global level, the GCE acted as the executing agency and hosted a secretariat to have overall oversight of three regional CSEFs established in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The **regional coalitions**, which were already members of the GCE (ANCEFA in Africa, ASPBAE in Asia and CLADE in Latin America), hosted secretariats that were in charge of supporting NECs within this process in different ways. Three regional **funding committees** were established in each region, each one made up of credible individuals from across the region, to adopt decisions for the allocation of funds. And three **financial management agencies** were identified (Oxfam GB in Africa, Education International in Asia, Action Aid in Latin America) to ensure sound financial management. The CSEF supported **NECs in 45 countries** as a way to enable them to advocate the EFA goals more effectively and adopt an active role in GPE related policy processes.

On the basis of a so-called 'realist methodology', this evaluation aims at understanding whether the CSEF has achieved its main goals and objectives, to what extent and why. Specifically, the **main questions** that have guided the evaluation are: *a) Has the CSEF strengthened the role of NECs as credible/ fully recognized partners in education sector policy processes? b) Has the CSEF met the capacity needs of NECs that wish to establish and strengthen their roles and positions? c) Has the CSEF accelerated progress on the EFA agenda and if so to what extent, particularly at the country level? d) Was the CSEF successful in attracting additional funding at the global and national level?*

The evaluation shows that the CSEF **has contributed to building stronger and more credible NECs in most countries that are part of the project**. Specifically, NECs have improved substantially in terms of capacity building and advocacy, and have been able to design their own context-based strategies that, to a great extent, are highly consistent with the global CSEF strategy. Furthermore, to a

greater or lesser extent, coalitions have achieved **political recognition** in the contexts in which they operate. The development of capacities in terms of research and knowledge management has been much more modest.

The CSEF project was **better designed and planned in terms of core processes (budget tracking, advocacy, etc.) than in terms of support processes (finance, human resources management, M&E, etc.)**. This meant that several managerial issues that emerged while the project was being developed had to be solved *ad hoc*. Time constraints, uncertainty with the future of the programme and delays in funding delivery marked the trajectory of the project and, to some extent, the level of achievement of its goals. The institutional setting designed by the CSEF is sophisticated and could be set up in a relatively short time, despite the unfavourable circumstances it faced. The institutional design has raised a set of principal-agent and coordination problems, many of which could be addressed during the project cycle through the proactive role and leadership of the regional organisations. However, even then, these problems have blurred the efforts to steer the whole organisation towards common objectives, especially in relation to those objectives that were more ambitious in nature, like the establishment of national civil society funds.

As this evaluation shows, the CSEF has contributed to civil society networks becoming key political agents in educational debates and has actively worked for the realisation of the right to 'education for all', effecting significant national policy change in many world locations. However, the contribution of civil society to the EFA action framework should not be seen only in terms of aid effectiveness. **Well-articulated and competent civil society networks can contribute to advance the EFA goals, as well as to the democratisation of education politics at different levels.** In relation to the latter, the CSEF has opened spaces for civil society organisations and individual citizens to have a say in education and to hold their governments to account.

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, simplifying the (supra-national) institutional setting, promoting further education policy debate, international exchange and learning, and providing core financial support to NECs' strategies.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction to the evaluation

In the World Education Conferences that took place in Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000), governments, bilateral aid agencies and international governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) formally committed to the right to quality **Education for All** (EFA) globally. In the Dakar Framework for Action, the above-mentioned stakeholders agreed on the attainment of a list of six educational goals, commonly known as the EFA Goals (see Box 1.1.).

#### Box 1.1. The 6 EFA Goals

Source: World Education Forum (2000)

- (i) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- (ii) Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- (iii) Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
- (iv) Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- (v) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- (vi) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The Dakar Framework for action calls for the broad political participation of a range of actors and, particularly, civil society in the process of advancing towards the EFA goals. Participants in the World Education Forum pledged themselves to “ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development” as one of the core strategies to achieve the goals (World Education Forum 2000, 18). To a great extent, the **Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF)**, reviewed in this report, aims at deploying this strategy by strengthening the role and capacities of civil society in EFA related policy processes.

The CSEF project was approved in December 2008 by the *Education Program Development Fund* (EPDF) Committee of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative



(EFA-FTI, currently, the **Global Partnership for Education**)<sup>1</sup>. In particular, US\$17.6 million from the EPDF were allocated in the project (World Bank 2009). In its first stage, the project operated during two years, between mid-2009 and mid-2011, although a budget neutral extension allowed a range of activities to continue until June 2012. The project has been designed and executed by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) (see Box 1.2).

The main objective of the CSEF project is to provide support to the core work of **national education coalitions (NECs)** so that they can fully engage in the development of education sector programmes with government and donors, and track the progress of national governments and local donor groups in working towards the EFA goals (GCE 2009). NECs are defined as networks of civil society actors that might include local NGOs, teachers unions, women's organizations, international NGOs, parents associations and grassroots organizations under its scope. They are organized at the national level to advocate EFA goals and to promote related education policy changes. According to the CSEF project, developing an active, well-organized and well-articulated civil society – linked together transnationally – that advocates the right to education and progressive policy change is one of the best ways to ensure that all children will have access to relevant and quality education.

Box 1.2. The Global Campaign for Education  
Source: Verger and Novelli (2012)

The GCE is the biggest and most active civil society network advocating EFA. It was set up in the run up to the Dakar Conference, with the aim of pushing for an ambitious EFA agenda. It brought together several International NGOs (Oxfam, Action Aid, Global March for Labour) and the federation of teachers unions at the global level (Education International). With the passage of time, the GCE became a multi-scalar organization by promoting and strengthening the role of civil society advocacy coalitions operating at the national and regional level. Very different types of organizations work together in these coalitions, which put pressure on national governments, donors and international organizations to honor financial and political agreements to deliver high quality education to all. To date, the GCE counts on more than 120 members including national education coalitions, regional coalitions, international NGOs, teachers' unions, etc. Large cooperation programmes like the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF)<sup>2</sup>, Real World Strategies (RWS) and, more recently, the CSEF have contributed to significantly strengthen this organizational strategy.

This evaluation aims at understanding whether the CSEF has achieved its main goals and objectives, to what extent and why. Specifically, the main questions that have guided the evaluation are: a) *Has the CSEF strengthened the role of NECs as credible/ fully recognized partners in education sector policy processes?* b) *Has the CSEF met the capacity needs of NECs that wish to establish and strengthen their roles and positions?* c) *Has the CSEF accelerated progress on the EFA agenda and*

<sup>1</sup> The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a partnership of the main international donors worldwide. It started as the Education for All - Fast Track Initiative in 2002. Due to the evolution of the *Initiative*, members decided to adopt 'GPE' as their new name as they believe that it better communicates the strength, scope and purpose of their organization. See: <http://www.globalpartnership.org/who-we-are/about-the-global-partnership/about-our-new-name/> [Last consulted: 5/10/12].

<sup>2</sup> It needs to be noted that the CEF was not a GCE programme, but a programme run by promoters and members of the GCE, like ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children.

*if so to what extent, particularly at the country level? d) Was the CSEF successful in attracting additional funding at the global and national level?*

The evaluation report is structured in six chapters. **Chapter 1** introduces the evaluation and outlines the background of the CSEF. Specifically, it refers to the origins, scope and organizational setting of the project.

**Chapter 2** presents the methodology adopted in the evaluation. The main methodological guidelines come from the so-called 'realist evaluation', which aligns with some more concrete approaches like the systemic review and comparative analysis. As we will see, realist evaluation focuses on discovering the causes of the effects – or lack of effects – of policy programmes; this approach is especially helpful not only to understand *what* went well or wrong with an intervention, but also *why* it went well/wrong.

**Chapter 3** reviews the organizational system architecture and the organizational processes enacted by the CSEF at the global and regional scales. It does so by focusing on the strategic and support processes, with emphasis on the operational management developed by the CSEF agencies, as well as on the institutional setting through which the fund has operated.

**Chapter 4** provides an exhaustive overview of the educational development context in the 45 countries in which the CSEF has operated on the grounds of official education indicators, as well as an exhaustive documentary review of what has been done at the country level in the context of the CSEF worldwide. The chapter explores the activities that have been carried out with CSEF funds at the country level in the three regions in which the project has operated (Africa, Asia and Latin America), on the basis of all the 'completion' and 'results framework' reports that have been produced by the 45 participating NECs in the context of the project. Thus its emphasis is mainly on the activities that the NECs have promoted to achieve the expected results, and in which context they have done so.

As the previous chapter, **Chapter 5** also focuses at the country level, but analyzes more intensively the main processes and outcomes that the CSEF has generated in a sample of seven countries, namely Bolivia, Cambodia, Malawi, Mongolia, Mozambique, Senegal and Sierra Leone. This analysis is grounded on country case studies that, as part of this evaluation, have been developed in each of the above-mentioned countries.

Finally, **chapter 6** contains a general discussion in which the main elements of the evaluation are put together and systematized. It focuses on identifying and analyzing the CSEF theory of change as a way to understand what went well and wrong, and what could be improved in future interventions. Consequently, this chapter concludes with a list of recommendations derived from our overall analysis.

## 1.2. CSEF background

The Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) project started operating in the middle of 2009, although the origin of the strategy to which the CSEF contributes to has a longer history. The promoters of the GCE (including several INGOs, the Global March Against Child Labour and Education International) posited the initial ideas behind the CSEF strategy at the end of the nineties when they realized the importance of organizing a multi-scalar advocacy campaign to achieve the EFA goals. At that time, these different stakeholders agreed on the necessity of giving more centrality to the advocacy dimension of their work if progressive and sustainable policy change in education was to be achieved, although they did not always arrive at this conclusion for the same reasons. A group of INGOs, including Action Aid and Oxfam raised concerns regarding possible unintended, perverse effects of the direct provision of education by means of civil society organizations, because they had found out that some of their projects had become a way of privatising education and dismantling the teaching profession. At the same time, the *Global March against Child Labour* saw that the government did not respond to its claims unless they were put under pressure by means of public campaigns, street mobilization and lobbying strategies. For its part, the global confederation of teachers' unions, Education International, also came to share this view insofar as its members often entered into conflict with governments in order to defend the rights of teachers and the expansion of quality education. In the end:

Donors, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) agree that CSOs should be involved in policy processes and monitoring government implementation (CEF, 2007: 6).

For the last decade the endeavour to introduce civil society voices in the politics of education has shifted from a more global approach to a more country-based one. The initial EFA debate focused on the operationalisation of educational goals through official indicators and mainstream programmes, and on whether such goals should be more restrictive or ambitious (i.e. the global agenda setting moment). However, once the EFA agenda was established, the GCE and its members realized that the priority should be to empower national coalitions at the level of advocacy for policy change and government policy monitoring. To do so, the GCE would need to count on the key contribution of regional organizations that mediate between the global and the national organizations and are closer to the needs of the NECs.

When it came to organizing such a scalar shift, civil society organisations involved in education were aware of their potential, but also of their difficulties for political action. Many attempts of organizing national civil society networks were severely weakened by unstable financing, lack of qualified staff, and difficulties in dealing with the media, among other issues. Current fundraising problems are not only due to the on-going financial crisis which squeezes international aid budgets; it has been traditionally challenging to convince international donors of the benefits of supporting civil society organizations in raising their advocacy profile and, by doing so, supporting them to

go beyond their conventional service delivery role. However, the CSEF has also been implemented in a context in which there is an increasing awareness among donors about the importance of coordinating and harmonizing their efforts at a range of scales – as reflected in the Paris (2005) and Accra (2008) Aid Effectiveness Declarations – and about the importance of collaborating and engaging with civil society organizations at both the political and the operational level. Thus, the CSEF project needs to be seen as a response to this scenario and its associated opportunities, challenges and necessities.

### ***The CSEF and its precedents***

The CSEF has many elements in common with previous initiatives like the Commonwealth Education Fund and the Real World Strategies, which also had the objective of stimulating the involvement of civil societies in educational policy-making at the national and international levels.

The first donor in funding this approach to civil society development in education was the British government in 2002. At that time, a series of discussions and negotiations with several INGOs led to the establishment of the **Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF)** that was executed between the years 2002 and 2008. The CEF became accountable to an independent commission appointed by the UK Department for International Education (DFID). The Global Campaign for Education was one of the beneficiaries of this fund, along with some of the international non-governmental organisations that participated in its inception, although the GCE was not running the fund. In essence, the CEF aspired to support civil societies so that they would be capable of influencing the media and public opinion and of tracking the educational budget in order to prevent countries' financial mismanagement in education. It also aimed at identifying and disseminating the most effective initiatives being carried out in order to bring the poorest children to school.

Before the period of the CEF came to an end, the Government of the Netherlands started to fund the **Real World Strategies (RWS)** programme, which operated between 2006 and 2010. Like the CEF, RWS based its action on a human-rights approach to educational development clearly distinct from the views on manpower planning or human capital prevailing in many 'educational development' projects. RWS also included a very explicit expectation that civil societies would eventually empower the poor so that they had a say in decision-making at the national level. At the operational level, the RWS initiative gave a lot of importance to the role of regional networks when it comes to articulate national education coalitions and to promote capacity building and exchanges among them.

In a way, these civil society funds also bridged the gap between local and international NGOs, teachers' unions and international donors, as well as between civil society and international organizations like the World Bank. Although an open conflict had divided these political actors during the Structural Adjustment Plans period, the new framework defined in Dakar — and later implemented by means of important coordination strategies, especially the 'Education for All' Fast Track

Initiative (EFA-FTI) - favoured some degree of communication between them in the global arena. Eventually, the contribution of the EFA-FTI and, later on, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), to civil society funds has created a new space where cooperation and conflict between international donors, international organizations and civil society are being institutionalised in an array of policy areas.

### ***CSEF in operation***

The CSEF was executed through the building of a **multi-scalar organization**. At the global level, the GCE acted as the executing agency and hosted a secretariat to have overall oversight of three regional CSEFs established in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The **regional coalitions**, which were already members of the GCE (ANCEFA in Africa, ASPBAE in Asia and CLADE in Latin America), employed small secretariats that would be in charge of supporting NECs within this process in different ways (preparing papers for funding committees, following up national coalitions to ensure proper reporting / accounting, promoting experience sharing and offering capacity building support as needed). The regional CSEFs supported NECs in 45 countries as a way to enable them to adopt an active role in GPE related policy processes (see Box 1.3). Three regional **funding committees** were established in each region, each one made up of credible individuals from across the region, to adopt decisions for the allocation of funds. And three **financial management agencies** were identified (Oxfam GB in Africa, Education International in Asia, Action Aid in Latin America) to ensure sound financial management. How all these agencies are inter-related can be seen in Figure 4.1 in this volume.

#### Box 1.3. The GPE and Civil Society

Source: GPE 2012

Several international civil society organizations are represented on the GPE Board of Directors, which means that the GPE gives the civil society constituency the same decision-making rights and capacities as Northern and Southern countries' governments. However, beyond the international arena, civil society is increasingly conceived by the GPE as a key partner at the country level. The GPE Strategy encourages greater and timelier participation of non-state partners (including international NGOs, local NGOs and associations, teacher unions, community based organizations, etc.) in the development of national education plans, program implementation and joint sector reviews. In the context of the GEP framework, many of these activities are carried out within the so-called **Local Education Groups (LEGs)**. Ministry of Education representatives, donor countries, teachers' representatives, private providers, universities and NGOs are the main stakeholders invited to participate in LEGS. With the CSEF project, the GPE aimed at boosting the presence and active participation of civil society organizations and, specifically, National Education Coalitions, in LEGS.

The design of the CSEF clearly separates strategic management from funding management as a way to avoid the interference of international donors and international NGOs in the policy-making process of the beneficiary organizations, but also as a way for the GCE and the regional organizations to focus on their programmatic and strategic role. Furthermore, the managers of the CSEF noticed

that multilateral funds were particularly helpful for governments that wanted to deliver their official development aid without conflicts derived from the internal politics of the recipient countries.

The architecture of the CSEF established a system of checks-and-balances between the international donors, the hosting agency and the national coalitions. Among other measures, the establishment of an independent funding committee in each region to deliberate on the quality of projects and funding allocation responds to this rationale.

At the operational level, the CSEF has been structured, on the one hand, in objectives and activities that are linked to the GCE core and primary processes: namely educational advocacy for EFA goals and, related to it, the necessary training, research and technical capacity building initiatives to ensure efficient educational advocacy. The deployment of these activities provides evidence of the relevance, the effectiveness and the potential impact of the fund. On the other hand, the CSEF has followed long-term objectives of a different nature and that are usually less visible, such as the organizational strengthening of the coalitions (through capacity building and other means) and the development of models for self-sustainability. The activities related to these objectives underpin the core activities and are related to capacity building of the coalitions and regional bodies of GCE at financial management, human resources management, communication and monitoring and evaluation levels. These activities provide evidence of the efficiency, and future sustainability of the project.

As we will show in the report, the CSEF project, despite the short time it has been in place and its complex institutional multi-level architecture, has been able to articulate, capacitate and empower a range of civil society networks advocating quality education all around the world. The evaluation also shows that the project has not always achieved all its objectives at each level and in each country. For this reason the evaluation also points out the pending and future challenges in making civil society a more central and effective partner when it comes to advancing the EFA goals.

However, beyond issues of aid effectiveness, the particular origin of the CSEF and its innovative organization has contributed to opening a range of questions of a different nature. When civil society networks are embedded in multilateral aid structures, is it possible for them to play a role as an independent advocate? How is it possible to guarantee the sustainability of funding to civil society for advocacy purposes? Could national CSEFs become a valid mechanism for this purpose? How can we ensure that transparency and inclusiveness become key principles in the organization and distribution of global, regional and national CSEFs? How can we make sure that the most legitimate civil society stakeholders are included within national advocacy coalitions? To what extent can civil society funds contribute to democratising education policy? These questions address key debates and contentions about the democratization of education, and especially about the democratization of the education policy process itself. We hope that the evidence and analysis presented in this evaluation contribute to answering – or, at least, to reflection on - these important questions.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY: A REALIST AND SYSTEMIC APPROACH

#### 2.1. Introduction

The methodology adopted in this evaluation is eminently qualitative and follows a so-called **realist approach**. According to realist evaluation, evaluation needs to be understood as a process that, by (re)constructing the theory of change behind the programme, identifies how the evaluated programme works and how it expects to achieve its objectives. In addition, evaluation needs to test whether the theory of change is solid enough to make the programme successful (or to make it “work”) once implemented in the field (Mayne 2008). In the case of the CSEF, we could consider that the programme “works” when it is able to:

- Strengthen the NECs role as credible and fully recognized partners in education sector processes.
- Address the capacity needs of NECs and integrate their new knowledge in their day-to-day practice.
- Contribute to accelerate progress on the EFA agenda.
- Attract additional funding at the global and national level.

For a realist evaluation, it is not sufficient to test whether an intervention achieves (or does not achieve) its objectives; it is also necessary to understand **why** the intervention does (or does not do) so. Thus, following this methodology, we should go beyond the conventional evaluation question: “does programme x work?” and ask ourselves the more complex question: *does programme x work for whom, why and under what circumstances?* (Pawson 2006). In other words, for a realist evaluation it is necessary to find out whether the evaluated programme has been able to, under particular circumstances, activate the necessary mechanisms to make the intervention achieve its main objectives (Ligero 2011). In order to do this, evaluation needs to consider how underlying mechanisms are likely to interact with historical, cultural, political and economic contexts to produce a range of outcomes (White and Phillips 2012).

Due to its explanatory character, from a realist perspective, it is as important to evaluate the success/failure of interventions as a way of drawing lessons that will contribute to improve future interventions. Beyond evaluating the degree to which goals are achieved, this approach focuses on understanding “how” the project has worked, and “why” it has worked. Therefore, the analysis of the internal processes that have allowed the consecution of goals must be included into the evaluation framework. This is especially appropriate in evaluating a project like CSEF, where organizational strengthening is one of the major goals. In this sense, the realist approach implies combining conventional evaluation tools with a broader research framework.

Due to its analytical focus, realist evaluation needs to be seen as the type of evaluation that is closer to academic research than other evaluation approaches. We consider that realist evaluation complements other approaches that have been adopted in evaluations undertaken by the GPE and the GCE themselves, which focus on the level of achievement of the project's activities/objectives.

### ***Towards a systemic approach***

Realist evaluation is systemic in nature, which means that it provides a holistic view in evaluating the programme's success (or failure). The systemic evaluation describes the theory of change of a programme as a causal framework that permits the integration of its results, processes (strategic, core and support) and institutional setting and context determinants more easily. It helps to organize the assessment around a logical model that, from a systemic perspective, describes the action/programme as a set of articulated and interdependent elements. In short, we can design a comprehensive evaluation which, according to recent analyses, represents the most advanced thinking assessment (Rossi, et al. 2004).

Following the systemic approach, we take into account that the CSEF programme operates in an assemblage of different but interlinked and interdependent domains that we need to understand and grasp. These domains include the (political) context, the institutional setting of the GCE (including its regional and national members), the processes that have been promoted on the basis of the CSEF, and their outcomes. In the following lines we define each of these domains. Each of them have been translated and operationalized into a set of indicators and questions, which can be consulted in the Appendix 1 of this report.

The **political context** significantly conditions the environment in which the NECs operate. The political context is selective; it favors certain strategies, actors and discourses over others. Therefore, not all outcomes are possible for everyone, for every strategy, in every moment and in every country (Hay, 2002). The main dimensions included in this domain are, on the one hand, the *issue characteristics* (in our case, the characteristics of education) and, on the other, the political opportunity structures for civil society participation. The education *issue characteristics* refer to variables such as the situation of education in the country in which the NEC operates, the way the right to education is regulated by the state, the extent to which education is a priority for the government in place, and the main perceptions of and public opinion on education affairs. *Political opportunity structures* refer to the political conditions that favour or make it difficult for civil society to produce certain results. They include variables such as the level of centralization (or decentralization) of the state, the level of openness (or closedness) of the political system to external actors, the independence of the different state powers (legislative, executive, judicial), and the traditions of civil society participation and articulation in the country (Tarrow 1994).

The **institutional setting** includes variables that refer to internal features and



structures of the organizations we are analyzing. Such features and structures were already in the coalitions before implementation of the CSEF project, acting as “enabling factors”. They specifically reflect the resources and capacities that the NECs had, which helped or even allowed the creation of the needed processes to achieve results. They are related to factors such as leadership, internal governance, strategy and alliance setting. Some indicators included here are membership (number and type of organizations), internal cohesion (especially when it comes to the relationship between NGOs and unions), level of inclusiveness and participation in the coalition, human and economic resources, sustainability of the funding base, management capacity and leadership, alliances with external actors (beyond the coalition members), communication strategy, women’s participation in the different bodies, and the level of coordination and integration with supra-national, especially regional, actors.

The **organizational processes** refer to the “nervous system” of an organization; they allow the translation of the organisation’s strategy into reality. The CSEF program has followed already existing processes within the GCE, but has also created some new ones. Organizing and applying processes – some of which operate in a more implicit and even unconscious way - involve determining what work is needed to accomplish the goal, assigning those tasks to individuals, and arranging those individuals in a decision-making framework (organizational structure) (see Figure 2.1). The result of organizing processes is an “organization” – i.e. a whole consisting of unified parts that work in harmony, both effectively and efficiently, to execute tasks to achieve certain goals.

In processes, responsibilities are assigned and clearly defined, both for the process as a whole and for its individual steps, as well as for permanent improvement of the process in the strategic project context. This is especially important in processes that unfold across the boundaries of mutually independent organisations. (GTZ 2009: 176).

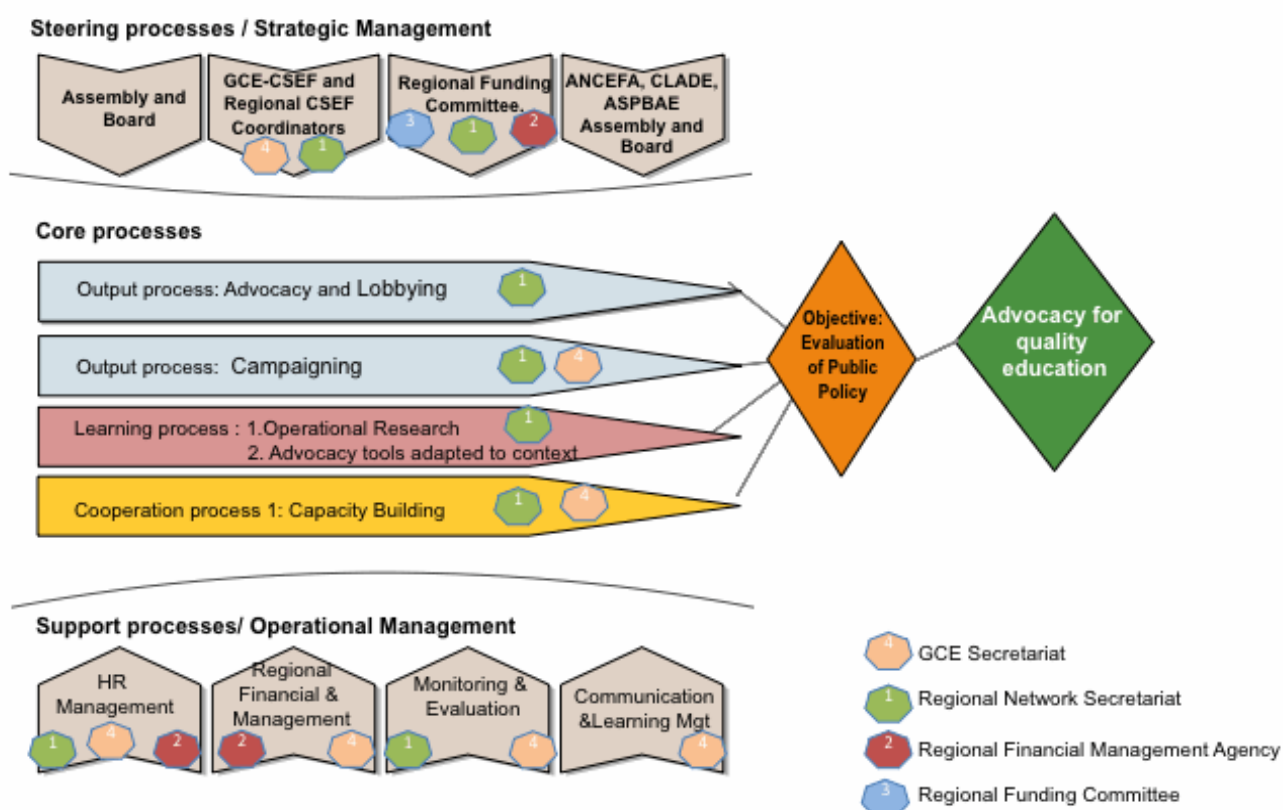
Looking at processes means paying attention to the internal mechanisms that were developed in the organization and also during the project to achieve the outcomes, focusing on the inner production. A *process* can be seen as a sequence of activities that creates added-value for the beneficiaries with respect to an initial situation.

The **steering processes** refer to governance aspects and strategy and are mainly analyzed in chapter 3 in this volume (as well as in the Case Studies). **Core and primary processes** refer to educational advocacy and related processes, such as campaigning, training, technical capacity building, research, data management, the diagnoses of education problems, and the articulation of demands and policy solutions. They are mainly described in chapters 4 and 5 in this volume (as well as in the Case Studies). **Support processes** refer to activities necessary for the development of the other processes, such as financial management, human resources management, ‘monitoring and evaluation’, internal and external communication, and regional coordination, and are discussed in chapter 3 (global/regional level) and chapter 5 (national level) in this volume, and in the Case Studies reports that this evaluation has also generated.

This evaluation differentiates support processes from strategic and the core/primary processes. This differentiation is especially relevant due to the fact that an important part of the CSEF program objectives are related to capacity building

and organizational strengthening of the NEC's and of the GCE as a network. Thus, an important part of the activities carried out are related to support processes that help in the achievement of the core processes.

Figure 2.1. The GCE/CSEF processes in place  
Source: authors



In the **outcomes/outputs** domain we include the particular deliverables and impact of the CSEF initiatives. Here, we refer to the new capacities and knowledge(s) that have been generated under the CSEF, the way this knowledge has been integrated in the coalition's everyday work, the way the CSEF has contributed to strengthening the coalition's institutional setting, the way it has strengthened the legitimacy and credibility of the coalition and, as a consequence, the extent to which the NEC is more active in education policy spaces and processes (such as the Local Education Groups, the Poverty Reduction Strategies, the elaboration and monitoring of the National Education Plans, and in the media) and, finally, the policy impact that derives from all of this.

By policy impact we refer to those policy changes that contribute to the advance of the EFA framework in a particular location, for instance, in terms of introducing legislative changes, improving policy implementation processes or agenda setting. Of course, in this domain, it is easier to evaluate the particular outputs (courses organized, how many people attended them, etc.) than to know for certain whether

the coalition is the main factor behind a range of policy changes. That is why when analyzing civil society impact, we assume that there is an 'attribution gap'. Nevertheless, systemic evaluation follows a contribution-oriented approach (not attributive), which is especially suitable for evaluating advocacy networks. The rationale behind such a choice is that since change in advocacy programs is not linear and strategic, primary and support processes need to be isolated and identified as well. The contribution framework approach can complement, validate or address relevant attribution gaps (Patton 2009, Klugman 2011). We refer to these gaps, as well as to some techniques that might be helpful to address them, more extensively below.

## 2.2. Main methods

To a great extent, this evaluation has focused on country case studies as a key methodological strategy to analyze in-depth the impact of the CSEF at the local level. Carrying out case studies has allowed us to understand the role and impact of the CSEF through the thick description of the implementation of the programme in particular contexts, but also through the adoption of a comparative approach. **Comparative analysis** is a useful tool to identify the main factors that explain the achievement of certain outcomes by CSOs. Specifically, it has allowed us to explore in more detail the role played by organizational conditions, programmatic strategies and external circumstances in the realization (or non-realization) of the impact of the CSEF, and to derive conclusions from it. Comparison is a helpful tool to build explanations via the observation of regularities, but also because it allows us to understand why, for instance, similar coalitions with very similar resources achieve different outcomes in different settings.

The national case studies have been carried out in **seven countries**. The main criteria to elaborate the sample of seven cases studies have been: regional representivity (i.e. include NECs from the different regions according to the weight of the CSEF in each of them), political situation in the country (include countries with a political environment that is conducive to the coalitions' demands, and other countries with a less conducive environment), year of establishment of the coalition (include NECs that existed and were running before the CSEF, and other coalitions in which the Fund was the key factor of constitution), areas of interest of the coalition (include coalitions that touch different themes and with different areas of expertise), and size of the grant (in this case, we had a preference for large and medium grants rather than small ones). As a result of crossing these variables with the CSEF countries, we have included in the sample the following countries: Bolivia, Cambodia, Mongolia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mozambique and Malawi.

Table 2.1. CSEF evaluation countries sample  
Source: Authors

NEC country (region)	Political environment	Year of establishment	Areas of interest	Size of the grant
Bolivia (LAC)	Conducive	2009	Inclusion, indigenous groups, RTE, gender	Large
Cambodia (Asia)	Intermediate	2001	School fees, volunteer fees, Budget Training	Medium
Mongolia (Asia)	Intermediate	2010	Discrimination in a general sense, campaign against law imposing school fees	Medium
Senegal (Africa)	Conducive	2008	Budget tracking, improving the NEC capacity	Medium
Mozambique (Africa)	Conducive	1999	Budget tracking, girls' education, anti-corruption, GPE application processes, school boards and education governance	Medium
Sierra Leone (Africa)	Intermediate	2000	Budget tracking, education financing, girls' education, anti-corruption	Large
Malawi (Africa)	Difficult	2000	Budget tracking, advocacy for increased spending, ECDE, HIV/Aids	Large

Interviews in each country have tried to cover the following types of stakeholders and constituencies:

- NCE members (board, secretariat),
- Teachers' unions (independently of whether they are members of the coalition or not)
- Other CSOs
- Local Education Group coordinator
- International donors (bilateral and multilateral)
- Education policy-makers and decision makers
- Parliamentarians
- Other key informants (media representatives, education scholars)

As can be seen, our evaluation has not only taken into account the voices of civil society coalitions, as this would provide us with a partial picture of the reality (activists often have a 'distorted' perception of their own impact and role in society). Thus, to avoid this problem, we have triangulated through interviews with non-NEC members. A total of 126 interviews have been carried out at the country level (see Table 2.3).

We have also conducted interviews with key global and regional actors in the governance and management of the CSEF. Specifically, at the 'global' level, we have interviewed members of the GCE board, GCE secretariat and GPE secretariat and, at the regional level, we have interviewed representatives of the CSEF Regional Funding Committees, the CSEF regional secretariat and the regional finance agency. Interviews with key global and regional players have been an important data source to evaluate the architecture and governance of the CSEF. Key evaluation questions here have been:

- What has been the comparative advantage of including the regional partners in the management of the CSEF? Have the transaction costs associated with adding several layers of governance been worthwhile?
- How has the process for the delivery of the funds through the different territorial scales worked? Has this process affected the quality of the capacity and advocacy work of the NCEs? In what sense?
- Have the regional and global organizations been able to monitor and, when necessary, strengthen the management skills of the NECs?
- How efficient has the overall process of M&E and Financial Management of the CSEF through the created architecture been?
- What has been the relationship between the FTI/GPE and the GCE in the context of the CSEF?
- Could the architecture of the CSEF be strengthened in a hypothetical future edition of the fund? What lessons have been learned in terms of the management and governance of the fund?

In total, 33 interviews have been conducted at the supra-national level (see Table 4.3). Interviews carried out at the supra-national level and at the global level have complemented the country case studies. Such a multi-scalar analysis has allowed us to capture the complexity of the interactions that have been produced in the context of the CSEF, as well as how relevant these interactions have been to understand the outcomes of the fund.

Table 2.2. Interviews  
Source: Authors

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Number of interviews</b>
<i>Global</i>	
GCE/CSEF global secretariat	5
GCE board	5
Supervising entities (GPE secretariat and World Bank)	9
<i>Regional</i>	
Africa	6
Asia	3
LAC	5
<i>National</i>	
Bolivia	17
Cambodia	36
Mongolia	6
Sierra Leone	14
Mozambique	20
Malawi	14
Senegal	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>159</b>

Beyond interviews with key national, regional and global players, the evaluation has relied on secondary data sources (including NEC completion reports, CSEF progression reports, GCE survey on the CSEF, GCE/regional organizations narrative reports, etc.). Document analysis and, specifically, the document equivalence technique (i.e. comparing the documents/official discourse behind the CSEF with the

documents/discourses produced at the national level in relation to the fund), has worked as another way of empirically contrasting the effects of the CSEF in the NECs and, more broadly speaking, the way the CSEF has been re-contextualized at the national level. Through document analysis we have also evaluated the total number of activities that have been conducted in the context of the CSEF in all the countries (44) that were eligible. In fact, the number of documents available (country projects, progress and completion reports) was so high that a full time person had to be hired just to carry out this type of analysis.

Overall, mixed methods have been adopted according to the territorial scope and to the different stages of the evaluation. In Table 4.3 we specify what these methods have been.

Table 2.3. Evaluation's mixed methods  
Source: Authors

Scope of the evaluation	Methods
All coalitions that are part of the CSEF (44)	Document analysis (secondary data); descriptive statistics
Case studies: Sample of 7 countries (4 from Africa, 2 from Asia, one from LAC)	Interviews in the field of NCE members and other education stakeholders; focus groups; document analysis
CSEF architecture and management review	Interviews (both in-person and through Skype) and document analysis

### 2.3. Challenges

There are several challenges and limitations that this evaluation has faced.

*Time frame.* This evaluation, despite its scope, needed to be done in a very short time. In the beginning of June 2012, we were informed that our evaluation proposal was selected. The GCE expected a first draft report of the evaluation at the end of August. Thus, in less than 3 months we had to organize a team of ten people, most of whom did not know each other before, construct an original methodological framework - and train the evaluators accordingly-, visit eleven countries, do case studies in seven of them, carry out (and transcribe) a total of 159 (interviews) and produce the evaluation report(s) you have in your hands.

*One desk case study.* Case studies have been designed to be done in-country, with evaluators spending an average of 13 days in each location. This has been the case for all countries in the sample, except for Mongolia. That case study was supposed to be carried out by a Mongolian evaluator, who, one week before the fieldwork was to begin, informed us that she was not going to be able to do it for personal reasons. Since it was too late to train a new evaluator and to organize a trip to the country, we decided that, instead, we would do a *desk* case study from the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*, with interviews conducted on-line.

*Delimitation of the CSEF impact.* This research is about the impact of the CSEF, not about the impact of NECs' work more broadly speaking. However, most of the

coalitions analyzed existed before the CSEF was created and had other sources of funding as well. In those cases, it was difficult to isolate the impact of the CSEF, since it was inevitably penetrated and influenced by other initiatives of the NEC that were simultaneously on-going.

*Attribution of causality.* One of the impact dimensions in our evaluation framework concerns policy change. We are aware of how difficult it is to ascertain that a civil society coalition's action is the explanatory variable for a certain political outcome. In many cases, it is more accurate to consider that a CSO has contributed to promote an X policy change than to consider that it is the main factor, not to mention the only one, in such a change. Thick description and the triangulation of interviews are methodological strategies with the potential to reduce uncertainty in this domain.

*Document analysis.* When it came to review the reporting documents provided by the NECs (see Chapter 4) we also faced some difficulties related to the limitations in data collecting of a number of NECs. In some cases, certain documents were unavailable which meant having to find the necessary information through other sources. In the *Results Framework* and *Completion Reports* that were available, the levels of precision and accuracy in the responses provided by the NECs and their understanding of key terms (such as *campaign*, *advocacy*, *workshops*, etc.) were quite variable. As a general consequence, the establishment of suitable categories for comparative purposes appeared to be challenging.

## CHAPTER 3

# CSEF SYSTEM REVIEW: STRATEGIES, STEERING STRUCTURES AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we analyze the organizational setting of the CSEF. To do so, we apply a systemic approach to project management that focuses on three main domains: Strategies, steering structures and operational management. This chapter is structured according to each of these three main elements.

After this introduction, in section 3.2, we analyse the CSEF strategy and the management of this strategy by the GCE. At the *strategic level*, organizations aim at "doing the right things" to achieve their goals, such as constructing a strong (whether explicit or implicit) theory of change, deciding on the distribution of resources for the primary processes and controlling their effective use. Strategic decisions are usually taken according to the opportunities and restrictions that the environment offers and as a way to assure organizational stability through adaptation. Strategic management assesses opportunities, makes choices, sets targets, and ensures that the processes in place are effectively and efficiently geared towards maximising the achievement of the chosen priority targets.

In section 3.3, we analyse the CSEF steering structure, the main agencies involved in this structure and the cooperation dynamics established between them. Due to the specific nature and innovative organizational setting of the 'CSEF Flow Chart' (see Figure 3.1), the CSEF architecture needs to be explored from a multi-level and multi-actor perspective. As we will see, the CSEF architecture does not display the conventional pyramid type of structure in organisational theory, but looks more like a mutually interlocking and "nested" system.

In section 3.4 we evaluate the operational management of the CSEF. The main function of the *operative level* is "to do things right", i.e. to provide information and communication that are useful to coordinate the various primary processes, assure stability and conflict resolution. In order to ensure the maximum quality output, operational management aims at allocating resources, time, money, equipment, etc., effectively and efficiently. Managerial tasks have been carried out in the CSEF context by a wide range of organisations and agencies operating at different scales.

For analytical purposes, strategies, steering structures and operational management are presented separately in this chapter, even though they are strongly interlinked in practice. In fact, operational management (in its quality of support processes) remains at the bedrock of the overall organisational system; effectiveness at the operational management level is needed for the rest of the processes to be achieved. The strategic management reflects to what extent the strategy of the CSEF is linked with the overall GCE strategy and with the regional and national networks



strategy, as well as with aspects of governance and leadership of the project. At the same time, the steering structure reflects how decision-making processes and how different actors and agencies have worked together in strategic and operational management duties, and how the cooperation between them has worked.

The above-mentioned support processes are key for the primary processes (or core processes) to achieve the desired impacts. Thus, results are optimised when the operational management is effective and when there is good guidance and direction at the level of strategic management. The primary processes (as well as the results and impact) of the CSEF are not explored in this chapter because they are presented in chapters 4 and 5 of this evaluation. What we want to make clear here is that the review of the support processes and the strategy of the CSEF carried out in this chapter is the other side of the coin of the impact/results of the programme.

## 3.2. Strategic management

### 3.2.1 The CSEF's strategy

The long-term goal of the GCE/CSEF is to achieve, by working with governments and international donors and development agencies, the EFA Goals (in the 45 countries where the programme is implemented). To do so, the achievement of the two following intermediate goals is necessary (GCE 2009):

*1. NECs fully engage with national governments and local donor groups in working towards the EFA goals, specifically, in respect to the Global Partnership for Education country-level processes.*

*2. NECs become effective, independent and sustained social change agents and are able to attract in-country donor support via national funds or other financial mechanisms*

The CSEF core strategy to achieve these goals consists in supporting and strengthening the advocacy, research and managerial capacity of the NECs via capacity building, training, human and economic resources. Such a support should be mostly organised and provided by the regional organisations' members of the GCE. Specifically, as a consequence of the project, and as specified in the *Results Framework* of the CSEF (GCE 2010b), coalitions should be able to:

1. Fully engage with national governments and local donor groups in working towards the EFA goals
2. Attract in country donor support via national funds or other financial mechanisms
3. Become broad and inclusive, with a growing membership and with strengthened governance and staff development

4. Acquire the skills to place their messages in the media and to raise the profile of the education debate among the public, and as such have the ability to generate public support and public pressure on decision makers.
5. Have credible financial management, budget monitoring and control systems, and as a result demonstrate legitimacy and credibility to government and society.
6. Have a strengthened advocacy and policy capacity, and therefore the ability to monitor and influence international, regional and national policies and practices.

### 3.2.2. The CSEF strategy and its ownership

The CSEF project fits into the GCE strategy to promote and ensure implementation of EFA, since dialogue and public pressure, on the one hand, and outreach, coordination and agenda-setting capacity, on the other hand, can be considered as two sides of the same coin. If civil society actors can act in a well-informed, concerted and capacitated manner, they will become credible interlocutors and will be able to enter in a determined dialogue with decision makers as well as to influence their policies and practices. Thus, the CSEF strives for the increased capacity of civil society to (1) contribute to policy dialogue, and (2) to independently monitor and scrutinize plans for educational development (as formulated in the Dakar Framework for Action). GCE plays an important role in initiating, facilitating and organising global awareness campaigns, such as the Global Action Week (GAW), the class of 2015 and the 1Goal Campaign, as well as in building capacity for civil society organisations to act in a knowledgeable and coordinated way at the national level to monitor government action, to engage in dialogue and to organize public pressure activities. Such global campaigns are implemented at the national level via NECs; the GCE provides NECs with grants to support specific actions and to guarantee that, in the context of the campaign, there are similar worldwide priorities, slogans and goals. At the same time, NECs have room to adapt the particular activities and messages to the national context. For NECs, global campaigns are moments when the global network they are part of crystallizes, which contributes to intensifying identity and ownership.

When it came to the development of the CSEF strategy, the regional and global GCE players are very much aware of the fact that the CSEF should not work as a global blueprint. To them “*decision makers in the country are the best people to decide on strategy and tactics*”. (GCE Secretariat). However, this ownership principle has not always been easy to materialise, as such an approach tends to conflict with donor requirements to have one global project format, clear global targets and an elaborate M&E protocol. The overall strategy of the CSEF-proposal was initially developed on the basis of previous initiatives, like the CEF (Commonwealth Education Fund) and the RWS (Real World Strategies) by the GCE Secretariat and the GCE representatives at the EPDF Committee, and shared with regional coalitions. In regions like Africa, the GCE National Coalitions members’ voices were also taken into account at this stage.

Consultation was done with coalitions regarding what they considered the key educational challenges in their countries. Some countries were highlighting the problems of girls’ access to

education; others, the adult literacy programmes; others, national accountability; while others pointed to great challenges with quality learning. All the responses were summarised by the Secretariat of ANCEFA in Dakar, as a way of having a first Project proposal. (CSEF Africa)

However, there were some critical voices at the regional level that were of the opinion that, even when they were consulted by the GCE secretariat, there was not enough time or space to align global and regional strategies in the context of the CSEF project design.

“CSEF, as far as I know, has been a GCE proposal sent to the Secretariat for making an input. But at that time was not discussed as a strategy in ANCEFA, and I was not on the GCE Board. All I saw was a draft”. (CSEF Africa)

Once the global CSEF framework was settled, the NECs would need to apply for the CSEF grants administered at the regional level by formulating a project proposal. Such proposals were expected to fit within the overall rationale of the CSEF. Also at the national level, many coalitions felt that there were not sufficient time and resources to develop an inception phase that would have ensured the inclusion of key actors in the design of the project proposal, to hire people to prepare the proposal, to decide on M&E tools and to clarify responsibilities.

The CSEF was open enough to allow NECs to use the resources to support their context-based and nationally defined strategy. Most coalitions analysed stated that they had sufficient room to adapt the CSEF to their national strategies (in fact, some NECs submitted their strategic plans as part of their application, although they had to adapt them to a ‘project’ format in the end). Nevertheless, some voices were concerned with the fact that the national CSEF projects were not always sufficiently customized (GCE Board). Probably, this is related to the fact that the regional networks presented several options of activities to the coalitions that would fit within the CSEF strategy, and/or to the fact that the benchmarks and indicators introduced in the CSEF reporting templates were perceived by some coalitions as guidelines for potential activities. In fact, this was probably the case for budget tracking related activities.

It was, ahhh, we valued that what they [NECs] wanted to do was also in line with regional and national campaigns... I wouldn't say that coalitions were pushed into doing that [budget tracking], we'd presented them a menu of things where we describe how, you know, if what you're doing is fitting, it does fit in this international campaign, that's great and then these or those are available too, like for example Global Action Week things, or One Goal Campaign... some coalitions took them up with energy and others did not, ah, but they were not penalised in any way or pressured... (CSEF-Asia)

It needs to be said that in Africa, the regional representatives considered ‘budget tracking’ to be a priority of their regional agenda and that, in fact, they were key when it came to introducing this theme within the Global CSEF agenda (CSEF-Africa).

In Latin America, the national projects were very diverse and based on the different educational realities of the countries in which the NECs from that region operate. There, the coalitions had enough autonomy to create projects based on their own priorities, and the projects were approved as long as they were consistent and followed the principles of the CLADE: defence of the right to education and civil society participation (CSEF-LAC).

In general, through the CSEF call, the GCE tried to promote a range of constitutional principles among the NECs, such as internal democratisation, gender parity and active participation of teachers' unions.

### 3.2.3 Negotiating the CSEF: the time constraint

In the design of the project, there was a gap between achieving short-term results and generating long-term policy change. This gap was accentuated by a key unforeseen event: the fact that the implementation time initially planned for was significantly reduced. The CSEF initial design was planned for a three and a half year period, but, for some reason, the project had to be developed in only two years (which was effectively reduced to 18 months in operational terms because no disbursements could be made in the last six months) (Interview GCE board). One of the main reasons for this time reduction was that it took one year to negotiate the terms of the final agreement from the date of the project approval by the EPDF committee. This would not have been such a major issue if it had been possible to extend the deadline for the execution of the project for an additional year. But this could not be done because, with the re-organisation of the EFA-FTI into the GPE and the constitution of a single fund, the EPDF had a closing date (end of 2011); thus, no new disbursements could be made after that date (World Bank).<sup>3</sup> In conclusion, the ambitious CSEF strategy of developing and strengthening civil society networks in 45 countries in three different continents had to be adjusted to fit a less than two year plan.<sup>4</sup>

GCE developed a project proposal for the EPDF Committee that fitted within the EPDF strategy of supporting the development and implementation of National Education Plans in EFA-FTI countries. This committee and the EFA-FTI/GEP board were very sympathetic to the importance of civil society in terms of its fundamental role in increasing transparency in education, ensuring results and improving accountability and governance in the education sector. They also placed a lot of value on the fact that this project would be the first ever global initiative to be funded through the EPDF. However, once the project was approved, the contract agreement was perceived as a "grey area" between the EFA-FTI and the World Bank (GPE Secretariat). Due to the fact that the EPDF is a trust fund administered by the Bank (World Bank 2008), it was signed by and negotiated with the Bank. Therefore, the Task Team Leader from the WB and the GCE representatives had to set up a project appraisal according to WB standards and financial delivery mechanisms. In doing this, they had the key support of a person from the GPE secretariat who worked as an effective broker between the two parties (or at least contributed to the negotiations not taking even longer than they did).

There is no a single explanation for why it took so much time to agree on the final CSEF grant agreement. According to the GCE and to some members of the GPE Secretariat, one of the main reasons for the delay was that the World Bank was reluctant for civil society to benefit from the EPDF (GCE Secretariat, Board). At that

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<sup>3</sup> Although, later on, it was decided to extent the EPDF closure to the end of 2012.

<sup>4</sup> A budget neutral extension followed and some of the CSEF activities could continue until June 2012, although activities at the country level were closed, for audit purposes, in October 2011.

time, the EPDF was exclusively used by the Bank “for their own purposes” and at “their own discretion”, even when it did not always reflect the priorities of the FTI (GPE Secretariat). Moreover, the World Bank was co-chairing the EPDF committee at the same time as the Bank was the recipient of the EPDF funds, so a conflict of interest arose. For of this reason, according to some observers, the Bank made no effort to accelerate the process. This generated a lot of frustration and uncertainty among the GCE members, and led to contradicting directions and confusing information from the GCE secretariat to its members (CSEF-LAC).

However, according to the World Bank, the negotiations took so long because the initial CSEF project was not thorough enough (i.e. many operational management tools were missing) and it took some time to adapt and amend the necessary funding instruments to the GCE request. The World Bank also took its time to make sure that the GCE had the necessary skills to manage the project according to the Bank’s standards (World Bank officials). At the same time, there was a lack of experience within the World Bank in dealing with global CSO-networks (in fact, one of the negotiators from the Bank side recognized that, at that time, the Bank was not fully aware of the comparative advantage of involving civil society when it came to achieving the EFA goals)<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the Bank’s procedures usually fit better with the capacities and organizational structure of governmental bodies; its financial and monitoring procedures are not always well-adapted to the capacities and rhythms of a civil society constituency.

The WB typically takes two years to prepare a project for a government client of the bank. So the idea that the Bank could work very nimbly is just not true. (GPE Secretariat)

In addition, the World Bank has much more experience in field contracts, but this time they were dealing with multiple partners operating at a range of scales - from the global, to the regional and the local. As one World Bank official involved in the negotiations stated, “we had never done this before” and “we were a bit scared about the complicated structure” (WB officials).

Overall, the delay in receiving the grant, and the shorter time to spend the resources, generated a range of issues. According to some of the interviewees, for civil society organisations, not having resources to develop their projects is a challenge. However, having a huge amount of resources to be spent in a short time is also a challenge; it can generate tensions between the parties’ involved, precipitate decision-making processes and even de-stabilise civil society networks (GCE board). The delay in receiving the funds also added pressure to staff and discouraged some NEC members in their efforts (see chapter 4 in this volume).

### 3.2.4. The National CSEF

One of the initial goals of the CSEF was “*to provide support to national education coalitions so that they can put in place, by the end of the three year period, national*”

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<sup>5</sup> “I was not, hmm, as sort of aware of the potential and really what the gaps were from the CSO perspective. So, if you were to say, with what I know now, whether doing something like this [the CSEF] would be essential to the success of the partnership [GPE], I would say yes, but at the time I didn’t know that.” (World Bank).

*civil society education funds that are legally registered and have the independence and credibility to attract in-country donor support.”*

The idea was to make the global/regional CSEF evolve in a way that it would trigger the constitution of national CSEFs and, by doing so, allow for the sustainability of the project through the coalitions getting predictable donor support at the country level. This idea has its origins in a consultation process that involved 500 key stakeholders across 20 countries and that was carried out at the final stage of the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF 2008).

Such a national fund would be a way of getting financial support for the implementation of the NECs' strategies. Applications would be submitted to National Fund legal entities, and approved by them if NECs could demonstrate that they were in possession of satisfactory participation, transparency and accountability standards. This form of “budget support” for advocacy coalitions would be a way to avoid donors defining civil society agendas by controlling what gets funded.

Among other advantages, a NCSEF would simplify the auditing and M&E tasks of NECs because they would have to report to a single entity. In addition, the transparency of coalitions would be strengthened, which is something that would also involve important efficiency gains. Another potential advantage of the NCSEF would be NECs not having to compete against their own members for donors' funds (which is what currently happens in many countries) because NECs would benefit directly from the NCSEF.

The idea of the national civil society education fund was that if you had strong enough, independent leading national civil society actors coming together, with the proper registered legal status, first of all, the donors could put the money into that, harmonising our support to government and harmonising our support to civil society through this mechanism. (...) without the donors having any say about the direction. Which is good for the donors also, because it means that they have a buffer between them and the national government, because a lot of donors would find it very difficult to support political work or citizen movements holding governments to account. A lot of the bilateral donors were saying that it was too risky for us because we have to deal with the government, and the government won't be happy with you challenging them. And let's face it, a good coalition is going to challenge the government sometimes. The donors know the accountability work is important but if they funded it directly, it would be problematic. But if they put their money in a pooled fund, in a protected one, they would be one step removed from how that money was going to be spent. (GCE Board)

Most NECs organised activities to advance the NCSEF idea, with 27 NECs reporting having a plan to set up a NCSEF (4<sup>th</sup> CSEF Progress report), but, as shown in the 3<sup>rd</sup> CSEF Progress Report (GCE), it did not get off the ground in any of the countries. A programme manager was hired in May 2010 to conduct NCSEF pilot projects in five African countries (Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana, Senegal and Gambia), three Asian countries (Cambodia, India and Nepal) and two Latin American countries (Nicaragua and Bolivia), although most of the work (including the organization of taskforces and prospective research) was done in Africa (GCE Secretariat).

Overall, the NCSEF idea was too ambitious to become a reality in such a short period of time, and with the exception of Mozambique no substantive advances were produced in other countries (see Bertomeu 2012). From the beginning, it became clear that to figure out the legal status that the NCSEF should have in each

country and, especially, to build the necessary credibility to lead this type of initiative would need more than two years.

Stakeholders were sympathetic to the idea of having a financial mechanism that would guarantee the sustainability of their advocacy work, but at the time, in thinking about its actual implementation certain reluctance emerged among both the donor and the civil society community. In fact, according to a survey conducted by the GCE, half of the NECS were not supportive of the idea of having a NCSEF in their territory (Kamera 2010). The main problems identified **on the donor side** were the following:<sup>6</sup>

- Too often, international donors, even when they formally subscribe to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, still prefer to fund independent projects because, by doing so, they can introduce more or less subtle aid conditionalities.
- In some countries, similar funds to support civil society already exist (although they do not necessarily focus on education), and donors are not willing to implement a similar mechanism in the same country. In this sense, one of the strongest criticisms of the person that the GCE hired to pilot the NCSEF was that a proper needs assessment and/or a feasibility study had not been done before the CSEF project was written, as this would have helped in developing more realistic objectives from the beginning.
- In recent years, in the context of the financial crisis, donors that have been generously supporting the EFA programme – like the Netherlands, the UK and Spain - have reduced their aid budgets substantially. These cuts have particularly affected the education sector.
- To make the NCSEF happen, the leadership of the NEC is not sufficient. A donor (or a group of donors) would need to buy into the idea and take the lead. This is what happened in Mozambique, where UNICEF became a sort of NCSEF champion, but not in the other countries that were part of the CSEF.
- Corporate donors are reluctant to provide budget support because they usually perceive philanthropy as a marketing tool, a way of linking their brands to particular aid projects. They would not become sufficiently visible by providing budget support.

And, **on the NECs side**:

- Some NECs think that having one single pool of funds to apply for resources would mean a restriction of their funding space. In other words, they are afraid that, in aggregated terms, the NCSEF will mean getting fewer resources than those they could get if they could respond to individual donor's calls for project proposals.
- Some NECs are afraid of the NCSEF generating conflicts of interest, favouritism, misappropriation and mismanagement of funds and potential discrimination towards weaker members.
- There is also the risk that the civil society education fund committee ends up becoming more powerful than the NEC.

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<sup>6</sup> Assessment based on interviews with GCE Secretariat, GCE Board, CSEF Asia and in Kamera (2010)

- Finally, the existence of a single funding source in the country could accentuate power struggles and competition – instead of cooperation – between education CSOs.

Despite the concrete idea of the NCSEF not developing as expected, it did help to promote a wide debate on improving the financial sustainability and accountability of coalitions. This was, at least, the case in countries where a consultative process was initiated among NEC members and key stakeholders to reflect on how the NCSEF should be financed and should ensure transparency. Debates on how to guarantee the independent management of the Fund, or on how funds would be allocated within the strategic planning of the NEC also took place in several locations (Bertomeu 2012, García-Alba, 2012a). These type of debates motivated the NEC's to enhance their fundraising strategies, including the need to mobilize their members and constituents in order to get resources for the network and to move towards increasing member ownership. In fact, as we will see in Chapter 4 in this volume, during the CSEF years, “we can observe an increasing and upward trend in the NECs capacity to mobilize resources”.

### 3.2.5. Diversifying the strategy: the case of the 1Goal Campaign

During the execution of the CSEF, this project interacted with the execution of one of the largest and most ambitious international campaigns that the GCE has developed in its lifetime: the 1Goal Campaign.

Box 4.1. The 1Goal Campaign  
Source: Mundy 2012

In June 2009 the GCE signed an agreement with DFID and FIFA to host a large, mass mobilization campaign leading up to a meeting of world leaders at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. A significant feature of the campaign was an online sign-up, which yielded more than 12 million signatures. The British government committed £1 million for the campaign.

Part of the CSEF grant (around \$650,000) was invested in the 1Goal Campaign under the argument that it involved capacity building activities for associated NECs . Specifically, NECs received support from the 1Goal campaign to convert mobile and online supporter bases, and to make use of new media to undertake national mobilization (Odaga, 2010). This decision was also taken for practical reasons and as an effective way to spend the CSEF grant, which was budgeted for 3.5 years, but for the reasons mentioned above, GCE only had 2 years to spend it.

The 1Goal Campaign contributed to the visibility of the GCE and to raise the message of the importance of education for development in the context of the strategic juncture represented by the celebration of the first World Cup in the African continent. It also led to the growth of the GCE Secretariat from 25 positions in 2009 to 47 in March 2010.

However, it must also be acknowledged that the CSEF and 1Goal represent two very different strategies or, in different words, “two angles, not always easy to link one to each other” (GCE Secretariat). The theory of change behind this type of



mass campaigning and use of celebrities is quite different from the CSEF focus on sustained grassroots organizing, and evidence based advocacy (Mundy 2012). It is not necessarily a problem that the same organisation adopts two different strategies to reach the same goals; however, it needs to have the necessary human resources and capacities to coordinate them to get the full potential from them and to avoid one strategy undermining the other.

Decisions related to the 1Goal Campaign were taken quickly and without wide consultation among the GCE membership. The decision to invest CSEF resources in 1Goal was made unanimously by the GCE Board in January 2010, although some board members felt that, “we did not have enough elements to understand what was really going on and take an informed decision” (GCE Board). This apparently undermined confidence in the Secretariat among certain key members for some time (Mundy and Haggerty 2010)

The Campaign penetrated much more in African countries and, for obvious reasons, was not as successful in countries without a soccer tradition (CSEF-Asia). In countries like Mozambique, there is the perception that 1Goal was very helpful in raising the profile of education among the donor community (see Mozambique report in this volume). In some Latin American countries such as Brazil, ‘1Goal’ resonated very well within the media, although the message of the Campaign did not impact on the complex educational policy debates that were going on in that country.

"One Goal" worked well at the level of media presence ... I do not know exactly what it managed to change, but in a country like Brazil it is something that it had any impact, we would say, but perhaps it assumed many things so that it would work, and in addition, Brazil did not put in its usual political content; the main problem of "One Goal" is that it had no political content, had no message. (CSEF-LAC)

The 1Goal Campaign helped to open a debate that is still going on in the GCE Constitutional Committee (which is working on the reform of the GCE constitution to enhance internal democracy), about what is the most appropriate approach for GCE campaigns. One of the conclusions they have reached is that media-oriented campaigns are not enough to bring about change, and that the content of the campaigns needs to be better elaborated and their message more politically committed (GCE board).

#### **4.2.6. Conclusions**

The CSEF strategy fits within the broader GCE strategy of promoting a pluri-scalar social movement to achieve EFA goals and, at the same time, of creating global awareness about the conception of education as a human right and as a key asset to promote international development processes. In fact, promoting, reinforcing and empowering grassroots’ national education coalitions – which are networked regionally and globally - and promoting evidence based advocacy, as suggested by the CSEF Project, are probably the most suitable strategies for civil society to provoke long-term progressive policy change in education.

When combining the CSEF with other global awareness campaigns also promoted by the GCE (whether it is the GAW or the 1Goal), leadership and management have not always been sufficiently effective to guarantee the consistency of the two approaches. Moreover, the agendas, needs and preferences

of the NECs have not always fitted with the timing requirements and the content of the global campaigns.

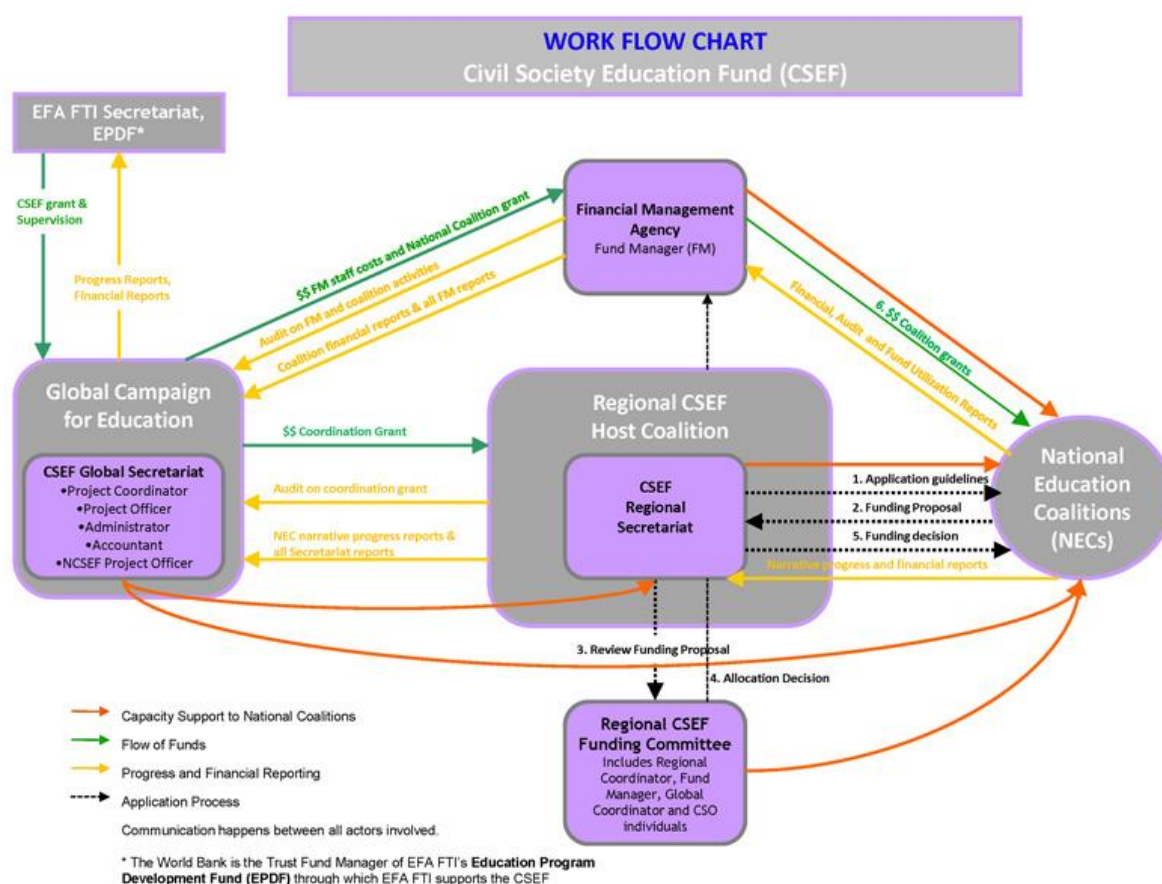
Due to funding constraints, civil society usually has to take decisions that are framed by opportunity rather than by strategy. The CSEF has been a great chance for the GCE to balance both elements: opportunity and strategy. To a great extent, the value of the CSEF relies on its level of adaptation to the locally defined needs and particular strategies of the GCE members. However, the time constraints coming from the donor side (and, specifically, from the mismatch between the World Bank and the GCE during the negotiation phase) made it difficult to establish the full potential of such a bottom-up approach from the inception phase.

The National CSEF proposal could not progress in most countries due to the combination of a constraining political context, low levels of engagement by donors, and lack of a common understanding of the potential benefits of the NCSEF among the GCE members. Such an ambitious idea would have benefited from a prospective study and broader consultation/deliberation with NECs before posing it as a major goal in the CSEF Project. The NCSEF idea has the potential to promote more sustainable advocacy strategies in the context of NECS, and avoid them having to implement donor funded projects that so often take NECs away from their focus. NCSEF could be seen as a process for “pressing” donors to finance civil society under Budget Support modalities and harmonizing M&E frameworks and requirements. The NCSEF idea could be re-considered in the CSEF II, but should not respond to a blueprint schema. The NCSEF might work in some countries where, for instance, there is room for improvement in donor coordination and might not be taken up in countries in which donor communities have built another civil society fund – since they will feel they are duplicating efforts. Different funding mechanisms might be considered in countries without a strong presence of international donors.

### 3.3. The CSEF Institutional Setting (Steering Structure)

#### 3.3.1 Description of the Steering Structure: global overview

Figure 3.1. CSEF Work Flow Chart  
Source: GCE



The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) acted as the executing agency of the CSEF project and, to this end, recruited a secretariat to have overall oversight of three regional Civil Society Education Funds established in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These regional funds supported national civil society coalitions (NECs) in 45 countries, with the intention of enabling them to assume an active role in EFA-FTI and other education policy spaces.

Three regional coalitions that are members of the GCE (ANCEFA in Africa, ASPBAE in Asia and CLADE in Latin America) acted as host agencies, employing small secretariats (CSEF-regional secretariats) to promote the regional funds, prepare papers for funding committees, follow up national coalitions to ensure (punctual) quarterly reporting / accounting, promote experience sharing and offer capacity building support as needed.

Three regional funding committees were established (in Africa, Asia and Latin America) each made of credible individuals from across the region. These have been the decision-making bodies for the allocation of funds.

Three financial management agencies were identified (Oxfam GB in Africa, Education International in Asia, Action Aid in Latin America) to ensure sound financial management.

All of these agencies - GCE, and its Regional Coalition members, the Regional Funding Committees and the Regional Financial Management Agencies - acted within the CSEF Steering Structure at the *strategic level*. They did so by deciding on resources for the primary processes and controlling their effective use; assessing opportunities and making choices; setting targets, and ensuring that the work process is effectively and efficiently geared towards maximising the outcome of these targets; monitoring the environment and assuring organizational stability through adaptation.

Overall oversight for the project has been provided by the GCE, which has channeled the funds to the three financial management agencies, analysed reports, independently audited spending and ensured cross-fertilisation between the regions. GCE has been ultimately accountable to the EPDF Committee for delivering on this project and to the World Bank as the formal supervising entity, although, as we detail below, an important part of the supervising role was also adopted by the GPE secretariat itself.

#### *The CSEF supervising entity(ies)*

In managerial terms, the supervising entity is expected to act at the *normative level*, i.e. it needs to assure that things are done at the service of the larger whole by establishing policy priorities in light of (usually) competing demands between the immediate and the strategic, and between internal and external pressures. It also involves ensuring project long-term viability and development, identity and vision. However, for different reasons we detail below, the supervising entity could not play such a normative role to its full potential.

According to the EPDF Agreement, the World Bank should be “solely responsible for the supervision of project activities” funded by this Fund. The mismatch between the World Bank and the GCE during the negotiation period of the CSEF project, which, as we explained above, led to important delays, also led to tensions between the two agencies. This, along with the lack of incentives for the World Bank to engage with a project like the one represented by the CSEF (GPE Secretariat), contributed to the Bank not being very proactive in its supervision duties. For these reasons, at some point, the GPE secretariat, without having a proper mandate, ended up acting as a *de facto* supervising entity and hired a CSEF focal person. In fact, the CSEF is the first project that has been supervised directly by the GPE secretariat. Several members of the GPE secretariat played a key and highly valued role supporting the project. However, having to adopt such a supervisory role generated certain frustration on their side because they expected to work as an effective *partner* with the GCE within the CSEF process rather than as a supervising entity. Combining both roles was not an easy task and, in the medium term, it meant that they could not work as proper partners with the GCE (GPE secretariat). According to a GCE member, this lack of definition had an impact on the CSEF not

receiving the necessary technical and political backing from the Washington-based organisations (i.e. the EFA-FTI/GPE and the World Bank):

There was no enabling engagement from the Bank or even from the FTI to ensure that what the CSEF wanted to accomplish was supported by them in their processes. I think there was a huge sort of gap between the stated aims of this project and its ownership by the partnership that approved this project. The bank is a partner, the FTI's secretariat, it supports the partnership, the other donors are partners, and yet none of them own this agenda enough to say "We support CSEF and its objectives and our role in ensuring that civil society has a place at the table is X, Y and C".(...) And I think that really stems from this model of the Bank, "Here is the money, we deliver it, then you report back, and as long as there is no corruption, you know, our reputational risk is reduced, and we are not worried". (GCE member)

### 3.3.2. The architecture at work: focus on the regional agencies

#### Funding Committees

The main responsibilities of the funding committee (FC) were to define the processes for grant application and to agree on the eligibility criteria of the CSEF projects presented by NECS (within general parameters set by the GCE Board). Of the three regional agencies, the FC was the one that took the most time to be set up because it meant the creation of a new governance structure (very different to the existing structures in the region), new rules of the game, and the involvement of external and independent evaluators.

Within the CSEF architecture, to a great extent, the FC was created as a way to differentiate the traditional *donor role*, which would be assumed by the FC itself, from the *political and programmatic role*, which would remain within the regional coalition (specifically within the regional coalition board and the CSEF regional secretariat).

In the three regions, sufficiently independent individuals were included in the funding committees to assess individual country CSEF proposals with rigor and to provide feedback. This was a transparency requisite to neutralize any country interest or preference that could exist within the regional coalition.

However, it should be noted that the outside individuals were selected by the regional coalitions (by its secretariat and/or board) and many of them were often too occupied to attend the meetings. The latter was especially common in Asia and Africa. In both continents, moreover, the regional coalitions and the FMA had strong representation within the FC, which did not contribute to it being perceived as an independent and neutral evaluator (CSEF-Asia, CSEF-Africa and CSEF-LAC). In LAC, in contrast, the FC ('Consejo Deliberativo') was quite strong and composed of mainly independent members with only one out of nine coming from the CLADE. Nevertheless, in Asia, NECs found that the active participation of ASPBAE within the funding committee was useful because the regional CSEF secretariat could provide them with more well-informed and quality support for their proposals (CSEF-Asia). In Africa, most of the members of the FC were international donors – especially in its initial stage - and, in contrast to other regions, local scholars and local activists were missing. The main advantage of involving donors within the FC was that it became easier to get extra-funding to cover the needs of the coalitions when the CSEF grant

was not sufficient (CSEF-Africa). However, this created a strong feeling in the region of the CSEF being a donor-driven fund (CSEF-Africa).

## Regional Coalitions

The regional coalitions (ANCEFA, ASPBAE and CLADE) played a key role in the structure of the CSEF by engaging their membership in the CSEF project and creating CSEF regional secretariats within the context of their organisational structure. As a coalition, they were already members of GCE before the project started.

In LAC, CLADE made a significant effort to manage the fund democratically, based on consensus and participation. However, they struggled to combine the time that proper consultation requires with the tight schedule they had to follow to meet the bureaucratic demands of the supervising entity. In Asia, the CSEF regional coordination gave a lot of importance to mutual learning and the exchange of good practices among members, and played an important role in capacity support of NECs.

In Africa, ANCEFA made a huge effort to coordinate the three regional agencies via weekly Skype meetings and was often overwhelmed for having to manage so many CSEF national projects with a relatively small secretariat. Proportionally, the CSEF budget allocation to the African secretariat was significantly smaller than the budget allocated to the Asian and Latin American secretariats. Moreover, along with M&E tasks, ANCEFA programme managers (all women) invested a lot of their time on the capacity building of the NECs. Beyond the large number of participants, one of the main challenges in managing the project for the CSEF African secretariat was a result of the linguistic diversity that exists in the region. At the same time, some perceived with concern that, in this region, the CSEF created a feeling between the NECs that they were in competition rather than in alliance, working for the same goals in the context of a common movement (GCE Secretariat).

The role of the regional coalitions within the GCE was altered by the CSEF because the Fund implied them having to assume different types of responsibilities. In fact, a sort of principal-agent confusion was generated. The main reason for this is that the regional coalitions, which are GCE-board members (the *principal*), became implementers of the project as part of the regional CSEF-Secretariat (the *agent*). Thus, on the one hand, the regional coalitions were governing the GCE-secretariat via the GCE board, but on the other hand they were implementing the CSEF-project that was being supervised by the GCE secretariat. Moreover, as we show below, the principal-agent relationship also altered the dynamics between the regional coalitions and the NECs.

### *Advocacy Network or Donor? The changing relations with members*

NECs are members of the regional coalitions' organisation. One of the core missions of regional coalitions consists in responding to their members' (including NECs and

other type of organisations)<sup>7</sup> needs and to support their development. Thus, to a great extent, the RCs staff is at the service of the national coalitions. Within the context of the CSEF, the RCs have developed numerous regional training activities to support capacity building processes at the country level (see Chapter 4 in this volume). For instance, in Asia, ASPAE promoted a range of initiatives to develop the NECs administrative, financial and staff recruitment competencies before the execution of the CSEF projects started (CSEF-Asia).

However, the CSEF has also contributed to reversing the conventional relationship between the RC and the NECs. First, for the NECs, it was not easy to differentiate between the CSEF regional secretariat role (located in the regional coalition) and the funding committee role. The fact that very visible members of the RC secretariat were part of the FC did not help to make this differentiation clear. Even when the different roles of the FC and the regional CSEF secretariat were explained more than once to the members, NECs got confused when they saw the same people sitting in the two bodies.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, many NECs started thinking about the RC as a donor.

One thing is to have a network where members generally contribute to the network by, for instance, paying membership fees, because the coalition members are collectively committed to this collective political project, beyond the interests of their particular coalition... This is a social movement or network logic, *versus* the donor logic, where coalitions receive funds from the network ... That changes ... The relationship gets reversed, there begins to be a tension that undermines the political alliances that should be there... (GCE Board)

Moreover, the fact that the regional coalitions were asking (and often chasing) their members to implement a very intensive M&E system, also contributed to reversing this principal-agency relationship and made it appear as if NECs were accountable to the regional coalitions. Thus, for this reason also, the RCs appeared to the NECs like donors to whom they were accountable.

Overall, the CSEF architecture ran the risk of challenging the idea of the GCE as a multi-scalar network of education advocates and activists.

We would like to stay on campaign, and advocacy for all and so on and so on. Not to become something receiving money, distributing money (...) (GCE Board)

The CSEF also had the potential to create a certain destabilisation within the regional coalitions, because it meant excluding from access to funding those members that do not operate in FTI countries. Leaving out certain coalitions was seen as problematic especially in Africa (CSEF-Africa). However, this was not seen as such an issue in the other two regions. In LAC, where only 5 countries benefited *a priori* from the CSEF, CLADE solved this issue by putting a similar proposal to the CSEF to AECID (the Spanish International Aid Agency), which, after being accepted, allowed them to include 10 additional countries in the process (CSEF-LAC). In Asia, the only excluded coalition was the Philippine one and ASPBAE found financial mechanisms

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<sup>7</sup> It needs to be mentioned that regional organisations have a membership that goes beyond the NECs constituency. For instance, ASPBAE has over 200 members and NECs represent only about 10% of their membership.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noticed that this was also the case for the FMA in most regions, since the representative of the FMA was also sitting on the funding committee.

to compensate them out of different funding sources, and invited them to CSEF-funded regional workshops and meetings that brought all the different Asian coalitions together (CSEF-Asia).

#### *The regional also as a political space*

As we have seen, the regional coalitions played a key role in the context of the CSEF programme when it came to coordinating strategies, promoting learning and exchanging experiences among the coalitions, as well as carrying out a range of capacity building initiatives. However, the strategic and political role of the regional bodies in developing advocacy initiatives at the regional level could have been more explicitly promoted by the CSEF, since many political decisions and agendas affecting education are increasingly being defined and framed at the regional level. By doing so, the regional coalitions would have also been able to develop their political dimension under the CSEF and their role would not have been reduced to supporting what is going on at the national level. This 'nationalistic' bias within the CSEF meant that core advocacy and value added processes at the regional level were reduced (or, at least, not developed) because of lack of budget allocation in the CSEF for this purpose.

The institutional arrangement of the Regional Network to also have specific advocacy roles for the region is important, and was not central in CSEF. There are decisions taken in the African Union, or in SADC or ECOWAS or EAC that significantly affect decisions at country level, so regional advocacy for ANCEFA needs to be emphasised in the strategy. In addition, so that governments can also see that CS can be supported regionally. (CSEF-Africa)

### **Financial Management Agency**

At the regional level, the management tasks were divided between the FMA, which was in charge of financial management and financial reporting, and the regional CSEF secretariat, which was in charge of the programmatic M&E and the 'narrative' reporting. Different international non-governmental entities, with enough credibility and know-how, assumed the responsibility for being the FMA in each region (although no previous assessment of their experience with the management of these types of funds was done, due to time constraints): Action Aid in LAC, EI in Asia and Oxfam GB in Africa. These organisations adopted their respective financial management systems to the regional CSEFs.

In Asia a very strong distinction in functioning between the fund manager and the regional secretariat was made. The FMA was very strict and was very much respected by the other agencies. The fund manager also revised NECs' proposals, primarily focusing on the financial aspects of the budgets and spending, and shared its analysis with the FC.

In LAC, the division of roles between the FMA and the FC was seen from the FMA point of view as inefficient and not natural, translating into delays, transaction costs and communication problems. As a way to overcome some of these problems, they recently increased the frequency of the meetings between the RC and the FMA (CSEF-LAC).

The INGOs' level of involvement in the CSEF was not always clear. The agreement between the INGOs and the GCE was made under time pressure (CSEF-



Africa). Apparently, the INGOs were asked to act as “service delivery” entities, but this generated certain confusion regarding roles due to the fact that INGOs are also important civil society actors that work at the programmatic level in the same regions, and they are often even members of the NECs and/or regional coalitions. This created grey areas, particularly in LAC and Africa, because the same actor (the INGO) was playing different roles with the same partner.

In Africa the agreement with the FMA came a bit late, with important time constraints that seem to have influenced the development of proper and clear agreements and the development of internal organisational processes to clarify managerial support.

And we just sort of forgot about it (CSEF), (...) So in the meantime this project was going ahead, was being approved by the Bank by FTI; Oxfam’s name was in, as a proposal...it, it didn’t say Oxfam surely will be it, but it did say Oxfam should be approached to be the financial management agency; We weren’t aware of it, we hadn’t seen the proposal or anything. And then [ANCEFA] called us...um...in March or April, (...) “I’ve got this bungle I need to talk to you urgently, this is approved” (...) so we then went through a rapid internal process in OGB to decide if we were going to join this project and we could see...there were huge risks; that was sort of evident from the start. It was a lot of money to a lot of coalitions which weren’t necessarily used to receiving that amount of money; (...) We didn’t feel like we could say no, we didn’t feel like it’s fair to the coalitions to say, you know; and we also felt as Oxfam, well if this is going to happen we need to be, we need to help make it work and we didn’t expect for every aspect of it to work because it, we felt it was clear from the start (CSEF Africa)

The contribution of the African FMA went beyond financial management duties and beyond the terms of the contract. This happened particularly during the initial stage when the FMA contributed to setting up the finance committee, received and approved country proposals, hired the African CSEF secretariat, etc. The FMA even wanted to play a bigger role in terms of the capacity building of NECs and, by doing so, to complement the role played by ANCEFA on this terrain (CSEF Africa). However, as “contractually” ANCEFA was the only one in direct communication with the NECs at the programmatic level, there were fewer options to use Oxfam’s presence at the national level to strengthen NECs’ capacities at different levels.

In LAC, communication and deliberation was needed to avoid the national branches of Action Aid playing a financial agency role at the national level (instead of that of partner). Moreover, in this region, they tried to go beyond the conception of the INGO as a simple ‘service deliverer’ by raising the political and strategic profile of the FMA (CSEF LAC).

In all the regions, Skype and face-to-face meetings between the three agencies were established on a regular basis (weekly in the case of Africa) as a way to share information, to coordinate action and to agree on joint solutions to problems. In the Asia Pacific region, a coordination committee was set up to ensure participatory decision making on coalition funding and governance matters.<sup>9</sup> It consisted of the chair of the funding committee, the head of the CSEF Regional

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<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the types of decisions they adopted included requests by coalitions to shift funds from one of their budget lines to another, agreeing to adjust the reporting timeline in light of frequent delays in funding, determining how to deal with a coalition that had not reported fully or accurately on their expenditures, deciding how to deal with a coalition where there was internal conflict at the board level, etc. (CSEF Asia)

Secretariat, the CSEF Regional Coordinator, the head of the FMA and the CSEF Global Coordinator. This committee protected against potential conflicts of interest, or one regional agency having more influence than another (CSEF Asia).

### 3.3.3. Conclusions

The CSEF architecture is sophisticated and complex, especially at the regional level where three interlinked agencies with differentiated roles have been set up. The focus on the regional scale is consistent with the GCE structure that considers the regional as the privileged organisational level and as the political space that is closer and more sensitive to national coalitions' needs than the global one.

The regional organisation became more complex than it might have been to avoid making the GCE and the RCs look (and act) like 'donors'. In practice, the division of roles between the three agencies has not always been clear to everyone, especially members operating at the national level, and has led to a transformation of the relationship of the RCs with their members.

Cooperation and communication between the three agencies has improved substantially with the passage of time in all regions. In the CSEF I, a lot of time was spent in setting up such a complex architecture, and the parties involved have learned numerous lessons from the experience. However, this does not mean that in case the CSEF has a new phase, some changes at the level of architecture to make it more efficient and effective should not be considered.

The rationale behind dividing the three organizational bodies was to ensure greater transparency, management and efficiency; but this was not always achieved, particularly due to time constraints and communication issues. The time and resources invested in doing the M&E and accountability from the CSEF global and regional secretariat led to the regional and national coalitions assuming an important workload that, somehow, undermined the scope of their education advocacy mission.

## 3.4. Operational Management Capacity

This section explores the operational management of the CSEF based on different core tasks and managerial dimensions: human resources, the gender approach to organisation, M&E systems, financial management, and organisational learning.

### 3.4.1 Human Resources Management

One of the main criticisms of the CSEF operational management is that human resources were not planned thoroughly, especially in the first stages of the project. However, in 2010, after a first assessment of project implementation, this problem was detected and a CSEF **Capacity Support Plan (CSP)** was developed in order to strengthen the capacities needed by the teams working at the national level. See the strategic objectives of the plan in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1. Strategic objectives in the CSP

Source: GCE 2010a

**Strategic Objective 1:** strengthen technical support for and supervision of national coalitions by providing resources for resident capacity support, mentorship programmes, financial management training, and campaign design. Under this objective, the key strategies agreed to include strategy technical support, resident capacity support, mentorship and mentor organisation support and financial management training.

**Strategic Objective 2:** provide resources to document the impact of CSEF projects; harness, disseminate and share information on FTI country processes with civil society, capture CSEF country highlights, compile good practice guidelines and skills toolkits, and promote sharing of lessons learned and important case studies among CSEF countries.

**Strategic Objective 3:** build capacity of CSOs in advocacy and campaigns, in particular to focus more attention on domestic financing of education, developing, monitoring and evaluating education sector plans, engaging in policy discussion and strengthening the consensus building process around education sector plans and coordination on education across civil society and with government and donors.

**Strategic Objective 4:** Support globally coordinated national advocacy and mobilisation activities across 50 FTI eligible countries; mobilise civil society to put pressure on national governments to commit to the EFA goals in the run up to, and during the UN MDG summit in September 2010.

To achieve the *first objective* of the CSP, additional staff to cover important gaps in programme implementation was recruited. As an example, in Africa, a project officer related to the setting up of NCSEFs and three additional staff for ANCEFA, including a Portuguese-speaking programme officer to support the Lusophone speaking countries, were recruited. Also as a way to achieve this first objective, the CSEF regional secretariats organised many visits and offered technical assistance to the national coalitions. Most of the coalitions were visited by their regional secretariat at least once during project implementation. The total number of visits were 32 in 2009, 62 in 2010 and 59 in 2011. These numbers can be considered quite positive as these visits appear to be highly valued by many NECs in the completion reports. The visits from the Global Secretariat were less common, but their frequency increased over time, occurring on 3 occasions in 2009, 17 in 2010 and 11 in 2011. Eighteen NECs reported having *mentorship plans* in place, which covered areas such as “engagement in the sector dialogue and processes around policies and the development/implementation and monitoring of ESPs, communication, national CSEF fundraising, coalition governance, membership development and advocacy and campaigns on areas of domestic financing of education, ODA, sector wide approach and policy analysis” (GCE 2010a: p. 7). Also related to this first objective, financial management was improved through a comprehensive management systems review exercise, covering 32 countries; a one week financial management workshop held in September 2010, attended by CSEF accountants from all 24 African countries; the rolling out of a financial management policy manual and the recruitment of a new accountant for Africa.

The *second strategic objective* in the plan was primarily related to sharing information and good practice guidelines (and, accordingly, will be more deeply explored in section 3.4.5 in this chapter).

The third and fourth objectives were related to technical training on advocacy tools for the NECs, for their members and key stakeholders, although their level of development was very different. On the one hand, the planned activities related to the third objective were only partially carried out: 3 coalitions undertook the information gathering meetings (instead of the benchmark of 10 coalitions included in the CSP) and 13 NECs organised national workshops on issues of domestic financing (instead of the benchmark of 30 established in the CSP). On the other hand, the **fourth objective** was more thoroughly approached: three regional planning workshops for national coalitions for the on-going globally coordinated advocacy were held in Lima (Peru), Johannesburg (South Africa) and Dhaka (Bangladesh); a workshop for globally coordinated advocacy was organised in the prelude to the UN MDG Summit; mobile and online supporter bases were obtained; campaign planning and resource packs were developed and disseminated to NECs in Spanish, Portuguese, French and Arabic; media and video assets were reported to be well used by African broadcasters, leading to significant coverage of the issue of education, and radio and mobile phone relationships and content were developed; and in general terms, a high level of engagement with the campaign was achieved.

#### *Recruitment and stabilization of key positions*

From the CSEF project design and the interviews conducted, it seems that an overall vision and strategic framework on competency requirements and competency development for this project were not sufficiently developed. Competency development, internal trainings and skill sharing were done on *ad hoc* basis, but were not part of the CSEF or of the CSP. At the GCE Secretariat, techniques such as professional competence evaluations are starting to become a common practice, but are not part of the organisational culture yet. Currently, results-oriented staff evaluations are done each semester (GCE Secretariat).

At the regional level, CSEF job descriptions were formulated in similar terms as in the GCE. Several interviewees stressed that the resources from the CSEF project to finance programme officers in the three regions were inadequate and insufficient given the job requirements (CSEF Africa and LAC). ANCEFA felt especially discriminated against in comparison to other regions, as they were in charge of 29 of the total of 45 coalitions that were part of the CSEF.

In the context of the CSEF project, ASPBAE started to develop **professional career plans** in order to increase the performance of the NEC's that benefited from the CSEF. In Asia, some face-to-face regional seminars were carried out, aimed at building the capacities of particular individuals in key positions in the coalitions, such as national or sub-national coordinators, NCSEF committee members, and finance and administrative officers and accountants. These were usually linked with the "technical" trainings, which were considered to be part of the institutional strengthening of the coalition. (CSEF Asia)

However, a high turnover of experienced staff reduced the effectiveness of internal trainings and emphasized the need for more elaborate information systems and on-line capacity building (CSEF Asia, CSEF Africa, CSEF LAC). The overall

CSEF project in several cases could not sustain key positions until the end of the project. Such turnover was experienced at the three levels - the GCE Secretariat, the regional networks (specifically ANCEFA) and in various NECs (this seemed to be the case especially in Asia) – and particularly during the final stage of the project.

One of the main reasons for the weakness in accounting and management is because of a turnover of accountants or appointment, I would say appointment of non-qualified accountants, I think that would be correct in most cases (...) And therefore those who come in and then we train them, they learn how to do it quite well then. And they see greener pastures when they get another opportunity and just leave and go, some of them didn't even give 24 hours notice, they just disappeared and left the whole account scrambled (CSEF Asia).

Various reasons for the turnover were identified in the interviews: (a) insecurity because of unclear sustainability of the programme, (b) disparities and delays in salary payments and, (c) workload and external pressure. High turnover obviously also affected organisational memory and the effects of learning, skill-sharing, and staff training.

Once the CSEF started in summer 2009, the project did not have a proper HR plan. In fact, the CSEF Secretariat and the CSEF coordination position were created relatively late and did not cover the entire project cycle. On the HR management terrain, clearer direction and management from the global level were missing at some points.

Some problems arose in HR, because of lack of experience in such a complex and big fund. It took quite a while to clarify that a coordinator was needed, and to clarify his/her tasks. (GCE Secretariat).

The CSEF global coordinator only arrived in February (2010)... from our side, from the supervising, the supervising department side, that there wasn't one person that would be the focal point was also really only decided in February - March, pretty late, a couple of months after launch. (...) but the structures in the GCE probably were not there to manage the CSEF at a global level so they hired people and that was a couple of months after we said the project started in July, so the question is more on the GCE side on what to do (...). So it's a big programme and it's a global programme and I think for that long it could have been maybe 3 people, one person for each region (GCE Secretariat)

The GCE argues that time constraints did not allow for proper creation of HR procedures, profiles and plans before the project implementation started. Responsibilities and positions were readjusted, but no proper skills and procedures were planned. As a result, priorities and tasks changed frequently during the CSEF implementation. As an example, the CSEF regional secretariat became heavily involved in accountability requirements, despite the fact that they were not recruited and hired for this specialized task. Regional project officers were supposed to do "core process tasks" but in the end spent a lot of their time doing monitoring and ensuring accountability. In Africa, the officer responsible for "Capacity building of the members" was engaged in M&E duties in relation to more than 14 countries. In Asia and LAC, the tension that the CSEF regional secretariats felt was similar.

### 3.4.2 Gender

Gender issues have been adopted in the CSEF project design, in the work plan and in M&E systems with the objective of mainstreaming the gender perspective in the programmatic activities. The CSEF has been implemented in the 45 countries with a strong focus on gender at the programmatic level, although as we show below, such an emphasis has not been as present at the operational level.

A considerable part of the primary process - advocacy - was aimed at achieving the EFA-Goal regarding 'Gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015'. Much effort was made to influence policy and legal levels and government agendas in relation to this goal, specifically promoting gender focused research, budget tracking including gender issues, quality standards at local levels through school councils, and avoiding early drop-out among girls. As another example the GAW 2011 focused on girls' access to education and on stopping violence against girls. In countries like Bolivia, the CSEF project has been totally aligned with the achievement of the EFA gender parity goal (Talavera 2012). From the gender perspective, many results were achieved, and internal learning and sharing of best practices related to gender issues were also carried out.

#### *Women in CSEF structures*

At the organisational level, gender sensitivity differs in the various levels of the network, but there is no systematic gender-mainstreaming approach within the CSEF.<sup>10</sup>

I think, like in many organizations, it's actually how gender expresses in your functioning, which becomes the true test (...) so that even if there are women on the boards, they actually are drawn out of their shell, or they actually are able to play more aggressive roles... And being themselves aware of gender differences and gender roles, because a lot of time being a woman does not necessarily mean you are aware of, and that you can be actively involved in contesting, or arguing for a change in gender roles. So I think much more could have been done, I think in terms of organisational processes that address the gender issue, but certainly in terms of a discussion on gender in education intellectually, and hoping that that would somehow permeate. If it touches you intellectually perhaps the next step would be ...would facilitate the next step in terms of changing behaviours and attitudes, but I think a little bit more needs to be done... (CSEF Asia)

Gender sensitivity and gender balance therefore differ at various levels of the network. Sensitivity is higher in the LAC Secretariat than in other regions. In LAC there is a non-explicit, but effective, gender approach due to a higher organisational sensitivity toward gender issues in CLADE.

You know CLADE composition is female and the gender issue, from my point of view, (...) the women's leading role in the project has always been there in effect. It is something that goes beyond the project. It's kind of CLADE ethos. We adopt the non-discriminatory language regarding gender, (...). We have women organisations among our membership (CSEF LAC).

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<sup>10</sup> By gender mainstreaming we mean making organisations gender-responsive, by identifying factors that create and aggravate gender biases in (overall) organisation such as: (a) vision or mandate and the resulting organisational objectives; (b) policies and organisational structure (c) organisational practices (d) programmes and services (d) beliefs, attitudes and practices of officials and personnel.

Women to men ratios in leadership and at board level are fairly balanced at GCE and in Asia and LAC. Regarding women leadership in the different boards, ratios are 50% on the GCE board and in the majority of the regional boards, with the exception of ANCEFA (3 women out of 10 members, but the number of women in ANCEFA's board is increasing). When it comes to NECs, a large disparity appears. NECboards are largely made up of men. At the national level, hardly any coalition shows gender equality, and only in 18 boards does the female presence exceed 40%, while in 8 it is lower than 20%. However, the participation of women in NECs' boards and committees has increased during the project cycle (see Chapter 4 in this volume).

There is room for increasing the number and centrality of member organisations with a clear focus on gender and women rights within the GCE. This could be an effective way to improve gender equity at both the programmatic and organisational levels. Thus, in order to better work together for the achievement of the EFA goals related to gender parity, more active participation within the coalitions of women/girls' movements seems to be one of the best though challenging strategies (CSEF Africa).

### 3.4.3 Monitoring & Evaluation

The CSEF established an extensive and complex M&E framework that was developed by the CSEF Global Secretariat in close collaboration with the regional secretariats. The regional secretariats redefined and adapted the framework to regional realities and preferences. As a consequence, the M&E framework was not harmonized globally. For instance, in some areas it had a stronger focus on results and in others on processes (GCE Secretariat). The fact that each region applied its own interpretation and M&E system is coherent with the decentralisation principle that is at the centre of GCE governance. However, it also led to inconsistent reporting, increasing the coordination costs and auditing costs.

The M&E system included an extensive development of both quantitative and qualitative indicators as tools. A significant number of *Tools and Guidelines* have been developed, and their application has generated a huge quantity of internal and public information on the achievements of the project and enhanced its transparency. Both the global and the regional CSEF secretariats agreed on the idea of requesting frequent reporting from NECs in order to ensure accountability and anticipate potential mismanagement.

Formal agreements in which the reporting duties were specified, were established between the WB and the GCE, on the one hand, and between the regional networks and the financial agencies with the NECs (in Asia and Latin America), on the other. The GCE- CSEF Secretariat compiled the information coming from the Regional CSEF Secretariat and the FMAs, which, at the same time, compiled the information coming from the NECs, and presented it to the supervising entities. Nevertheless, the feed-back and quality assessment of the reporting was mainly carried out by the Regional Secretariat, who was in direct communication with the NECs, the FMA only occasionally having direct contact with NECs in relation to M&E procedures. The FMA reporting and the M&E reporting processes were not well-coordinated in most regions and were seen as separate processes. This made it

difficult to relate the policy/narrative reporting to the financial reporting, and to simplify the reporting in one single cross-fertilising process (CSEF Africa).

Coalitions started working on the project without proper knowledge about the M&E systems, and also without proper training on how to apply them. The correct implementation of the reports generated by the NECs was not always supervised at the regional and global levels. For instance, when reading a group of CSEF completion reports written by the NECs it can be seen that there was no common understanding or interpretation of certain key concepts and indicators among the coalition members and, consequently, the content that they reported was not consistent.

The M&E Framework of the CSEF developed as a three-step process (GCE, 2010b):

1. A baseline assessment process, carried out at the beginning of the project
2. A quarterly reporting and a bi-annual reporting process, where coalitions submit quarterly reports and complete a specific results framework.
3. An annual impact assessment process, where coalitions organise a learning platform for members as well as for civil society to assess their collective impact on the 6 EFA goals.

In relation to **step 1** of the M&E Framework, the baseline assessment was conducted by external consultants in some cases (Africa), and in other cases by the regional coalitions themselves (LAC). Not all NECs did a baseline assessment and, in those cases where it was done, it was not always with the purpose it was designed for, i.e. to be a tool for assessing the national network capacity as a structure itself. Instead, in many baseline reports, the NECs assessed the aggregated capacity of its national members (see Bertomeu 2012, García-Alba 2012a, 2012b).

**Step 2** of the M&E has been the component most developed and the one in which participants have invested the most time. The initial frequency of the reporting (every three months) was not imposed by the donors but a suggestion of the GCE to look more like a credible recipient (GCE Secretariat). At the time of the negotiations, the GCE thought they needed to self-impose this high accountability standard due to the fact that it was the first time that the FTI was supporting this type of fund for civil society (GCE board). Nevertheless, this reporting frequency generated a burden at the regional and national levels. Coalitions and the regional secretariat complained that the reporting tasks were very time consuming and that formats and reporting requirements changed during the CSEF process (specifically, in mid-2010) (CSEF LAC).<sup>11</sup> However, it should be noted that in 2010 it was agreed that the reporting frequency would be reduced to twice a year instead of quarterly, due to the fact that the reporting activity was both too time consuming and because no substantive changes could be reported in such a short period (GPE Secretariat).

Regional secretariats felt overwhelmed by the M&E system and felt that these types of tasks were not related to their more strategic and programmatic skills. They also felt that, if not done efficiently, M&E and other technical work could interfere with the political work, which is their main focus and area of expertise (CSEF LAC).

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<sup>11</sup> In LAC the amount of work that M&E generated increased because they had to make the formats of CSEF-EPDF and CSEF- AECID uniform. (CSEF LAC)



If you ask me, I think, I think it went a little over board, you know, these are the tensions, because in some ways I think a balance needs to be struck between how much energy goes into, as, you know, how much energy sapped out the coalitions, to deal with, attending to financial and administrative nitty-gritty... versus the energy that goes into the substantive part of the work... It's a constant tension, there's a constant tension in that. (CSEF Asia)

The amount of time needed and the requirements for data compilation and quality checks carried out by the regional coalitions in the frame of the CSEF did not leave much time for them to organise advocacy campaigns and research at the regional level (CSEF Africa, CSEF LAC). For this reason, to some extent, the CSEF ran the risk of losing the regional bodies as one of its main focuses.

In relation to **step 3**, the impact assessment of the overall goals and the role that CSOs had in the achievement of EFA was not always consistent. An important number of NECs, instead of assessing their collective impact on the 6 EFA goals, did research on the status of government achievement of these goals. Thus, the reporting at this stage was used more as an advocacy tool than as an M&E Tool.

The multilingual nature of the GCE affected the speed of the M&E process. In LAC, translating the report into English was generating delays and additional costs. However, CLADE raised the issue to the GCE, and the GCE secretariat agreed on taking care of the translation itself (CSEF LAC).

However, with the passage of time, the perception of M&E as a time consuming activity was ameliorated, and once “they got used to it” the burden it generated was reduced (CSEF Asia). It needs to be noted that “at the beginning of the Project the M&E culture was not there” and, for this reason, many did not see the potential benefits of implementing rigorous M&E systems (CSEF Africa). However, even in cases where the CSEF M&E system was particularly demanding, many coalitions came to consider it as a useful tool for their own learning, helping them to document processes and lessons learned in terms of campaigning and advocacy work.

#### 3.4.4. Financial Management

During the project cycle, there was much effort to strengthen financial management capacity at all levels and to comply with financial management requirements. In the early phases of the project, communication between the World Bank and the GCE about accountability, contractual relations and financial management was difficult, but all parties gradually were willing to adapt and to learn (World Bank, GCE Secretariat). As a result, a lot has been done to improve financial management of the CSEF-project and to assure proper financial accountability.

In the initial stages of the project, a number of consultations were held with both regional organisations and national coalitions, to identify the main organisational capacity challenges. At the regional level the main challenge appeared to be the low level of technical and institutional support for certain major aspects (such as strengthening and facilitating M&E capacities) within regional secretariats and mentor organisations. The main challenge identified at the national level was financial

management, including the lack of standard/uniform management systems and procedures. Subsequently, in the process prioritising what needed greater attention (choosing 5 issues), financial management appeared at the top of the list and as such was addressed with priority (see Chapter 4 in this volume).

In the early stages, various actors had weak management capacities and internal audit systems and management information systems were often weak or non-existent. But from 2010 onwards, this situation improved considerably, specifically at the regional offices. In the early stages, coalitions did not have a system of internal audits nor professional management information systems. Insufficient accountability and financial management led to problems in various NECs in the early stages of the project. In Sri Lanka (Asia) the lack of basic auditing and accounting procedures - and serious concerns raised in the external audit report - led to a stoppage of the disbursement of funds. In this region, the FMA spent a lot of time guiding the NEC, to help them learn, "*so after 6 months the NEC knew what was needed*" (CSEF Asia).

In Africa, external audits in different countries revealed a lack of proper systems and procedures and several financial management issues. However, these problems were already anticipated by the FMA and the Regional Secretariat and, in some countries, funds were frozen for a time to allow for improvements. On the basis of the CSEF Capacity Support Plan for the African region, financial management was improved through the following steps: a comprehensive management systems review training, covering 32 countries; a one week financial management workshop held in September 2010, attended by CSEF accountants from all twenty-four African countries involved in the CSEF; the rolling out of a financial management policy manual, and the recruitment of a new accountant for Africa (with the budget initially allocated to an uniform accounting software). In this region, appropriate checks and balances mechanisms were in place. When necessary, incidents were investigated and in some cases investigations resulted in the suspension of funds.

In LAC, serious financial management challenges were identified only in Haiti. To avoid suspending the grant to a country highly in need of resources, CLADE directly assumed the organisation of certain training activities developed in Haiti itself. The FMA and the regional CSEF secretariat, at the time of conducting this evaluation, were debating over the next steps to be taken in relation to this country.

As seen in the HR management section, from the year 2010 onwards, external technical support and supervision increased, as a consequence of the Capacity Support Plan. The CSEF fund manager organized 20 visits in 15 countries to assist NECs more directly with the financial problems they were facing.

As indicated earlier, cash flow issues resulting from irregular and late funding disbursements at different scales have affected timing of project execution. Consequently, this has also affected the capacity of timely reporting and of proper financial planning. The CSEF Capacity Support Plan developed in 2010 was a useful tool for the capacity building of the NECs and a good example of the support that could be provided by the regional and global levels. However various constraints affected the timing of the execution of project activities and proper financial reporting, as indicated in the background of the *CSEF Capacity Support Plan (2010)*.

During the first semester of the project (September-December 2009) major challenges were experienced due to the delayed release of funds. The delay in disbursement led to a delay in

implementation by up to 5 months. Project implementation in most countries did not start until December 2009. The shorter duration of only 9 months for the project in year 1 caused a backlog in activities, clogging the implementation schedule. While funding was initially made available for only one year of the project, the EPFD Committee approved another two years of funding in November 2009 but asked GCE to use the funding over a shorter 18 month time period. With this approval, the Committee also asked the GCE to accelerate implementation and wind down the project by 30 June 2011. These developments imply that the CSEF project cannot be implemented as originally planned and therefore demands greater flexibility considering a much shorter timeframe of 21 months instead of 30 months.

As indicated by the GPE Secretariat in one of the interviews, in the beginning of the second semester of 2009, the WB/EPDF had the main responsibility for a funding delay episode. However, the following disbursements were linked to quality of progress reporting and interim financial statements and basically depended on the funding request made by GCE. Independently of the main reason for the delays, the delays also caused a problem of under-spending due to the short time that was left to implement the project.

Now on the CSEF Bridging Fund there is only a one year proposal that at max, needs to be executed by March 2013, but there are countries that still have not received any money (...) It is not fair that NECs had to face the consequences of problems with financial absorption, especially in Year 2, when already fixed contracts for HR were leaving the NECs in a difficult situation (GCE Secretariat).

The three regional funding management agencies applied different rules and regulations for the supervision of the grants. They also used different reporting applications; however, at the end of the day they had to adapt the data to an Excel sheet format, as required by the GCE. Some consider there to be more sophisticated and, at the same time, user-friendly applications that could have been used instead (CSEF-LAC).

The finance report was basically quantitative, and the GPE would have liked the FMAs to produce a narrative report on the use and management of funds (GPE 2011). As pointed out earlier, greater integration between the M&E system and the finance reporting the FMAs were in charge of would have contributed to this end.

#### 3.4.5 Learning and communication

The **second objective** of the 2010 Capacity Support Plan is to “provide resources to document the impact of the CSEF project, harness, disseminate and share information on the FTI country processes with civil society, capture CSEF country highlights, compile good practice guidelines and skills toolkits, and promote sharing of lessons learned and important case studies among CSEF countries” (see Box 3.1). As a way to achieve this objective, guidelines on financial management were developed and published, a monitoring and evaluation system was put in place, including a learning and reporting mechanism, a KARL site (a web based information management system) was launched in February 2011, three M&E and policy regional workshops were held in Nairobi, Bogotá and Jakarta in October and November 2010, a CSEF Global policy meeting was held in Paris in February 2011, and the Terms of Reference of the end of project review had been developed by the

end of the 5th semester. However, the strategy on research, documentation and information sharing for civil society was somehow underdeveloped and it is not clear to what extent most of the related activities were carried out.

The intranet-site for interregional learning and sharing (KARL) was launched in February 2011, but it is still not much in use at the national level. It works as an online "learning community" where information and documentation related to the advocacy experiences of the members can be found. Each coalition has a web-page, calendars with activities, and a separate "community section", conceived as an open space where forums to talk about various issues that engage the different NECs can be organized. Many are enthusiastic about the potential of this tool, but are not yet using it much as a learning tool. Moreover, it is being used more by the regional networks - to share relevant information before scheduled meetings – than by the NECs themselves.

In LAC they are working on a common shared webpage. There, they want to transform the Monitoring and Evaluation system into a Learning and Memory system, which would not only be useful in providing information to donors, but also internally. They want to adapt the KARL idea to the knowledge needs in their region by putting greater emphasis on the idea of organising online forums and seminars via video-conferences. They want to make sure that the members feel ownership of the platform, but they are aware of the fact that, at least during an initial stage, CLADE will have to play an active role when it comes to promoting it (CSEF LAC). In Africa, they are also planning to develop learning systems at the regional level as a way to make their advocacy strategy more sustainable, effective and efficient.

No, we don't have an available learning budget. We are planning to have one. We have a partner, KH, based in Germany; they want to help ANCEFA to have capacity building online and interactive spaces for the coalition. I really like the idea because it does not cost a lot of money, and is attractive. I was very disappointed in putting a lot of money in capacity building in coalition, because there was a huge turnover there. for example, in Ghana the people from the coalition in 2005 and now we have the three staff generations. (...) The online costs less money and can be accessible for a lot of people, a lot already have access to internet (CSEF Africa).

In LAC there is a strong feeling that the KARL platform will not work if mechanisms to overcome linguistic barriers are not in place (CSEF LAC). In general, in both LAC and Africa there is an important concern with language issues - not only for learning purposes - due to the fact that the CSEF global secretariat mainly speaks English. Language was precisely one of the main reasons why the relationship between the CSEF global coordinator and LAC was not very fluent (CSEF LAC). In contrast, the role of the regional coordinator was more appreciated in Asia, where he apparently played a more proactive role as knowledge broker.

It was refreshing to have someone who was a bit from the outside... interpret things for us ... and he was very proactive that way, so we got mature and grounded advice and insights from him during coordination committee meetings ... I think when he reflected experiences from Latin America and Africa as well, it helped us appreciate our own... (CSEF Asia)

In general, regional coalitions perceive that the GCE did not play its role as knowledge broker between the coalitions (both regional and national) that are part of the network well enough. Thus, an opportunity for promoting South-South learning more intensively was missed. Most of the learning dynamics and exchanges

happened at the regional level (and within the region), not at the global one (with the exception of a few initiatives like the Global CSEF workshop held in Paris mentioned above).

There is a potential beyond CSEF LAC, to see what works, what does not work, how to strengthen an institution, what kind of impact it has, what are the common themes, that is, to me, that's what justifies this global scheme (CSEF LAC)

There was not sufficient information sharing between the three regions. I have the feeling... because going through the line and back... No, and I think it was the first, but I think that we will have to establish a mechanism which ensures that they can communicate, they can share what's going on, what is good... this was a good thing, no, in our country it didn't work and so on (GCE Board)

Such a knowledge broker role could have also been stronger in relation to exchanges between the regional FMAs. For instance, when dealing with the case of Haiti, the LAC FMA would have benefited substantially from having more direct knowledge of how the African FMA dealt previously with several financial management issues (CSEF LAC).

### *Communication*

Certainly, in the first semesters of the project not enough effort was made to disseminate and communicate the CSEF process, both externally and internally (GEP Secretariat). Moreover, for an important period of time, the 1Goal Campaign absorbed most of the communication capacities and resources of the GCE (GCE Secretariat, CSEF Africa). However, by the end of 2010, the GCE developed a proper CSEF communication strategy. Though this strategy came relatively late, once it was approved, several communications and internal exchange initiatives took place, including a CSEF bulletin, a civil society learning section on the GCE website, the publication of various case studies and information brochures, the production of a short film on the CSEF experience and the setup of a southern civil society email group to share information and discuss matters related to GPE and education dialogue, among others. During this evaluation, a survey was being carried to understand how civil society understands and engages in GPE processes, with the aim of developing a toolkit and Q&A for coalitions and donors to support these processes (GCE Secretariat and Board).

### 4.4.6 Conclusions

The GCE did not have the appropriate **human resources** in place when the CSEF project started. Not all the necessary capacities to manage such a multi-level project were there at the first stage of project implementation. However, the GCE and its regional members were able to detect and correct many of the problems they identified in the human management terrain through, among other initiatives, a Capacity Support Plan. Nevertheless, one of the main problems the CSEF faced in HR during the project cycle was the turnover of managerial positions at all levels and, at some points of the project cycle, a lack of leadership and coordination from the CSEF global secretariat side in this terrain.

The definitive **M&E framework** was also settled once the project had already started. It was very complete and allowed for the collection and publication of an

important amount of data related to project implementation. At the same time, it was very complicated and time-consuming and, when reporting, not all members followed the framework with the same level of accuracy and consistency. This problem could have been overcome if central guidance and direction on reporting activities would have been stronger. Changing the requirements in M&E procedures led to confusion and to additional workload among the CSEF staff.

Within the context of CSEF, some advances in **gender equity** at the organisational and programmatic levels were produced, although no specific gender approach was adopted at the organisational level.

Concerning **financial management**, good learning practices were in place at the regional level to overcome the initial capacity weaknesses detected in this area. Cash flow problems resulting from irregular and late funding disbursements affected timing of project execution and generated under-spending issues. Financial management good practices were not shared from region to region in a systematic way.

Cross-national **learning** and exchange of experiences on advocacy and organizational aspects was produced, especially at the regional level by using an online tool - KARL. The GCE could have done more to promote such type of exchanges at the global level. Internal e-learning systems have been designed and are available, although they are in a very incipient stage. These technologies have the potential to facilitate learning and exchange of experiences among the CSEF participants in a cost-effective way. However, for these technologies to be appropriated by the participants, they will need active coordination and promotion, at least in the initial stages.

## CHAPTER 4

# CSEF WORLDWIDE: The STATE OF THE ART IN 45 COUNTRIES

### 4.1. Introduction

The following chapter contains a quantitative description of educational development in CSEF countries as well as an overall review of the activity of the National Education Coalitions (NECs) during the years 2009, 2010 and 2011. The first section looks at the main indicators of educational development in these countries, and a few relevant statistical observations are noted. It relies on a basic analysis of the official data provided by the United Nations Human Development Report and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. This section is complemented by an appendix presenting the selected data for the sample, specifying the year of reference (since not all the cases provide the same information for the same years).

The other sections draw on basic sources of information produced by the Global Campaign for Education. To be precise, the GCE delivered the following types of reports to the evaluation team: Completion Reports, Result Framework Reports and (some) proposals produced on a country base, as well as the CSEF Progress Reports and the Revised Capacity Support Plan. The collected information has been systematized in spread sheets and charts, enclosed in Appendix 2.

These sections provide a picture of all the NECs involved in the CSEF, distinguishing their activities and resources. As it is only a descriptive list that reflects the volume of work undertaken by the coalitions, this information does not lead to any specific interpretation related to the evaluation. More analytic arguments are presented later on in chapter 5, where a sample of seven NECs has been studied and compared in a more systematic way. Finally, some concluding remarks are presented in the last section.

### 4.2. Educational Development in CSEF countries

CSEF is targeted at countries with a lower level of human development insofar as their income per capita is low, their general population is not fully literate, their school age population is not universally enrolled in schools, and their average life expectancy lags behind the potential observed in other countries. Thus, the very selection of participant beneficiaries suggests that their governments and civil societies face difficult circumstances that constrain the development of Education for All (EFA) goals. Actually, lack of resources, low levels of education and poor health are likely to hinder the achievement of the goals

Table 4.1 summarises the main indicators of educational development in CSEF countries. The first four general indicators capture the key shortcomings in all these

countries, as their populations have only been at school for a few years and their human development index is much lower than the maximal observed scores (above 0,9500). In addition, data show that many children are not enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary educational programmes; specifically, 15% of the population that should be attending primary school lack a place. This is an indication that the most elementary conditions to materialise their right to education are not guaranteed at all. Noticeably, this variable reveals appalling differences between certain Asian countries where the proportion of out-of-school children is very low and certain African countries where this proportion is much higher.

Gender parity indexes also highlight that girls experience greater exclusion than boys. This is clearly a problem in primary and secondary education, and therefore a challenge for the governments, international organisations and donors committed to the EFA goals. Development studies have convincingly noted that this gender discrimination not only harms the immediate victims but also produces an array of negative externalities related to family planning, health and the education of future generations.

Table 4. 1. Indicators of educational development in CSEF countries

	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Coefficient of variation (SD*100/M) %
Mean years of schooling (of adults)	4.64	1.95	42.03
Expected years of schooling (of children)	9.43	2.05	21.74
GNI per capita PPP terms (constant 2005 international \$)	1943.13	1452.99	74.78
Human Development Index	0.4651	0.1064	22.88
Pre-primary gross enrolment rate 2010	35.19	31.57	89.71
Gender parity index pre-primary gross enrolment rate 2010	1.02	0.04	3.92
Primary gross enrolment rate 2010	106.62	20.98	19.68
Gender parity index primary gross enrolment rate 2010	0.94	0.06	6.38
Primary adjusted net enrolment rate 2010	84.74	14.09	16.63
Gender parity index primary adjusted net enrolment rate 2010	0.97	0.07	7.22
Out-of-school children rate for primary school age	15.26	14.09	92.33
Secondary gross enrolment rate 2010	47.32	19.49	41.19
Gender parity index secondary gross enrolment rate 2010	0.89	0.19	21.35
School life expectancy	9.82	2.06	20.98
Gender parity index school life expectancy	0.9	0.11	12.22

Source: Human Development Report and UNESCO Institute for Statistics

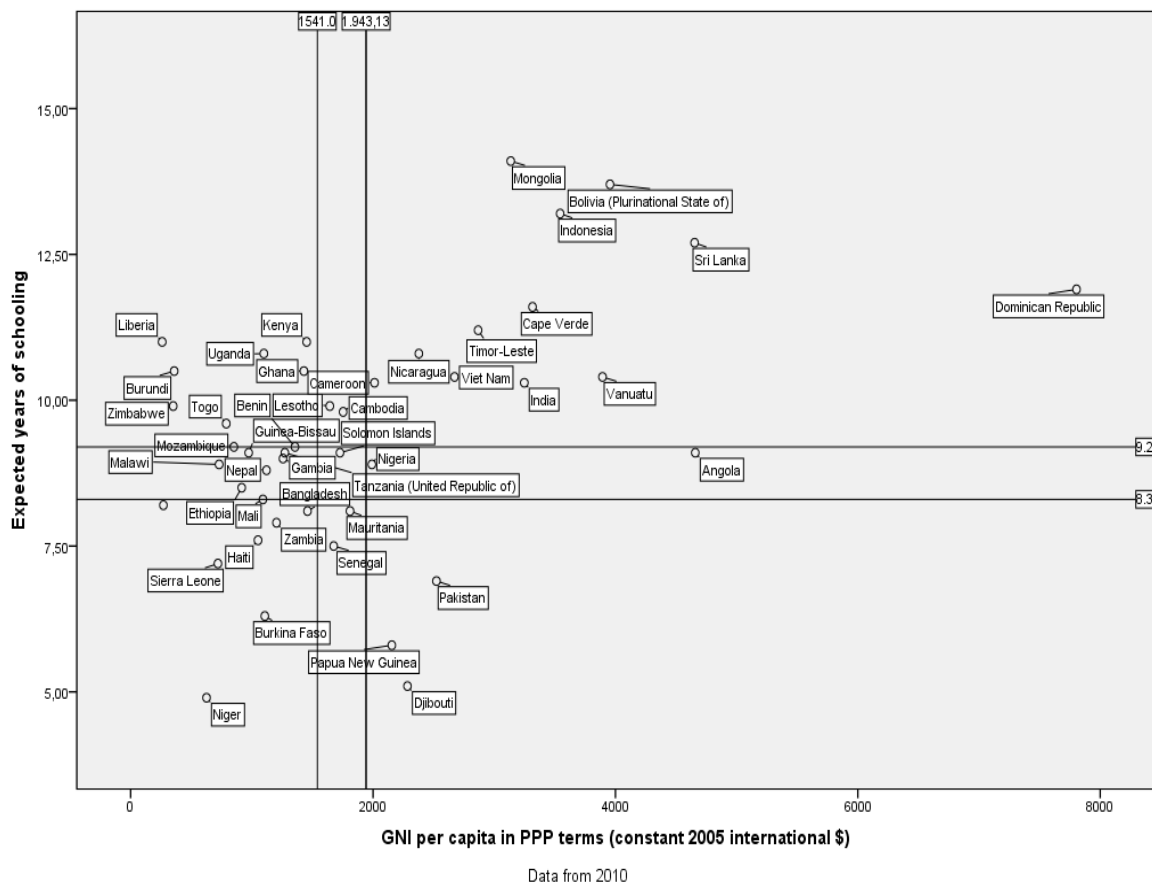
Figure 4.1 maps out the distribution of these countries based on their gross national income per capita (GNI) and expected years of schooling. The countries have been classified into four types according to their position with regard to the average of



these two variables in the sample. Thus, there are above-average and below-average countries as well as mixed cases with the value of one variable above the average and the value of the other variable below the average.

Two observations become apparent. Firstly, only three cases do not use a relatively high GNI per capita so that their population is able to stay at school for more years. In Djibouti, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea a relatively high income corresponds to few expected years of schooling. Secondly, many countries are in the area where schooling has advanced despite scarce income. This fact highlights that non-economic factors probably account for significant progress in EFA goals in low-development countries, and that active civil societies could eventually make a difference among the countries sampled out for CSEF intervention.

Figure 4.1. Education and economic growth in the CSEF countries  
Source: Authors



Source: Human Development Report and UNESCO Institute for Statistics

In Appendix 2 the analysis of correlations between these variables is reported. Notably, two variables are significantly correlated, namely school life expectancy and

the expected years of boys compared to girls (gender parity). That is to say, the shortcomings and the gender imbalances observed in table 1 are connected in complex but crucial ways. Therefore, if education policy and pedagogic strategies can finally tackle gender discrimination, they will contribute to both parity and universalisation.

### 4.3. The structure of the national coalitions (NECs)

#### The composition of NECs

The reports show the highly variable nature and seniority of the NECs, the oldest being in Bangladesh (1990) and the most recent in Mongolia (2010). Currently, all the coalitions have a similar legal status to the extent that they are registered<sup>12</sup>. But their focus of operations differs according to their experience. While junior NECs put their energy in launching their project, senior ones have a more comfortable margin for research, budget tracking and lobbying.

On average, coalitions have increased their membership by 185% since their initiation. However, a few NECs have grown up to 2900% since their founding (Ghana, for example), while others have not grown substantially, such as Mongolia, Mozambique or Niger. Variations in membership are not related to seniority<sup>13</sup>, as some of the youngest coalitions have experienced sound growth while some of the oldest ones have not shown such an impressive increase. Although these total figures reflect changes prior to the CSEF, the growth of membership also suggests a few relevant observations for a discussion of this fund. Interestingly, the number of organisations currently involved in NECs is quite significant, and moreover, the total number of branches and networks of the NECs at district or provincial level has gone from 588 in 2009 to 716 in 2010 and to 827 in 2011.

Diversity of membership is a salient feature of the coalitions too. In general, the CSEF has addressed 45 national coalitions, altogether gathering 181 international nongovernmental organisations<sup>14</sup>, 950 national nongovernmental organisations, 933 grassroots organisations and 158 teacher unions or associations<sup>15</sup> in the national coalitions (see the graph on page B62 in Appendix 2).

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<sup>12</sup> Only 8 out of 45 NECs remain without legal status or, at least, do not provide information in this respect (and two of them were in the process of obtaining legal status when the reports were delivered); and since the beginning of the CSEF, the number of registrations has increased greatly: while until 2008 20 NECs were registered (out of the 36 existing before 2009), during 2009 7 more obtained legal status, during 2010 6 more, during 2011 3 more and during 2012 one more. Summarising figures and charts are included in page B7 in Appendix 2.

<sup>13</sup> The Pearson's correlation coefficient has been calculated, as can be seen in page B6 in Appendix 2, giving a weak figure of 0.12 or 0.17 (depending on the inclusion of the Nicaraguan case, whose growth appears to be negative due to a possible misunderstanding of the concept of "founder organisations upon formation").

<sup>14</sup> This number includes each of the national branches of the INGOs.

<sup>15</sup> The percentages can be seen in the joint chart in page B8 in Appendix 2.

## Internal organisation and democratic running

Some indicators also provide relevant clues on internal organisation, with activity clearly peaking in 2010<sup>16</sup>. All the coalitions providing information around the issue carried out (or scheduled) at least one general meeting, the average being 2.41 in 2009, 4.3 in 2010 and 3.94 in 2011. All of them held board meetings, the average being 4.19 in 2009, 6.39 in 2010 and 6 in 2011. As to the election of new members, 17 coalitions elected 86 new members in 2009, 23 coalitions elected 119 new members in 2010 and 19 coalitions elected 74 new members in 2011. On average, boards are composed of 8.98 members. Almost all coalitions have 5 or more members, except for Angola, with 3 members.

The creation of websites and the publication of newsletters fostered communication between these groups within the different countries. Hence, these data can be considered a sign of democratic health as meetings are estimated to be useful opportunities to share views and reach consensus, elections indicate rotation of representatives, and communication favours debate. But the low presence of women on the boards (34.35 %) is a reminder of important shortcomings concerning gender parity. The share of women exceeded 40% on only 18 boards; worse, on 8 of them it was lower than 20%.

## Financial resources of the NECs

The amount of funds received by the NECs does not seem to be related to national GDP, GDP per capita or population, as it can be seen in page B3 in Appendix 2<sup>17</sup>. In fact, if we work out the correlation coefficient between the disbursed amount or the final expenditure and the GDP per capita or the population of the countries, we do not find any relation, as they turn out to be very low (see page B4 in Appendix 2). Nor does there appear to be any relationship between the expended amount per capita and the GDP per capita, as can be seen in the corresponding chart (B5 in Appendix 2, comparing expenditure/population and expenditure/GDP per capita and showing variable differences).

Regarding this issue, it has to be pointed out that a significant number of NECs (24) reported problems with the disbursement of funds. Important delays in funding were said to seriously affect and delay the implementation of coalition activities, and to put pressure on staff, as well as discourage NEC members in their efforts.

It is also worth considering the NECs' capacity to generate funding outside the CSEF grant. Even though this point was briefly introduced above, further analysis

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<sup>16</sup> The number of general meetings has been obtained from the questions regarding *annual general meetings* contained in the reports.

<sup>17</sup> We have to take into account that the data regarding the disbursed amounts and expenditures contained in the table was obtained from the *Matrix III Breakdown of expenditure incurred by NECs at national level, total disbursement to-date and fund balances as of the end of December 2011*, in the 5th Progress Report of the CSEF prepared by the GCE. The figures did not match up exactly with the ones provided by the NECs in their reports, but they have been used, understanding that as they have been worked out under a common criterion they were more appropriate for a comparative purpose.

is of interest: if we observe the internally generated funding we can, for instance, highlight that 23 NECs obtained internal funding through membership fees, while only 6 set up local funding raising activities and individual contributions were virtually symbolic (having taken place only in 3 cases). The external funding appears to have been very diversified, and the origin of the resources was a mixture of bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, governments, international NGOs, foundations and businesses. Since the reports offer data regarding the amounts contributed by the various sources, it is possible to compare their importance. However, the data also contain pledges and undertakings that will be disbursed in the future but have not yet been allocated<sup>18</sup>. All in all, it appears that INGOs and bilateral donor agencies are the most important contributors to the coalitions, which can provide us with clues about the implementation of the NCSEF.

Table 4.2. Contribution of donors to CSEF supported coalitions (US\$)

<b>Bilateral donors</b>	<b>Multilateral donors</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Foundations</b>	<b>INGOs</b>	<b>Business</b>
4,473,262.59	1,647,950.48	595,484.65	1,510,647.34	46,899,534.48	272,729.29

The identified sources of external funds are quite diverse and include bilateral donor agencies such as AusAID, Canada International Development Agency, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands, Irish Aid, AECID, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and USAID; multilateral donor agencies<sup>19</sup> or funds such as the Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid, FTI, GCE, UNESCO, UNICEF and the WB; collaboration from the government institutions of the countries; foundations such as Cinemateca Boliviana, CHF, Crisitian Councuk, FDC, FOSI, Fundación Construir, Fundación Jubileo, Fundación la Paz, Ghana Aids Commission, Hewlett, IDASA, Myer, MUSEF (Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore de Bolivia), OSISA, OSIWA, PREAL, Star Ghana, Ty Danjuma Foundation, and Zambian Governance Foundation; International NGOs such as AAEA, ActionAid, Aide et Action, AIN, AIWS, Ayuda en Acción, CARE, CCRDA, CCS Italy, CESC, CJPC, Concern, Diakonia, DVV International, Fe y Alegría, FELITAMO, GCAP, Global CEI, IBIS, IDAY, Kinderpostzegels, MS, Oxfam, Plan International, Progreso, Save the Children, Sight Saver International, Trócaire, VSO, and World Vision; and businesses such as the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, COTCO, Microsoft and national businesses located in the Dominican Republic<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Another reason that may lead us to approach the data with certain “reservations” is the (apparent) confusion in the mentioned reports about the classification of some agencies, which does not seem to follow a common criterion. Moreover, it is also important to note that in the final sum of the amount generated through INGOs, 42,159,549 USD of the total 46,899,534.48 USD came from one source (ActionAid, for the Mozambican coalition) and in fact had not yet been allocated (for this was a pledge planned to be disbursed in 2013). Possible confusions between fiscal years and “CSEF years” must also be taken into account.

<sup>19</sup> On this point, some coalitions reported the CSEF itself (or ANCEFA, ASPBAE) as a funding source “outside the CSEF”.

<sup>20</sup> The original classification has been altered due to some “confusion” in the classification of some of the agencies, as it did not seem to follow a common criterion.

NECs have also managed to obtain funds outside of CSEF grants. Regarding such funding, the results reveal noticeable differences between coalitions, with a slight relationship to seniority. Thus, the total amount generated by all the coalitions adds up to 9,449,930.05 US\$. The table below summarizes the evolution and nature of the funding outside the CSEF grant.

Table 4.3. Source of funding of CSEF supported coalitions (US\$)

	2009	2010	2011	Total
<b>Externally generated</b>	2,825,075.08	3,656,635.53	2,570,989.76	9,052,700.37
<b>Internally generated</b>	104,610.48	96,609.74	196,009.45	397,229.68
<b>Total</b>	2,929,685.56	3,753,245.27	2,766,999.21	<b>9,449,930.05</b>

However, as reported above, performance on this issue differs considerably. Thus, half the NECs received external funding, i.e. 21 NECs in 2009, 22 NECs in 2010, and 23 NECs in 2011. Less than half generated part of their funds internally, i.e. 15 in 2009, 17 in 2010, and 22 in 2011. The amount obtained by each coalition was also quite variable (as can be seen in the extended data in page B15 in Appendix 2).

The statistical correlation between NECs' seniority and their capacity to generate funding is very weak<sup>21</sup>. Even so, it is plausible to assume that seniority is a condition for successful fund-raising. Although some senior coalitions certainly lagged behind, the group that obtained the highest amounts had an average age of 11.2 years.

The CSEF also foresaw the creation of National Civil Society Education Funds (NCSEF). Remarkably, none of the coalitions had definitively established a NCSEF, but sound progress in exploring resource mobilisation options can be observed in many cases. In 31 coalitions there was some type of "work in progress" around the fund drawing on instruments such as donor mapping, concept notes, feasibility studies and reflection committees. But here seniority and NCSEF negotiation do not seem to be related. The average age of the coalitions whose national fund was a work in progress is 8.2 years, whereas the average age of the coalitions that did not provide information in that sense was 9.21 years.

### Human resources and regional coordination

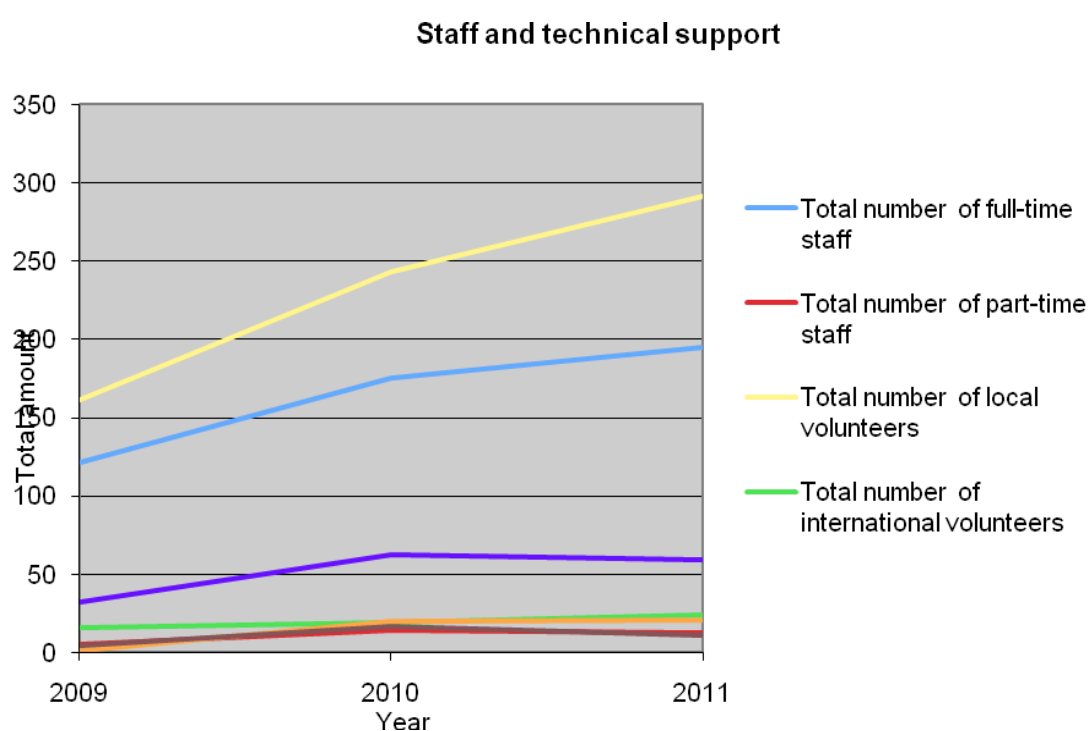
In Figure 4.2, the increasing volume of human resources is mapped out. The staff capacity of the NECs experienced a deep increase between 2009 and 2011, the number of full-time staff increasing from 121 to 195, with all the coalitions<sup>22</sup> having employed at least one person during the three years. The number of part-time staff also increased (5 people in 2009, 14 in 2010 and 12 in 2011), but only 3 coalitions

<sup>21</sup> The Pearson's coefficient of correlation is only 0'07

<sup>22</sup> Providing information in that sense.

used this type of contract in 2009, 4 in 2010, and 3 in 2011. The NECs also attract more local volunteers over time; the total number of volunteers was 161 in 2009 and 291 in 2011<sup>23</sup>. The point is that more and more NECs benefit from this support: 13 in 2009, 22 in 2010 and 23 in 2011. International volunteers turn out to be less important, used only by 8 coalitions in the first year and by 10 in the following ones, the number of international volunteers increasing from 16 (2009) to 19 (2010) and finally 24 (2011). In short, an increasing amount of human resources was available, the bulk coming from either full-time staff or volunteers. However, while some coalitions hired more than 10 full-time employees (Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Mali and Pakistan in 2011), others were mostly staffed by volunteers (see Appendix 2).

**Figure 4.2. Staff and technical support of the NECs**



#### 4.4 What has been done?

##### ***Advocacy, campaigning, lobbying, communication and public awareness rise***

Concerning advocacy, we see that in most countries (38 out of 45) national coalitions carried out various lobbying activities, though their intensity and their effects varied noticeably. We can, for example, look at the case of the FEDH-IPN (national coalition from Nicaragua), whose completion report highlights the “institutional silence” in the face of civil society demands since the change in tenure in the Education Ministry<sup>24</sup> in

<sup>23</sup> It might be important to take into account that for the three years, 100 of the local volunteers come from only one country – Senegal.

<sup>24</sup> In fact, FEDH-IPN states that the coalition has been excluded from the *Mesa sectorial* in spite of the compulsoriness of its presence.

May-June 2010. The closure of these spaces for dialogue has seriously affected the possibilities of its legislative and parliamentary work. This case differs strikingly from the Burkinian one, where a partnership was established between the national coalition (with support from ANCEFA and Save the Children Sweden), members of parliament, journalists specialized in education and associations for the rights of persons with disabilities, resulting in a pressure group and committing the members of parliament that were part of the Education Commission to launching a budgetary line for inclusive education.

The most common lobbying methods were meetings, round tables and audiences with policy makers (education or finance ministers or authorities, members of parliament, parliament thematic commissions and working groups). Memorandums and letters containing demands were also delivered. Some NECs presented proposals, questions, law propositions or research reports to the parliament or ministries. Often, members of parliament answered questions in training sessions to which they were invited. But the Indian Parliamentary Forum in Education stands out for its ambition. This forum gathered together 50 members of parliament. Another innovative example was the GAW 2011 in Gambia, which organised the “Big Story Reading”: a collection of the testimonies of women and girls on their right to education, collected and presented to both the National Assembly and civil society organisations.

Apart from lobbying strategies, NECs advocate for their goals by participating in education sector working group meetings. Thirty-five coalitions stated that they were fully recognised as partners in the Local Educational Group (LEG) or Education Sector Working Groups, although two of them only enjoyed “partial” recognition. Most of them took part in the Education Sector Plan development, endorsement, appraisal process and monitoring, as well as in annual joint sector reviews (32 in the first case and 33 in the second, Pakistan being the only coalition with partial participation in both cases). In fact, 28 coalitions belonged to one or more technical working groups of their country’s Ministry of Education, with 8 of them joining 5 or more, in contrast with 6 joining only one. This engagement can be considered a good starting point, as it fosters the development of a close relationship between donors, civil society and policy-makers in the design and implementation of education policy. However, it must be kept in mind that formal presence does not guarantee significant participation in policy processes; for example, in two countries, the coalitions were invited to the LEG but did not carry out any lobbying activity.

Table 4.2 shows that NECs were invited to official meetings in different ways. Most of them were fully recognised as partners in the Local Educational Group/ Education Sector Working Group (A). A similar number of NECs took part in the development, endorsement, appraisal and monitoring of the Education Sector Plan (B). Little variation is visible regarding the number of NECs active in annual joint sector reviews (C) and having full access to education sector plans and sector policy documentation (D), while only two coalitions had only partial access (E).

Table 4.2. Engagement of NECs in official meetings

	A	B	C	D	E
<b>Total number of coalitions</b>	35	33	35	34	2

Regarding public awareness, the media was widely used and valued. Communication strategies linked to mass media were reported by 39 coalitions: for instance, radio and television broadcasts – in the form of debates, spots, interviews, round tables, talk-shows, activities’ coverage- and presence in newspapers, press conferences, supplements, notes and press releases. Meetings with journalists also took place: they were oriented to training initiatives (e.g. Cape Verde, Djibouti, Malawi and Nicaragua), to networking and to increasing the frequency of reporting on education issues (see the Kenya Education Journalist Association’s commitment, the launch of Nicaraguan communicators and journalists in favour of education -“amigos de educación” in the original- or the Mongolian quarterly breakfast meetings). It is also worth noting the use of celebrities in some countries (e.g. Gambia, Senegal and Bangladesh).

Other initiatives to raise public awareness were also carried out. Thus, we can find information campaigns by means of the dissemination of materials, taking forms ranging from posters, flyers and brochures with short messages to the diffusion of research findings in newsletter supplements, booklets on good practices in education, policy briefs and digests, education agendas, copies of education acts, user-friendly Education Watch reports and grassroots stories. Information was also disseminated by means of sharing sessions, public speeches, meetings and round tables with other civil society agents. In fact, virtually<sup>25</sup> all the national coalitions drew on at least one of these methods to ensure the diffusion of their campaign messages or research findings. However, the intensity of these efforts appears to have varied significantly. If we look at the Bangladeshi case, for instance, we find that public awareness through information dissemination was a key element in the coalition’s strategy, which organised six sub-national level sharing meetings on the issue (with a total attendance of 485 representatives) and four national-level sharing meetings, published a user-friendly Education Watch report and a scoping study on privatization and PPPs. In addition, the coalition carried out a stocktaking of government action in light of its commitment to the Dakar Declaration through the publication of supplements in four national newspapers. It also published a policy brief on National Education Policy 2010 and convened public debates on the conclusions of this document in 8 districts covering 6 divisional areas, and created *the National Consultation on Implementation of the National Education Policy 2010: Challenges and Way Forward* as a sort of discussion platform.

Some coalitions also used websites and newsletters. These strategies not only promote public sensitisation but also foster internal communication between coalition members. A noticeable number of NECs (21) reported having launched

<sup>25</sup>

We observe that 43 NECs reported the use of at least one of these strategies.



websites or created a *blog* page. In some cases, like Zambia and Burkina Faso, these initiatives involved training in website management. In addition, 16 coalitions stated they edited journal.

A good indicator of the efforts made to disseminate information could be the total amount spent on publications: a total of 618; 381.27 USD<sup>26</sup>. It is also interesting to observe the gradual increase in publications (not related to research<sup>27</sup>): 18 in 2009, 42 in 2010 and finally 49 in 2012. These figures demonstrate a growing effort to disseminate information to the general public or targeted groups.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the observance of national/regional days and global campaigns: we found that 32 coalitions had joined Global Action Weeks, 12 had engaged in World Teachers' Day, and 6 in International Literacy Day. There was also reported participation in the 1 Goal Campaign, the Day of the African Child, Human Rights Day and others. In these types of campaigns the activities are quite diverse and can include demonstrations, round tables, parades, material dissemination, presence in the media, demonstrations, and so on. Usually, they are assumed to raise general awareness. In some cases the NECs related them to a specific outcome. The Burkina Faso coalition (CN/EPT-BF), for example, linked the GAW 2010 campaign to the remarkable increase in its gross enrolment rate (from 55.8% in 2009 to 77.6 in 2011), and stated that as a result of the GAW 2011, national authorities committed themselves to cut the enrolment gap between boys and girls by at least 3% in primary school and 2% in secondary school.

## Research

Research is helpful to carry out evidence-based advocacy and public awareness campaigns. A total of 161 studies were reported<sup>28</sup>, and 40 NECs carried out at least one study. Some NECs were especially active in this sense: this would be the case, for instance, of Pakistan, responsible for the production of 11 studies on different issues, such as standardisation and privatisation of education, financing, budget allocation and education of indigenous peoples, as well as policy briefs on adult literacy and the right to education. This coalition has also created a Budget Watch Group, which will track public education budget in selected districts, and has been piloting a budget tracking initiative in 4 districts during 2012. On the whole, thus, great effort was made to carry out research.

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<sup>26</sup> In this case it is particularly important to keep in mind the methodological limitations reported below, as a significant number of countries did not report the total amount spent on publications and as a consequence this figure is likely an underestimate.

<sup>27</sup> As discussed further on in the text.

<sup>28</sup> Even though, as can be seen in the tables, the trend is not clearly progressive (with 30 studies produced in 2009, 78 in 2010 and 53 in 2011), we have to take into account the methodological limitations (clarified in the table), which lead to serious reservations regarding the 2011 figures.

The topics of research varied, as they appear to depend on the education background of the country. However, we can identify the “main” issues that most commonly captured NECs’ interests. Studies on the current education laws and systems of their country were done by (at least<sup>29</sup>) 10 coalitions. EFA reviews were carried out in 9 cases. Research on girls, women, non-sexist education, discrimination against women and other gender issues was carried by 8 coalitions. Studies or exploratory research on NCSEF feasibility were done in 6 cases. Research on adult and youth literacy or continuing education was carried out in 4 cases. Literacy surveys were carried out on 4 occasions, school fees studied on 3 occasions, and issues related to teachers (training, social treatment, quality) were analysed in 6 cases. National coalitions were also a common object of study: hence, we find at least 12 studies about the NECs themselves (baseline, environment, communication and advocacy strategies, strategic plans, organizational development, etc). Other issues around which some kind of research was carried out were education necessities of the country, stakeholder mapping, education in emergencies, working children, children with disabilities, community engagement in education governance or quality, indigenous citizens, school drop-outs, school governance and management, SWAPs, marginalised groups, accountability and transparency, national examinations, ODA, FTI implementation, non-formal and pre-school education, and under-resourced schools.

It is also worth noting the wide range of methods and sources used in research initiatives. NECs have used secondary data and literature on the issues and have also produced primary data, such as grassroots stories, surveys, case collections, witness testimony and interviews.

Apart from the mentioned topics, budget tracking might be considered as a special sort of research initiative. It was by far the type of research carried out by the largest number of coalitions (32). Budget tracking was, for an important number of NECs, a central activity that somehow inspired and connected the rest of the coalition’s initiatives. In the Beninese case, for example, budget tracking involved the training of 37 members of the coalition, the NGOs responsible and others, as well as the training of 16 local representatives. The issue also centred an important part of the advocacy task, and finally the findings were disseminated through a televised debate. The NEC of the Dominican Republic is also a good example of the significance budget tracking took on, as we can see how the Budget Tracking Observatory involved the intense activity of presentations, newsletters and mobilisation for a budget increase (“Yellow Monday”).

## **Training**

Almost all the NECs (39) conducted training initiatives. The number and nature of trainings, however, appear to be fairly varied, and it should be mentioned that the “sum” of training initiatives (provided in the Synthesis table) is not very

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<sup>29</sup> The following sums are based in the information included in the completion reports and result frameworks, but due to the lack of systematisation of some of them, the figures may be underestimated.

informative in that sense<sup>30</sup>. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify which issues training initiatives were focused on: budget tracking, analysis, monitoring and education funding stand out due to the large number of coalitions that conducted training related to them. Thus, 18 coalitions have carried out some sort of training related to education budgeting and funding. Training on advocacy, lobbying and campaign and communication strategy was also quite common (25 NECs), as well as training on networking, partnership building, resource mobilization and the NCSEF (9 coalitions). Other issues which have captured the NECs' interests have been national education policies, laws and acts (5 coalitions), the right to education (3 coalitions), the education agenda, intercultural dialogue, decolonisation, non-formal education, extracurricular education, rural education, inclusive education, community participation and others.

We can also distinguish training initiatives of a more "technical" nature and usually orientated to improving staff skills, such as ICT (3 coalitions), webpage management (2 coalitions), financial and material management (6 coalitions), administrative skills, proposal writing, oral English and organisational development.

As reported above, these sorts of initiatives took a wide range of shapes (seminars, workshops, formal sessions, training of trainers), and were addressed to different groups. Thus, training initiatives were not always solely aimed at member organizations, but also at non-member union representatives, local representatives, school boards and councils, teachers, journalists and members of parliament. In that sense, training was not only a capacity building strategy but also a method for advocacy and campaigning. In some cases, training was aimed at particular individuals in the coalitions, such as national or sub-national coordinators, NCSEF committee members, and finance and administrative officers and accountants. These types of initiatives were usually linked with the mentioned "technical" trainings, and therefore could be considered part of the institutional strengthening of the coalition.

## Outcomes

Regarding the outcomes or impacts of the national coalitions, it must be pointed out that these are by far the most challenging of the issues to be analysed, as they can hardly be quantified and, as a consequence, a comparative approach faces noticeable difficulties. Different interpretations among the coalitions about the nature of the outcomes, as well as a certain lack of concreteness or insufficient contextualization led to difficulties in formulating a complete list of the different categories of outcomes necessary to systematise the information provided.

Nevertheless, it is possible to outline the main sort of impacts that can be observed. Firstly, we can consider the increase in the education budget, which was found in 15 cases. In Benin the education budget increased from 20.4% of the total budget in 2009 to 23.29% in 2011. In Burkina Faso the expenditure on school canteen provisions increased from 4 milliards in 2010 to 20.3 milliards in 2011. In

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<sup>30</sup> As the NECs were not particularly systematic in the compilation of these initiatives, nor were they all counted in the same way: only some of them took into account the dissemination to district/province level; not all of them counted training sessions organised by others as a training initiative, etc.

Burundi the education budget increased from 12.82% in 2004, to 17.2% in 2008, 25.3% in 2010 and 23.8% in 2011. In Cambodia the budget went from 16.4% in 2010 to 16.6% in 2011. In Cape Verde the Government committed itself to devote a significant share of its budget to education in the following year. In Djibouti a significant increase in the budget took place, being today larger than 25%. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo the budget increased from 7.2% in 2010 to 10.6% in 2011. In Ethiopia it reached 25%. In Gambia where there was an increase from 16.9% to 19.6% in 2011. In Guinea Bissau it increased from 9.38% to 11.28%. In Liberia it increased from 9% to 13.02% in the 2011/12 national budget. In Malawi there was an increase from 12.5% in the 2009/10 budget to 15.6% (2010/11) and then 18.7% (2011/12). Nepal, which reported an increase in the education budget and a policy circulated to all local governments to allocate at least 25% of their budget to education. In Sierra Leone it reached 20.3%. Finally, in Zambia there was an increase of 3.25% in 2010 and 3.8% in 2011 (it is assumed that these last increases refer to the growth in the budget in comparison to the previous year)<sup>31</sup>.

We should also take into account other outcomes that involved reforms in a country's education policy. Hence, 29 coalitions reported legislative changes such as new education laws, the implementation of approved rules or the launching of new policies. However, it is worth keeping in mind the complications in attributing these reforms to the actions of the national coalitions, because some of them could eventually influence policy-making in many indirect ways.

#### 4.5. Final comments

This chapter reports on the statistical profile of educational development in CSEF countries. Briefly, the data analysed highlight a syndrome of exclusion and gender discrimination that precludes the achievement of EFA goals regardless of the economic product of the countries. This is a challenge as well as an opportunity for civil societies involved in education policies.

The chapter also explores the main activities carried out by the Civil Society Education Fund. A comprehensive inquiry finds that the NECs have become more legitimate representatives of civil society in education, and reveals how much they have done: lobbying, research, training, raising public awareness and budget tracking. Human and financial resources have also improved, and the democratic direction appears to be quite deep-rooted. Gender parity on the boards and the launching of national CSEFs in order to ensure NECs' sustainability in the long run are probably the issues needing significant improvement.

A few conclusions on a few methodological issues also emerge from this chapter. First of all, it is necessary to take into account serious existing methodological difficulties and limitations in data collecting. These limitations result from the unavailability of certain documents from some NECs (as detailed in the

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<sup>31</sup> The amounts are presented as they were reported in the documents, what has involved a lack of systematization or precision for some cases.

tables in page B1 in Appendix 2). This meant having to find the necessary information through other sources, which affected the accuracy of the analysis included in this chapter and, as a final consequence, undermined the reliability of this general overview. Similar effects arose from the lack of systematisation and accuracy in the provision of certain data, even those of a quantitative nature, such as funding, staff, number of organisations, studies, etc. (provided in the Results Framework Reports). In the Completion Reports the difficulties arose mainly from a certain ambiguity in the use of certain terms, such as *campaign*, *advocacy*, *workshops*, etc., and from the openness or generality of the questions, which were answered with differing levels of precision and with variable adjustments to the questions. In the mentioned reports, a certain vagueness was also encountered regarding various issues, such as trainings, budget tracking, lobbying, GAWs, campaigns, etc. (for example, the duration of these activities, number of beneficiaries, their territorial scope, detailed activities, targeted groups, etc.), as well as around the outcomes and the concrete changes related to budget and legislation. As a general consequence, the establishment of suitable categories for comparative purposes was quite challenging.

## CHAPTER 5

# THE CSEF IN THE FIELD: FOCUS ON ITS PRIMARY PROCESSES AND IMPACT

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the dynamics of the CSEF according to the experiences observed in the seven case studies carried out at the country level. Variations in the primary and support processes across these cases show the domestication of the CSEF in these countries. The comparative approach adopted in this chapter is helpful to monitor the efficiency and the sustainability of the project core processes, as well as to identify some significant impacts (see OECD DAC Network on Development Cooperation, 2010).

In the field, the CSEF has consisted of its main primary processes, namely capacity building, advocacy, training and research. While the deployment of these activities in all the cases provides evidence of the relevance, the effectiveness and the potential for sustainability of the fund, the importance of advocacy also suggests some comments on its efficiency. These core activities have been underpinned by support processes, such as financial management, human resources management, gender parity, communication and monitoring and evaluation.

An array of outcomes and impacts are also identified in this chapter. The fund has promoted the national appropriation of the global theory of change on the potential for civil societies to contribute to the EFA goals. At the country level, despite irregular results in learning and innovation, the CSEF has provoked a positive impact on the official recognition of the national coalitions. Thus, some substantive impacts can be mapped out.

### 5.2. Context

Propitious contexts are normally found where governments have an explicit commitment to education progress. In fact, progressive governments, but also governments with an economic competitiveness agenda, open windows of opportunity to NECS' influence. Progressive governments usually adopt a rights-based approach to education and invest in public education as a way to guarantee such a right. Pro-competition governments conceive of education as being a key asset for developing the country economically, politically, and socially. Thus, these types of governments are sensitive to education investment claims. When governments are politically committed to the EFA goals, they usually institutionalise consultation by means of official committees, open conferences and public awareness of parliamentary debates.

Governments may also stimulate participation in order to overcome the huge obstacles of post-conflict reconstruction. In these cases, a propitious context is the

consequence of a deeper social change that contributes to educational development and participation in educational decision-making, although the policies and the goals are broader than educational development due to the former destruction of the infrastructure and the rules of governance.

In contrast, instability and a low political interest in education could hinder the implementation of the CSEF. Moreover, the governments that subscribe to a neoliberal doctrine, whose main aim is to control public spending and reduce the economic weight of the state, are not usually open to improve education quality via increasing public educational budgets. These conditions do not stimulate civil society to get involved in education, but induce CSOs to engage in open conflict with their governments. Therefore, any narrow opportunity for consultation may easily turn into a frustrating experience for advocates and activists, since they encounter unwilling officials and politicians who do not respond to their demands.

The rationale of these hypotheses notwithstanding, the first comparative finding of this evaluation strongly indicates that the context does not clearly influence the success of many NECs, since the CSEF has advanced in the seven countries included in the sample despite adverse contexts in some of them. Similarly, even unstable and authoritarian governments have recognised the NECs as political actors. Therefore, instead of internal circumstances, the growing importance of debates in the global educational agenda seems to pattern the connections between education and civil society. Apparently, in countries with quite different economies and politics, CSOs operating both in the capital and in the farthest regions avail themselves of the ideas openly defended in these debates.

### **Structure of civil society in education**

In Mongolia, the CSEF intervention led to the creation of national education coalitions (Fontdevila, 2012), while in other countries the CSEF contributed to the development of already existing NECs. Teacher unions, community associations, denominational groups and both national and international NGOs are the most common components of National Education Coalitions (NECs). The CSEF has insisted on the advantages of better coordination in a NEC, not least because it is crucial to raising funds thanks to a more reliable public image. This institutional arrangement is really spreading regardless of many variations in the configuration of the polity in diverse countries.

While teachers' unions participated in the creation of the Global Campaign for Education and promoted some of the NECs, some examples, like Cambodia (Edwards, 2012) and Sierra Leone (García-Alba, 2012b) convincingly show that civil society is wider than unions. However, the interaction of unions and other civil society organisations within NECs follows varied patterns. Certainly, unions are normally very active in NECs, and sometimes the coalitions help a diversity of teachers' unions find common ground. However, some coalitions also trigger disagreement, debate and negotiation between unions and other players.

As previously observed in Verger and Novelli (2012), the relationship between teachers' unions and education NGOs is, potentially, contentious. Usually, the coexistence between these two types of organisations is smoother in countries that do not have a single or very dominant teachers' union. Very large unions are often reluctant to work with other social organisations in a totally horizontal way. As they feel that they represent a much larger constituency, they are not comfortable with a small and very professionalised NGO having an equal place at the table. Furthermore, teachers' unions are seldom happy working with NGOs that put what they consider to be sensitive issues on the agenda of the coalition, such as teacher evaluations, community participation in school management, and other issues that may undermine teachers' professionalism. Due to their active support of public education, teachers' unions often react against NGO members that are education services providers, who, in their daily activity, may contribute to privatise education. For their part, some NGOs feel uncomfortable working with unions that, quite often, adopt disruptive action repertoires to influence government decisions, because they prefer the adoption of dialogue and negotiation strategies.

### 5.3. Primary processes

#### Capacity building

The internal cohesion of the networks and the range of their membership are crucial elements when it comes to understanding the capacity for influence of a NEC. So far, international comparative research on campaigns supporting Education for All throughout the world has noted that cohesive and well-connected coalitions often manage to influence decision-making, while weaker coalitions are only able, at most, to put issues on the agenda (Verger and Novelli, 2010). Thus, an evaluation of the CSEF should scrutinise the potential of the programme for triggering analogous processes in countries where the presence of the Global Campaign for Education has not been traditionally so strong.

Actually, the seven case studies highlight that, although a growing number of members in a coalition strengthens its influence as a political player, size also requires the development of new capacity to deal with complexity. Rapid growth normally generates new challenges concerning internal discussion, regional scope and management. Box 5.1 focuses on the details of this dilemma in three countries.

#### Box 5.1. Capacity building in Malawi, Senegal and Sierra Leone

Source: authors

Remarkably, the CSEF has promoted new alliances and partnerships between civil society organisations in a variety of political settings, but the resulting better-organised and assertive political players are also facing new problems. Thus, many coalitions have taken a step forward by establishing clear structures of governance and appointing effective leaders. However, some problems still constrain the capacity of these coalitions to the extent that certain regions remain alien to their activities, internal cohesion is not guaranteed, and traditional forms of organisation compete with them.

The Malawian Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education illustrates the work of a senior coalition that has a strong independent voice (García- Alba, 2012a). Founded in July 2000 after



the Dakar Conference, it was strengthened by the Commonwealth Education Fund and a stable structure of donors. Here, the CSEF project opened an opportunity to engage in participative self-assessment and planning. Not only the members were consulted about the proposal, but it was also based on a prior Capacity Gap Assessment. As a consequence, this coalition decided to focus on its Annual General Meeting so as to promote good governance, transparency, knowledge sharing and ownership of its members. During the operation of the CSEF, this process has already generated a positive feed-back for a substantial review of the basic norms regulating the activities of the coalition.

After several civil society organisations started an open discussion on the need for coordination in Senegal, the *Coalition des Organisations en Synergie pour la Défense de l'Éducation Publique* was constituted in 2008 (Acebillo, 2012). Between 2009 and 2012, CSEF supported activities have contributed to the organisational development of this new coalition, and have revealed some dilemmas emerging out of its rapid pace of expansion. For instance, a wider and more stable array of donors has levelled the initial imbalances between the more prominent INGOs who provided funding and the other members from the national civil society. Similarly, although a growing number of members have also stretched the coalition throughout the regions of Senegal, some of our interviewees were worried about the consolidation and internal cohesion of such a decentralised network.

Since the Education for All Sierra Leone Coalition was formed in 1999, it has collaborated with international and community associations that provide many basic services the state is unable to deliver (García-Alba, 2012b). In fact, this is a common pattern in post-conflict countries like Sierra Leone. Besides the national coalition, some traditional associations (which are aligned with chiefdoms) and (more formal but ascriptive) neo-traditional groups are also catering to the main needs of the population. Two consequences of these circumstances are persistent difficulties in intermediation between this type of civil society and official local authorities, and many obstacles to create local networks of civil society organisations in the Western part of the country. However, international support provided by the Commonwealth Education Fund, some international donors, and recently, the CSEF, have been crucial to establish a stable coordination team and a system of representation. After 2009 a stronger leadership has also underpinned this relative, initial but consistent progress, as the newly appointed coordinator has played a crucial role and the drafting of a new common strategy has opened space for a broader consultation among members.

In Mozambique (Bertomeu 2012), Mongolia (Fontdevila, 2012), Sierra Leone (García-Alba, 2012b), Malawi (Malawi, 2012a) and Cambodia (Edwards, 2012), the capacity of the autochthonous NECs is based on the equilibrium between growth and cohesion, on the one hand, and a handful of centripetal trends and important obstacles, on the other. These NECs, some of them created by the CSEF itself, have been able to maintain their capacity while their members multiplied. Some of them have established self-evaluation mechanisms and have designed admission criteria. Other NECs have also been quite skilful at brokering between members, or have promoted internal democracy. However, most of these growing coalitions are dealing with geographical disparities and lack technical expertise in Monitoring and Evaluation. Often, their internal coordination is threatened by a new type of 'micro-political' tension. Some members may not fully accept others who do not have their alleged status of 'premiership'. If the leading officers are not fully competent, or do not invest a great deal of energy in their job, new difficulties may also appear.

Significantly, this equilibrium has broken down in Senegal to the extent that new members have not been appropriately incorporated, and democratic processes and participation have not been evolving accordingly (Acebillo, 2012). In Bolivia, the NEC has engaged in the broader national debate on the centrality of education in order to build a multi-nation state. It has also developed a growing interest in critical co-education as means to overcome patriarchy (Talavera, 2012).

Therefore, if the quantity of members matters, capacity building posits a new challenge for the sustainability of the CSEF. This frail equilibrium between the expansion of coalitions and the realisation of their weaknesses when engaging in

new activities is indicative of potential difficulties. Although the leap from nothing to an emerging civil society in the area of education is a remarkable advancement, future progress definitely depends on the capacity of NECs to overcome the new problems that emerge when participating in a more lively and complex civil society.

## Advocacy

Box 5.2 sketches some relevant details of evidence-based advocacy in our case studies, where the NECs advocate for legal reform and/or budget tracking. Some of them are even implementing an advocacy plan they have produced by themselves. Particular political conjunctures have also triggered *ad hoc* campaigns responding to national circumstances and national education debates. For instance, the Mongolian NEC actively contested an educational reform that proposed the legalisation of fee-paying schools (Fontdevila, 2012). In quite a different context, instead of putting pressure over the amount of the educational budget—since a substantial budget is an official policy right now—the Bolivian NEC is checking to what extent schools receive the resources officially allocated to them (Talavera, 2012). However, in some cases the correspondence between the actual advocacy activities and the written advocacy plan remains unclear.

Advocacy is a very important process for NECs, as well as an essential component in the CSEF project. Notably, the fund has been quite effective with regard to this process, since all the coalitions in our case studies have either launched campaigns, have put pressure on governments, or both. Moreover, the widespread scope of advocacy activities in all these countries suggests this process is becoming sustainable over time. To start with, although a given political moment at the national and supra-national levels has been conducive to the spread of advocacy, this change in the political interplay is likely to remain. By launching their initial campaigns, social movements also equip themselves with a repertoire of political action they can use in future campaigns.

### Box 5.2. Promising synergies between research and advocacy

Source: authors

The comparative account of the sampled case studies records a widespread feeling that evidence-based advocacy has been successful in very different countries, in a variety of cultural contexts, and quite disparate political conjunctures. Mostly, national coalitions have learnt to be much more assertive by deploying this strategy, which underpins some of their claims and unveils new concerns for future advocacy.

Until a repository of reports and other documents based on this research is available, any general comments on the most salient topics and the sounder methodologies will only be based on very indirect examples. However, a closer look at two national coalitions that have conducted extensive research and published the resulting documents on their websites, namely Cambodia (Edwards, 2012) and Mozambique (Bertomeu, 2012), suggests two interesting commonalities that deserve attention. We signal these tentative conclusions in order to trigger further debate and evaluation on the potential of civil society education funds, but they cannot be extended to all the participating countries so far.

Firstly, research appears to open the gates of consultation at a higher political level. These national coalitions have constructed operational partnerships with research institutes and think-tanks, and have managed to engage either policy-makers or top officials in their research processes. Thus, the relevant questions may arise from the very debates between policy-makers and civil society organisations triggered in consultation meetings. Similarly, the very ministry can be asked to approve studies and help with looking for the key informants, and finally, some officials can be invited to participate in the NEC's research advisory council.

Secondly, after some years of evidence-based advocacy a list of the relevant topics emerges in each country. The titles of the public Cambodian reports are quite expressive: *The Impact of Informal Fees on Family Expenditures*, *The Impact of Preschool on Early Childhood Education in Cambodia*, and *The Experiences of Promoting Scholarship Implementation in Promoting*

EFA. Current work focuses on the impact of incentives on teacher motivation levels, children's academic performance in grade 6, the guarantee of children's rights in school, and teaching hours. In Mozambique, the NEC has equipped school councils with a tool designed to assess the quality of educational services concerning the following dimensions, each of them being observed by means of more concrete indicators: social and cultural environment (*inter alia*, looking at violence), pedagogic practices, student assessment, school management, teachers' in-service training, teachers' working conditions, material facilities, and attendance and progress between levels.

### Research and training

Most NECs have carried out some type of research to support their advocacy activities. A general picture of the nature and contents of research carried out by NECs can be grasped by looking at Appendix 2. This information shows that the strategy to associate research and advocacy is being widely adopted in the educational community of many countries with a low human development index.

Roughly speaking, most NECs have undertaken training activities which can be classified into two main categories: instrumental and thematic training. Instrumental training has to do with research on budget tracking, strategies to deal with the media, fund-raising and learning to implement an M&E system. Thematic training has been based on collective reflection on dissemination activities (e.g. disseminating debates in Mozambican school districts) and has responded to concerns regarding certain topics, such as gender (e.g. Bolivia).

### Resources available

The following tables (5.1 and 5.2) estimate the 'rough' efficiency of advocacy, training and research, that is, the core of the primary processes enacted by the CSEF. Since we cannot break down the data in order to compare the expenditure devoted to each process, these tables simply compare the amount of resources received in each country. They show that the observed commonalities have been supported by uneven endowments in different countries because the amount of money varies significantly between the seven case studies.

Table 5.1. Expenditure of CSEF and population in the sample of case studies  
Expenditure in US \$ (Dec. 2011)  
Expenditure/population in millions

	Expenditure in US \$ Dec. 2011)	Expenditure/population
Bolivia	203875,88	19,81
Cambodia	229161,71	15,32
Malawi	148383,42	9,09
Mongolia	191529,91	60,22
Mozambique	175217,73	7,45
Senegal	217178,27	16,75
Sierra Leone	158997,4	28,98

Source: Data provided to the evaluation team by the Global Campaign for Education.

The CSEF has to some extent given priority to countries where the NEC had no alternative sources of funding (Mongolia) and simply provided a small support to the countries where these sources were available (Malawi and Mozambique). However, Bolivia, Cambodia, Senegal and Sierra Leone have received different amounts of

money from the CSEF although their opportunities to attract other funds were similar. This distribution is likely a response to the importance of post-conflict construction and variable circumstances in Africa, Asia and Latin American.

Table 5.2. The CSEF and complementary sources of funding

	Total amount of funds generated by the coalition outside the CSEF grant	CSEF funding (expenditure in US \$ Dec. 2011)	B*D (CSEF and outside funding)	CSEF proportion of the total funding (B+D)	Group (1)	Coalition seniority (years)
Angola	236.255,39	47.465,58	283.720,97	16,73	A	5
Bangladesh	0,00	245.393,57	245.393,57	100,00	E	22
Benin	24.920,94	133.987,95	158.908,89	84,32	D	9
Bolivia	100.295,00	203.875,88	304.170,88	67,03	C	3
Burkina Faso	4.681,63	120.833,73	125.515,36	96,27	D	12
Burundi	964,22	146.333,97	147.298,19	99,35	D	8
Cambodia	377.137,98	229.161,71	606.299,69	37,80	B	11
Cameroon	33.000,00	73.145,00	106.145,00	68,91	C	7
Cape Verde	*	54.560,34	54.560,34			4
Djibouti	0,00	102.408,18	102.408,18	100,0	E	4
Dominican Republic	153.785,59	166.171,24	319.956,83	51,94	C	12
Democratic Republic Congo	54.570,00	102.408,18	156.978,18	65,24	C	3
Ethiopia	673.569,64	152.710,65	826.280,29	18,48	A	13
Gambia	*	191.622,35	191.622,35			10
Ghana	594.623,58	276.186,16	870.809,74	31,72	B	13
Guinea Bissau	*	93.844,72	93.844,72			6
Haiti	50.000,00	22.164,80	72.164,80	30,71	B	9
India	68.892,00	332.264,74	401.156,74	82,83	D	11
Indonesia	*	128.000,21	128.000,21			2
Kenya	268.483,00	223.258,67	491.741,67	45,40	B	13
Lesotho	36.500,00	99.098,69	135.598,69	73,08	C	9
Liberia	78.426,00	86.133,00	164.559,00	52,34	C	7
Malawi	675.248,79	148.383,42	823.632,21	18,02	A	12
Mali	981.064,11	65.294,52	1.046.358,63	6,24	A	6
Mauritania	1.207,14	21.917,89	23.125,03	94,78	D	3
Mongolia	15.594,00	191.529,91	207.123,91	92,47	D	2
Mozambique	947.690,80	175.217,73	1.122.908,53	15,60	A	13
Nepal	26.400,65	151.222,64	177.623,29	85,14	D	9
Nicaragua	604.000,00	197.000,00	801.000,00	24,59	A	16
Niger	171.912,00	188.308,54	360.220,54	52,28	C	4
Nigeria	0,00	165.391,69	165.391,69	100,0	E	12
Pakistan	202.388,00	276.313,47	478.701,47	57,72	C	7
Papua New Guinea	404.859,81	196.097,47	600.957,28	32,63	B	9
Senegal	309.735,00	217.178,27	526.913,27	41,22	B	5
Sierra Leone	305.419,80	158.997,40	464.417,20	34,24	B	13
Solomon Islands	340.202,94	214.768,56	554.971,50	38,70	B	8
Sri Lanka	*	43.138,84	43.138,84			8
Tanzania	*	29.240,30	29.240,30			13
Timor Leste	*	90.375,95	90.375,95			3
Togo	9.755,07	190.440,80	200.195,87	95,13	D	12
Uganda	*	125.749,04	125.749,04			11
Vanuatu	144,44	157.892,92	158.037,36	99,91	D	3
Vietnam	*	151.044,99	151.044,99			2
Zambia	1.647.752,53	146.966,40	1.794.718,93	8,19	A	11
Zimbabwe	50.450,00	133.168,24	183.618,24	72,52	D	3

Source: Data provided to the evaluation team by the Global Campaign for Education.

#### 5.4. Support Processes

Although financial support was the main trigger of the CSEF activities, it was not able to provide its full contribution due to delays in delivery. An important positive effect of this financial support can be noted in the success of some NECs in opening new sources of complementary funding. Since this process is quite sensitive to trust, our comparative exercise suggests that the problems of transparency detected in some countries must be addressed in the best possible way (see country reports for more details).

While the CSEF has been relatively effective regarding external communication, internal communication has emerged as a new challenge. Access to the media is not universal, but a growing trend. However, many interviewees complain of problems with the coalition IT system, and their difficulty spreading up-to-date information to all members.

Although all the NECs are trying to implement Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) schemes, at most, our evaluation can say they are at a very initial stage. Many self-evaluative comments recorded in interviews confirm this point.

Although all NECs report on gender (dis)parity in steering committees and staff, it is hard to say this criterion is enough to suggest that coalitions adopt an effective gender approach. Some suggestions have already been posited in terms of thematic training. In Mongolia the noticeable representation of women in civil society was reflected in the importance of this issue in the debate. When the NEC decided how to accept new members into the coalition, it eventually endorsed gender parity as a necessary criterion (Fontdevila, 2012). But the more ambitious debate on the position of men and women in societies with diverse cultural traditions has only been raised in Bolivia (Talavera, 2012).

Closer views of human resource management and gender highlight two further challenges. First, overwork and/or under-staffing is an issue. To the extent that this is a consequence of delayed funding, the problem could be overcome by a more systematic delivery of the budget each year. Currently, this situation entails the risk of some 'brain drain' of officers trained by the CSEF and similar funds. These skilful staff may look for more stable and comfortable jobs, that international organisations and NGOs could offer in some countries.

Secondly, the restrictive bias of the gender approach is an understandable consequence if the whole work of NECs, and the common quantitative reading of EFA goals concerning this issue, are taken into account. However, since gender issues are often more visible at the local level (participation in councils, security of girls, time management), NECs will very likely need a more sophisticated perspective if they are to extend their influence throughout their countries. A more complex notion of gender highlighting power in different social settings might be a way to reach a more diverse audience at the local level, or conversely, a one-dimensional view of gender might become an obstacle for the work of NECs.

### **5.5. Outcomes and impact**

The assessment of outcomes and impacts is a complex and difficult task. As has already been stated in Chapter 2, there are significant problems in identifying differences between "attribution" and "contribution". Moreover, it is important to take into account the distinction between the direct or indirect effects of CSEF funds. CSEF funds may produce a 'direct' effect when allowing for the creation of the NEC – as in the case of Mongolia (Fontdevila, 2012) - or when clearly facilitating the recognition of the NEC as the crucial interlocutor with the government. In countries like Cambodia (Edwards, 2012) or Senegal (Acebillo, 2012), the CSEF has consolidated a network and has reinforced the role of the NEC in front of the government and the public. In other cases, the impact of CSEF funds may be better understood as a process that reinforces the strategies of an already existing NEC and its capacity to leverage education policies in the country and particularly the EFA

goals. In these cases we can understand that the CSEF funds have an indirect effect in the capacity of the NEC to influence policy and practice.

Despite methodological difficulties, this evaluation tries to assess the qualitative nature of the effects of CSEF funds. That is, what can be inferred from the seven case studies is the type of effects (either direct or indirect) achieved after the reception of the CSEF in the coalition. Thus, we are better equipped to identify contributions associated with the CSEF funds than direct attributions. The final discussion chapter will explore some possible factors that can be identified as key to understanding the nature of the outcomes and impact. In this chapter, we pay attention to those parallelisms and differences regarding four different dimensions. First, we focus on the theory of change (ToC) for each NEC to assess to what extent they are aligned with the general CSEF goals. Whether explicit or implicit, NECs have strategies and assumptions associated with these strategies that may be more or less close to CSEF goals and that may appear more or less effective in the pursuit of the EFA agenda. Secondly, we observe whether the CSEF funds have contributed to processes of learning and innovation within the NEC. These outcomes are of course closely linked to those primary processes that the CSEF project has activated. The third dimension to evaluate is the contribution of the CSEF to the 'recognition' of the NEC as a proper interlocutor and as a reference actor for the political sphere and the general public. This is an important dimension of impact because it is closely linked to one of the main objectives of CSEF funding: to reinforce the NEC as a crucial actor that contributes to monitoring governments' decision making in education. Finally, the fourth dimension refers to what can be considered 'substantive impact', that is, whether we can observe changes in policies or regulations as a result of the NEC's intervention.

Needless to say, three of the evaluation criteria adopted by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (2010) correspond to the dimensions discussed in this section. Are the outcomes relevant? To what extent did the CSEF produce an impact? And, to what extent is the CSEF sustainable over time?

### **The theory of change behind NECs' actions**

The theory of change (ToC) refers to those principles and causal relations underlying strategic action that each NEC develops in order to reach its goals. It can also be understood as a system of beliefs through which each NEC expects to change conditions and behaviours regarding education in their country and specifically attain the EFA goals. This section aims to identify whether certain characteristics of the ToC implicit in different NECs' strategies and actions are similar, whether they share the same assumptions, whether they intend to solve similar or different educational problems and whether they can be considered useful for achieving EFA goals. Possibilities or limitations for achieving some expected outcomes might exist because of external factors, but also because of the strengths or shortcomings of the NEC's ToC. It is important therefore to look at the nature of the ToC and its explicit or implicit definition within each NEC.

The first aspect to highlight here is the fact that, despite the existence of different degrees of explicitness, all NECs are able to define a theory of change that lies behind their strategic work. First, all NECs identify crucial problems that governments face regarding education policy and practice. On the basis of this identification, the ToC defines which strategies are considered the best ones in order to solve these

problems. Two crucial problems are shortcomings with regard to budget transparency and accountability, and with regard to technical capacity within the government to manage financial resources. Without doubt, in some countries weak capacity building, lack of recognition and low participation of NECs are also problems. We can distinguish two types of NECs according to their internal or external orientation. Some NECs may consider the need to build better capacities before developing a complete strategic action plan, while others might be more clearly focused in influencing the agenda. Cambodia (Edwards, 2012) is an extreme case of an internally oriented ToC, whereas Bolivia (Talavera, 2012) has elaborated a ToC rather oriented to external changes. This does not have to do exclusively with NECs experiences, but more with the political context and the political momentum to undertake specific actions. In the case of Mongolia, for instance, a combination of internal and external objectives can be observed, insofar as that a new NEC needs to be internally reinforced at this stage. But its ToC does not overlook the need to obtain a greater recognition from the government and to fight for its inclusion in decision-making and consultation platforms.

This is a second important feature of most NECs. One of their main strategies consists in activating participatory strategies for including CSOs in consultation and decision-making processes as well as raising public awareness. Most of them work towards informing civil society and making it more conscious about participation possibilities. For instance, the Mozambican coalition has launched a campaign to foster popular involvement in school councils in important regions of the country (Bertomeu, 2012).

Equally, most NECs' theories of change include the assumption that evidence-based advocacy is crucial for both empowering their capacities and for influencing policy change. A significant number develop research projects to gain evidence for their advocacy. However, as has already been said, this assumption contrasts with the difficulties developing the appropriate research skills of NEC members in the short term. Therefore, the recognition of the role that research can play to improve advocacy and influence has not always been translated into the necessary training; neither has it facilitated the design of medium-term or long-term plans to acquire the necessary research skills. Generally speaking, training plans should be considered one of the weakest aspects in most NECs, and this can be seen in the role training plays in the ToC. When NECs are aware that they lack the ability to perform rigorous and respected research, they may rely on the expertise and advice of more highly-trained allies in the education sector, as the NEC in Cambodia has done (Edwards, 2012). This advice revolves around how to design and carry out solid research that will lend itself to being more influential for policy-relevant issues.

Finally, a final aspect of the NECs' theories of change is the development of partnership strategies for lobbying the government and sharing the achievement of the EFA goals. Of course, as it has been stated, CSEF funds have raised the capacity of the NECs to attract other funds and new partners. Nevertheless, most NECs include in their strategic action plan the objective of improving collaboration with development agencies and other actors. It is clearly assumed that through partnerships with key stakeholders the political atmosphere changes and CSOs find a better environment for participating in decision-making.

In short, despite the existence of differences in the selection of the main priorities and the identification of their country's main problems, NECs' theories of change

share a significant degree of similarity regarding the main assumptions. Since these ToCs are partially aligned with the global ToC as interpreted by the CSEF (see Chapter 6), they become relevant for the whole programme. Furthermore, the general capacity of the NECs to figure out their own ToC is a sign of their effectiveness as autonomous coalitions. Moreover, if all NECs have been able to envisage their own theory of change, it is reasonable to conclude that they will also be capable of participating in future processes of advocacy, not least because they have acquired a key skill to define and implement a strategy in this domain. But the range of ToCs notwithstanding, their impact is severely weakened by other problems observed in this evaluation, which relate to the lack of innovation and the limitations in knowledge management strategies within the coalitions.

### **Learning and innovation/Knowledge management**

Processes of learning and innovation are a relevant outcome of NECs in different settings. However, the ways they have developed vary between different NECs. All actors argue that they have learnt by having access to training courses or by developing joint methodologies with several members of the coalition. Moreover, most of the NECs underline the “learning by doing” effect that results from engaging in more activities and from the possibilities of professionalisation that derive from the CSEF funds. The chance to be involved in research processes has also facilitated, in most cases, the acquisition of methodological or analytical skills, and has stimulated better-informed actions to leverage education policies. In general terms, there is a very positive outcome from the CSEF funds with regard to learning processes.

However, there are clearly some aspects to improve in the ‘innovative’ character of the ways in which different NECs develop their advocacy strategies. NECs have rarely organised their agendas to prioritise this aspect. That is, learning processes have mostly occurred because the development of strategies has produced informal learning. In some cases, like Bolivia (Talavera, 2012) or Mongolia (Fondevila, 2012), while dissemination and systematisation of knowledge work effectively, there has been a lack of innovative training, especially in certain areas, such as budget tracking and monitoring. African coalitions, for their part, seem to have focused more on facilitating training in monitoring and evaluation (Acebillo, 2012; Bertomeu, 2012; García-Alba, 2012a, 2012b) . Nevertheless, these training processes have rarely spread among all coalition members. In countries like Senegal, the growth in the members of the NEC, the process of decentralisation and changes in the Board and management systems clearly reveal the difficulties that spreading learning and innovation processes entail (Acebillo, 2012).

Most of the case studies point to the need for NECs to gain skills in knowledge management. Instruments and learning processes that are too traditional prevent the development of new learning strategies, especially in those technical aspects that might reinforce capacity building for advocacy. Another foreseeable effect has been the fact that the learning capacity within some NECs is unevenly distributed. The professionalisation process leading from CSEF funding tends to concentrate the capacity building and the knowledge management processes in the hands of a few senior members of the NEC Board or in some specific organisations within the NEC. Problems of dissemination and communication have clearly taken place in countries like Senegal or Cambodia and have prevented a better distribution of knowledge and



experience among all members of the NEC. Notably, these problems could damage the sustainability of the NECs if CSEF support was withdrawn.

### **Recognition**

If there is one terrain on which the CSEF has clearly had an impact it is in reinforcing the visibility and the recognition of the NECs. Its particular relevance stems from a basic fact, that is, recognition is a *sine qua non* condition for starting a dialogue between governments and civil society organisations. Certainly, NECs have been recognised for the first time or have reinforced their position before the government thanks to the fact that the CSEF identifies them as the primary reference point among CSOs for working on the EFA goals.

In countries like Mozambique (Bertomeu, 2012), Sierra Leone (García-Alba, 2012b) or Cambodia (Edwards, 2012) the NEC has achieved a high degree of political recognition to the extent that they sit in many government committees and are included in various consultation and decision-making platforms. Evidently, in the political sphere, the degree of recognition has a direct relationship with both the strategy developed by the NEC and the collaborative attitude towards the government which the NEC exhibits. In these countries, the positive and collaborative attitude of the NECs toward participation in the development of national education plans and policies have clearly facilitated their inclusion in participatory platforms. Actually, the willingness to participate in the development of national education plans is an explicit objective of most coalitions involved in the CSEF. However, some governments are not especially open and willing to include the NEC in the development of national education plans and decision-making. And sometimes, as in the case of Mozambique, the openness of the Ministry of Education conflicts with a more averse attitude of the government. Therefore, it is very important to highlight that in some countries (Mozambique, Cambodia) the collaborative attitude has been part of the advocacy strategy and has achieved notable results in terms of agenda setting and policy-making.

Nonetheless, the “collaborative” strategy does not necessarily mean that NECs achieve a more substantial impact. A collaborative attitude on the part of NECs can be developed from positive but distant cooperation or as a result of simple co-optation; it can also generate tensions with NEC members like teachers’ unions that combine negotiation with more disruptive collective action repertoires such as strikes. It is difficult to assess whether co-optation has occurred with some of the NECs’ studies. In contrast, in some countries the NEC may have a lower level of political recognition but a high level of social and public recognition that constitutes an important asset in achieving specific goals. This seems to be the case in Bolivia, where pressuring strategies rather than a collaborative attitude have resulted in the introduction of specific aspects in the new education law (Talavera, 2012).

The NECs have also gained substantial informal recognition as a result of increasing action by means of external communication strategies. Social and public recognition appear as a result of these factors and have an effect in increasing the NEC’s ‘prestige’ and credibility. The ‘net’ effect in terms of prestige and recognition has to be considered against the different political contexts in which NECs develop their work. In countries like Cambodia (Edwards, 2012) or Senegal (Acebillo, 2012), where CSOs have traditionally been seen by the government as an obstacle for policy making, the increase in political recognition means that the CSEF has produced a

high added value in the achievement of this objective. In other countries, the lack of participatory tradition can be the reason NECs achieve lower levels of political recognition. Overall, NECs have made important progress despite this lack of recognition by increasing visibility in the media and other social forums.

Finally, recognition can also be assessed by considering the extent to which international donor agencies identify the NEC as the key actor to collaborate with, both financially and through political action. In most countries the CSEF has clearly attracted more sources of funding from organisations like Action Aid or Oxfam. In countries such as Cambodia (Edwards, 2012), the NEC has acquired a high degree of recognition among development agencies. Simultaneously, collaboration with development agencies helps to increase the level of recognition of the NEC before governmental bodies. There is, therefore, a virtuous circle generated by the CSEF, because it is able to attract key actors for the achievement of EFA goals, which in turn get more involved with the NEC thanks to clear gains in legitimacy.

In short, the 'recognition' effect has been one of the greatest outcomes of the CSEF, and the particular effects observed on this terrain strongly suggest a positive effect on medium-term sustainability. While attaining recognition is an end in itself, it is only significant insofar as it contributes to the general goals of the CSEF. The available evidence also documents the effectiveness of increasing recognition, its link to widespread advancement and the potential for enacting virtuous circles over time. Once a new actor is fully accepted, the whole structure of the political interplay changes for a long time.

### **Substantive impact**

The assessment of what we call the 'substantive impact' of a NEC's intervention brings to the fore the main difficulties for differentiating between "attribution and contribution" in the strategic action of NECs. As we have already pointed out, direct and indirect effects take place and can help us to understand changes made in the political or regulative domain. The seven case studies provide evidence of different forms of impact associated with NECs' interventions. These forms range from cases where the action of the NEC has mainly a symbolic effect in the education policy field (for instance, by introducing changes in the governments' discourse or by including specific formal declarations), to cases where a NEC's action seems to have a clear impact in changing legislation, administrative procedures or political decision-making. Differences can be observed not only among coalitions but also sometimes within coalitions themselves. That is, in certain aspects the NEC is able to achieve a substantial impact while in other aspects change is only symbolic in nature.

The political context and the perception of the CSOs by the national government are also factors that explain differences in substantial impact among NECs (Verger & Novelli, 2010). In the case of Bolivia, for example, the process of approval of a new education law coincided with the reinforcement of the CBDE (the Bolivian NEC) and provided a positive opportunity structure for the CBDE to include their claims in the new law (Talavera, 2012). In countries like Cambodia, despite the existence of a governmental context very biased against CSOs, the collaborative strategy developed by the new leader of the NEC has created the conditions for facilitating a change in the administrative and political procedures used by the government to accept the NEC's presence in consultation bodies. While it does not seem that substantial changes have been achieved yet, the NEC is already included in many

governmental committees and has acquired a high degree of legitimacy (Edwards, 2012).

The composition of different internal forces within the NECs seems to also be a factor explaining why the coalitions obtain better results on certain goals and poorer results on others. The case of Senegal, with the strong presence of teachers' unions in the NEC, is a good example. While significant changes have been achieved in teacher recruitment procedures or inclusive education, the NEC has been less successful in other strategic goals, such as gender parity and girls' access to schooling (Acebillo, 2012).

African coalitions seem to have been consistently successful in influencing budget monitoring and tracking. Training on these issues and a clear strategic definition of this goal explain their success in this area. Thus, in Mozambique the NEC has managed to introduce methodological changes in the budget-tracking manual (Bertomeu, 2012). In Sierra Leone it has been successful in getting an increase in the education budget and fostering the pattern of decentralisation it desired (García-Alba, 2012b). The Malawian NEC has convinced the government to change education financing and strengthen the role of the NEC in monitoring the process (García-Alba, 2012a).

As for the Mongolian NEC, it has found difficulties in carrying out the budget tracking process, but has succeeded in introducing legal changes preventing potential privatisation processes in the education sector.

The relevance of substantive impacts is self-evident, since the CSEF aimed at engaging NECs in debates on legislation and educational budget/financing. However, it is hard to take account of such a variety of situations in order to generalise both about main 'trends' in terms of substantive impacts and about their potential for sustainability after the first intervention of the fund.

## 5.6. Conclusions

The CSEF has been deployed in heterogeneous national contexts, where NECs are being created that include teachers' unions, INGOs and community-based associations. An account of the seven case studies highlights important advances in terms of capacity building and advocacy, but also important shortcomings in training and research.

The national coalitions funded by the CSEF have been revealed to be building a growing capacity to deal with an increasing number of members. Box 1 highlights these circumstances in a small but relevant sample of countries. The comparative account of the seven case studies clearly shows this progress as well as the challenges emerging from new centripetal forces. In the end, growth brings complexity back in, but coalitions are developing new abilities to lead more complex partnerships.

The fund has also been successful as far as the connection between advocacy and research is concerned. Box 2 provides details of this emerging synergy between the primary processes of the CSEF. Although training still lags behind this potential, the available evidence clearly shows that this is a promising way to consolidate civil societies in education.

Support processes deliver their contribution through primary processes. Financial management and human resource management have been partially effective insofar as the CSEF provided the very basic infrastructure for these two processes. There has also been the additional financial success of attracting extra-funding. Communication has only been partially effective due to problems with internal communication. The introduction of a gender-sensitive approach and an M&E system are incipient processes. Important concerns with medium-term sustainability have to do with the possible consequences of insufficient financial information, the risks of brain drain and poor communication at the local level (where gender issues are more visible).

All NECs have developed their own ToC, which either stresses their focus on capacity building or their focus on external influence on official policy-making. Since most of them have drawn on the CSEF assumptions on political participation and research-based advocacy, their ToCs are, in general, aligned with the global ToC.

However, although the CSEF has engaged NECs in some training activities, they are not really developing a process of knowledge management. The potential for the NECs to maintain an action in the medium-term eventually depends on their capacity to enact a virtuous circle between the primary processes (capacity building, advocacy, research and training) and the outcomes in terms of 'theories of change' and innovation. If relevant and internally coordinated coalitions are able to underpin advocacy with research, they can tackle some of the main problems of Education for All right now. But if they are to do so in the future, they need to innovate in their strategies by aligning their research with their ToC, thus strengthening their capacity for future advocacy. Training may prove the key link in this circle.

Finally, a couple of observations regarding the current situation already suggest that the NECs have an opportunity to maintain their activities and their influence in the medium-term. First, many governments, publics and international organisations have actually recognised the NECs in a number of countries. Once NECs are recognised, their proposals enter the political agenda and become possible assets for candidates in elections and campaigns launched by diverse social movements. And secondly, the coalitions have certainly triggered important legal reforms - in those places where educational reforms were being discussed - and have tracked the educational budget of governments in most countries. These social changes are likely to be durable because they entail some transformation of prevailing institutions.

## CHAPTER 6

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1. Introduction

The main objective of this concluding chapter is to put the pieces of the CSEF evaluation puzzle together. As we have seen, these pieces deal with a variety of issues: results, primary processes, systems' architecture, strategy, operational management, etc., and relate to what different actors have been doing - and how - at a range of territorial scales: from the global to the local.

According to the realistic and systemic approach on which this evaluation is based, this chapter is organised in three main parts. In the first we (re)construct the theory of change of the CSEF project (i.e. the causal relations required to bring about the CSEF long-term goal). In the second part we test whether the causal-relations and other links included within the CSEF's theory of change are sufficiently strong on the basis of the collected data and other sources of evidence available. We will devote the third and last part of the evaluation to present a list of policy recommendations based on the results obtained. This chapter can be read as a synthesis of the main results of the evaluation, but its main objective consists in reconstructing and testing the CSEF theory of change and, by doing so, identifying lessons that can be learned for future initiatives.

### 6.2. Reconstructing the CSEF theory of change

The **theory of change** (ToC) behind the CSEF might be stated as such: *if international donors support the constitution and strengthening of broad and inclusive NECs, civil society will be able to participate proactively in education policy debates and to monitor and influence the formulation and implementation of educational policies (including National Education Plans) and, by doing so, civil society will contribute to the achievement of the Education for All goals.*

The **long-term goal** of the GCE/CSEF is to achieve – by working in partnership with governments, donors and other key stakeholders - the EFA goals. Such a goal must be achieved in a context where the commitment of the international community and country governments towards the goals is not yet sufficient and, in fact, is declining (Legault 2012), and where civil society is not yet strongly articulated and capable of advocating strongly for progress in education everywhere. To overcome these and other problems, according to the CSEF project, the achievement of the two following **intermediate goals** is necessary that (GCE 2009):

- 1. NECs become fully engaged with national governments and local donor groups in working towards the EFA goals, specifically, in respect to the Global Partnership for Education country-level processes.*
- 2. NECs become effective, independent and sustained social change agents and are able to attract in-country donor support via National Funds or other financial mechanisms*

The CSEF core strategy to achieve these goals consists of supporting and strengthening the advocacy, research and managerial capacity of the NECs via capacity building, training, human and economic resources. Such support should be mostly organised and provided by the regional organisations' members of the GCE (GCE 2009). Specifically, as a result of the project, and as reflected in the CSEF Results Framework (GCE 2010b), coalitions should be able to:

- Fully engage with national governments and local donor groups in working towards the EFA goals.
- Attract in-country donor support via National Funds or other financial mechanisms.
- Become broad and inclusive, with a growing membership and with strengthened governance and staff development.
- Acquire the skills to place their messages in the media and to raise the profile of the education debate among the public, and as such have the ability to generate public support and public pressure on decision makers.
- Have credible financial management, budget monitoring and control systems, and as a result demonstrate legitimacy and credibility to government and society.
- Have a strengthened advocacy and policy capacity, and therefore the ability to monitor and influence international, regional and national policies and practices.

A range of more or less explicit **assumptions** (or intermediate causal-relations within the CSEF ToC) can be identified and inferred when analysing the CSEF at multiple scales and through different data sources (interviews, plans, progress reports, website, etc.). They are:

- In a globalised world, civil society politics will be more effective if organised supra-nationally. The regional scale is the most appropriate to organise such a strategy
- Regional organisations have the capacity to support the NECs on both the level of advocacy and policy capacity and the level of organisational management.
- Evidence based advocacy is the most strategic way of conducting advocacy campaigns for EFA.
- Getting an increasing number of resources - and managing them effectively - will contribute to NECs becoming credible interlocutors in education policy related debates at a range of scales (global, regional and national).
- To become credible interlocutors, NECs need to be as inclusive and broad as possible, with special attention to the participation of teachers' unions and women.
- National Education Plans and Local Education Groups are key policy instruments when it comes to the development of the EFA goals at the country level.
- Tracking governments' education budgets is an effective way to avoid financial mismanagement by government agencies and to make education systems more transparent and accountable to the public.
- Governments take evidence, media debates and public opinion seriously when it comes to framing education policies and priorities.
- If NCSEFs were created, CSOs would be able to catalyse much more support for their advocacy tasks.

- Donors' actions would be more effective if they coordinates better at the country level. They are willing to enhance their coordination within the education sector by supporting NCSEFs (or related mechanisms) and hence use their resources more effectively.
- Nationally coordinated funds will allow CSOs to be better informed, to organise and align more effectively and carry out advocacy work more independently.
- A Favourable political environment is conducive to policy reforms, transparency and accountability

Table 6.1 presents the CSEF ToC by putting the above-mentioned elements (problems, strategies, goals and assumptions) in relation. As we can see, two different types of assumptions can be differentiated according to whether they relate more directly to the achievement of the intermediate goals (assumptions A) or to the achievement of the long-term goal (assumptions B).

Table 6.1. CSEF Global Theory of Change: Main Components  
Source: authors

2009-2011 CSEF programme scope – causal attribution framework (ToC)				GCE / CSEF contribution process to long term impact	
PROBLEMS	STRATEGIES	ASSUMPTIONS (A)	MID-TERM GOALS	ASSUMPTIONS (B)	LONG-TERM GOAL
<p>a. <i>Governments' lack of transparency and accountability in budgetary procedures</i></p> <p>b. <i>Education financing is insufficient to meet the EFA goals</i></p> <p>c. <i>Education policies are not consistent to implement the EFA goals</i></p>	<p>S1. A strengthened advocacy and policy capacity through regionally coordinated actions and capacity building support from regional organizations, and therefore acquiring the ability to monitor and influence international and regional policies and practices. By: a. <i>Budget tracking research on resource allocation</i>; b. <i>Providing evidence of effective budget utilisation</i>; c. <i>Evidence dissemination strategy and validation</i>; d. <i>Advocacy campaigns on transparency and accountability in education service delivery at local level with School Management Committees</i>; e. <i>Lobbying meetings with policy decision-making actors at national and local level</i></p>	<p>A1. Evidence based advocacy is the most strategic way of conducting advocacy campaigns for EFA.</p> <p>A2. Governments take evidence, media debates and public opinion seriously when it comes to framing education policies and priorities.</p> <p>A3. In a globalised world, civil society politics will be more effective if organised supra-nationally. The regional scale is the most appropriate to organise such a strategy</p> <p>A4. Regional organisations have the capacity and resources to support the NECs primary and support process</p>	<p>G1. To provide support to the core work of NECs so that they can more fully engage with national governments and local donor groups in working towards the EFA goals (specifically, in respect to the Global Partnership for Education country-level processes).</p>	<p>B1. Favourable political environment is conducive to policy reforms, transparency and accountability</p> <p>B2. National Education Plans and Local Education Groups are key policy instruments when it comes to the development of the EFA goals at the country level.</p> <p>B3. Tracking governments' education budgets is an effective way to avoid financial mismanagement by government agencies</p> <p>B4. Political space and recognition influences governmental behaviour/ decision-making</p>	<p><b>The GCE contributes towards the attainment of the EFA goals (in 45 countries)</b></p>
<p>d. <i>NECs do not exist or do not have sufficient scope (in terms of territory and</i></p>	<p>S2. NECs become broad and inclusive, with a growing membership and with a strengthened governance and staff development. By: a. <i>Adopting democratic governance</i></p>	<p>A5. To become credible interlocutors, NECs need to be as inclusive and broad as possible, with special attention to the participation of teachers' unions and</p>		<p>B5. Getting more resources (and their effective management) is a necessary condition to NECs</p>	



<p>membership)</p> <p>e. NECs are not recognized as non-state actors with political voice</p> <p>f. Donors (financial) commitment towards civil society advocacy is insufficient</p> <p>g. Governments not sufficiently open to CSOs' participation</p>	<p>rules; b. Openness to new members, with a focus on unions and women; c. Broader territorial scope</p> <p>S3. NEC's develop the skills and necessary alliances to place their messages in the media and to raise the profile of the education debate among the public, and as such have the ability to generate public support and public pressure on decision makers improving and extending political space for dialogue. By: a. Meetings with members/allies; b. Research/ Advocacy material developed; c. Political opportunity plan; d. Media engagement</p> <p>S4. To ensure credible financial management, budget monitoring and control systems, and as such demonstrate legitimacy and credibility. By: a. Capacity Building Action Plan; b. Stable and committed governance/management and structure</p> <p>S5. Bring donors together to support CSO advocacy in a coordinated way by: a. Organising NCSEF pilot projects; b. Establishing alliances with donors that can act as champions of the proposal</p>	<p>women</p> <p>A6. Capacity building and an effective use of resources (human, technical, knowledge and methodological) enhances the credibility of CSOs</p> <p>A7. Global/regional organisations have the capacity and resources to support NECs at the management level (support processes)</p> <p>A8. Nationally coordinated funds will allow CSOs to be better informed, to organise and align more effectively and carry out advocacy work more independently.</p>	<p>G2. NECs become effective, independent and sustained social change agents and are able to attract in-country donor support via National Funds or other financial mechanisms</p>	<p>becoming credible interlocutors in education policy related debates at a range of scales (global, regional and national).</p> <p>B6. Donors would be more effective if they coordinate better at the country level. A) They are willing to enhance their coordination within the education sector by supporting National Education CS Funds (or related mechanisms) and hence use their resources more effectively. B) If funds like this were created, CSOs would be able to catalyse much more support for their advocacy tasks.</p>
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### 6.3. Analysis of the CSEF ToC

The analysis that follows focuses on the existing relations within the CSEF theory of change included in Table 6.1. The analysis is structured around three main relations: problems and strategies, strategies and medium-term goals, and strategies/medium-term goals and long-term goals). The last two relations are explored through the analysis of the validity of the assumptions identified (Assumptions A and B), which, to a great extent, work as the coalitional glue of the theory of change. It needs to be acknowledged that the causal attribution of the CSEF can be more clearly isolated in relation to assumptions A than in relation to assumptions B. Nevertheless, both of them are equally important pieces in the CSEF ToC.

As suggested in Mayne (2008), the analysis of the CSEF theory of change will be guided by the following questions: Which (causal) links in the CSEF ToC are strong/consistent and which ones are weak/non-consistent?<sup>32</sup> Are key assumptions validated? Does the pattern of results and links validate the results chain? Do key stakeholders agree with the story behind the ToC?

#### **First relational dimension: Problems – Strategy**

Regarding the relationship between the existing problems and the strategy designed in the context of the CSEF to address them, our main observations are:

- The strategy is consistent with the problems identified in the EFA field. Specifically, advocacy for introducing policy changes in education and increasing educational budgets is consistent with *problems a, b, c* included in Table 6.1.
- There is a broad consensus in the international community about the key role that civil society should play in the achievement of EFA. This consensus has been materialised in the EFA framework of action and in the last GPE Strategic Plan, where the key advocacy role that civil society could play is acknowledged and supported (World Education Forum 2000, GPE 2012). The capacity and articulation of civil societies advocating EFA worldwide is still weak in many countries, reason why, again the CSEF strategy of strengthening civil society coalitions in multiple dimensions (policy, articulation, knowledge, management, etc.) is consistent with the existing problems civil society faces in most countries (*problems d, e*).
- To many CSOs and CSO networks, especially those that are not into service delivery activities, but have a high advocacy profile, the sustainability of their funding is a challenge. Many bilateral donors, governments and international organisations do not see the need to coordinate to support independent and quality advocacy coalitions. Therefore, the CSEF strategy to coordinate donors is necessary to face another of the problems identified (*problem f*).

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<sup>32</sup> Criteria to decide if a link is strong are: good evidence available, strong logic, low risk, and/or wide acceptance. Criteria to decide whether a link is weak are: little evidence available, weak logic, high risk, and/or little agreement among stakeholders.

- Overall, the organisation of a pluri-scalar civil society network - to which the CSEF directly contributes - is consistent with the globalisation of educational politics, in which supra-national actors, such as international organisations and bilateral donors are shaping global education agendas and framing countries' education policy priorities.

## Second relational dimension: Strategy – Middle term goals

In general terms, it can be considered that **medium-term goal 1** –building strong credible NECs- has advanced in those countries that are part of the project, and for this reason we can consider that the strategies (and according primary processes) have been adequate. Specifically, we have observed how all NECs have improved substantially in terms of capacity building and advocacy. They have designed their own context-based strategy that, at the same time, is highly consistent with the global CSEF strategy, and have achieved political recognition. However, the development of capacities in terms of research, training and knowledge management has been much more variable. In some countries the evolution of NECs in this terrain has been quite substantive, and in other countries it has been more modest.

**Medium-term goal 2** – on national funds - has only advanced substantially in one country (Mozambique). The fact that the NCESF component has provoked substantive impact in, at least, one country shows that the idea is feasible. However, further attention needs to be given to the contextual and institutional conditions of project adoption and implementation if the project has to be scaled-up. Among other inconveniences, NECs were expected to implement the NCSEFs component in a relatively short time, which was definitely insufficient for developing such a complex institutional design. Furthermore, NECs would have needed more time to appropriate and adapt the NCSEF component to the very diverse political and economic realities in which they operate. We develop further arguments in this respect below.

In the following table (Table 6.2), we use the *Assumptions A* as the mediating analytical device to explore the relationship between strategy and medium term goals more in-depth. The data we use for the analysis is a combination of the results of the evaluation, evidence retrieved, perceptions of key stakeholders and academic research available.

Table 6.2. Testing assumptions A  
Source: authors

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
A1. Evidence based advocacy is the most strategic way of conducting advocacy campaigns for EFA	
Broad consensus among GCE members about the importance of adopting an evidence based advocacy approach	An excessive focus on evidence based arguments could undermine the key master frame of the GCE ( <i>'education as a human right'</i> )
Research points to a combination of principled beliefs and evidence based arguments as the most strategic way of conducting advocacy (Keck and Sikkink 1999)	Low profile of training initiatives on research, data management and knowledge production within the CSEF  Low level of involvement of local universities and

<p>Many coalitions produce 'education reports' and other research products</p>	<p>scholars in NECs</p>
<p><b>A2. Governments take evidence, media debates and public opinion seriously when it comes to framing education policies and priorities</b></p>	
<p>Media sources are a key instrument to amplify the messages of civil society campaigns and, in this way, to transmit them to public opinion and decision-makers (McAdam 2001).</p> <p>Most NECs try to influence the media for advocacy purposes, and many of them have elaborated a communication plan.</p>	<p>Government ideologies mediate the validity of this assumption. Quite often, the GCE (as well as the int'l donors) has a flat understanding of 'governments' and does not sufficiently adapt its strategies to the different political programmes of governments.</p> <p>In some countries, education is not at the centre of the agenda of the media, which makes it more difficult for NECs to have influence in the media.</p>
<p><b>A3. In a globalised world, civil society politics will be more effective if organised supra-nationally. The regional scale is the most appropriate to organise such a strategy</b></p>	
<p>Education agendas are settled globally (Dale 2005), and the global organisation of civil society is a necessary condition to influence these agendas</p> <p>The GCE develops global awareness campaigns with the potential to reinforce and legitimate local advocacy strategies</p> <p>Efforts to adopt bottom-up and participatory approaches in the context of the CSEF</p>	<p>Global campaigns/strategies do not always fit in the priorities and agendas of national coalitions.</p> <p>Leadership and strategic management have not been sufficiently effective to make both the GCE global awareness campaigns and the CSEF feed off each other.</p> <p>Except for Latin America, CSEF funds have not been used to organise advocacy initiatives of a regional scope</p>
<p><b>A4. Regional organisations have the capacity and resources to support the NECs' primary processes</b></p>	
<p>Regional coalitions have a long tradition and experienced staff in capacity matters (especially ASPBAE and CLADE)</p> <p>Regional coalitions have played an active role in capacity building activities related to advocacy (especially budget tracking)</p> <p>They have played an active role when it comes to promoting mutual learning based on NECs' experiences (at the regional level)</p>	<p>Knowledge exchange at the advocacy level have not cross-fertilised beyond regions</p> <p>Regional coalitions perceived as donors by many NECs instead of as political partners. This is something that may undermine the support of RC of NECs' primary processes.</p>
<p><b>A5. To become credible interlocutors, NECs need to be as inclusive and broad as possible, with special attention to the participation of teachers' unions and women</b></p>	
<p>Most coalitions have widened their membership and their territorial scope with the CSEF resources (and, by doing so, have decentralised the coalition and expanded the network beyond their country's capital)</p> <p>Most coalitions have established clearer rules of the game, democratic decision-making procedures and carried out more internal meetings</p> <p>An increasing number of teachers' unions are involved in NECs and, in some cases, are even taking key responsibilities within the coalition</p>	<p>Growth of NECs has not always been sustainable and has brought destabilisation to some coalitions (there is a fragile equilibrium between membership expansion and internal cohesion)</p> <p>The participation of women's movement organisations is still a challenge in most NECs. There is no gender mainstreaming approach within the CSEF.</p> <p>Relationship between teachers' unions and NGOs is not an easy one due to: a. misunderstandings on the political weight teachers' unions should have within the NEC; b. lack of tuning of agendas and priorities; c. lack of tuning of approaches to advocacy (unions being more confrontational and NGOs more pro-dialogue) (Verger)</p>

	<p>and Novelli 2012; country reports in this evaluation).</p> <p>Internal communication problems due to the difficulty of some NEC coordinators in spreading up-to-date information to all the members</p>
<p><b>A6. Capacity building and an effective use of resources (human, technical, knowledge and methodological) enhances the credibility of CSOs</b></p>	
<p>The CSEF has contributed to building new advocacy coalitions in countries where this type of actor did not exist before</p> <p>Most NECs have become credible political actors and are highly present in governmental and donor-driven consultative bodies</p>	<p>When the CSEF started, NECs had low managerial skills and lack of a M&amp;E culture</p>
<p><b>A7. Global and regional organisations have the capacity and resources to support the NECs at the management level (support processes)</b></p>	
<p>FMAAs have worked intensively in building the financial management capacities of NECs</p> <p>Needs at the managerial level were assessed and a Capacity Support Plan (CSP) was designed and – to a great extent - executed</p> <p>Many of the communication problems between the three regional agencies have been addressed via coordination committees (or ad hoc mechanisms)</p>	<p>Absence of a HR plan when the project started. Turnover of managerial positions at all scales (global, national and regional), especially at the last stage of the project</p> <p>Communication and coordination problems between the three regional agencies were common</p> <p>Risk of conflicts of interest and confusion of functions due to duplication of roles by the same persons</p> <p>Regional FMAAs have not communicated between themselves globally</p> <p>The adoption of a CSP was a response to donor demands rather than a result of internal reflexivity.</p> <p>M&amp;E implementation was not sufficiently harmonised and the levels of precision and understanding of key concepts in the reporting was very diverse. The three steps included in the 'CSEF M&amp;E Plan' did not feed each other sufficiently.</p>
<p><b>A8. Nationally coordinated funds will allow CSOs to be better informed, to organise and align more effectively and carry out advocacy work more independently</b></p>	
<p>[This assumption cannot be empirically tested yet]</p> <p>The implementation of NCSEFs has the potential to overcome project-like funding modalities that usually bring coalitions out of their strategic focus.</p>	<p>Several internal and external sources of resistance to the NCSEF idea have been identified (Kamera 2010)</p>

### Third relational dimension: strategy/medium-term goals – long-term goals

In this section, the relationship between the strategy/medium-term and the long-term goals is analysed by testing the intermediate assumptions (Assumptions B). The long term-goals in the CSEF ToC consist in the achievement of the 'EFA goals', with a focus on the countries where the CSEF project is being implemented.

2015 is the deadline for most of the Education for All (EFA) goals and, even when we are getting very close to this date, many countries in the world are still far behind from their achievement. In fact, as stated in the last EFA Global Monitoring Report, “progress towards many of the goals is slowing down, and most EFA goals are unlikely to be met” (UNESCO 2012: 34). However, it also needs to be acknowledged that, at the same time, a lot of advances have been produced in this terrain in the last decade:

The number of children out of school is falling, gender gaps are narrowing and more children are moving from primary school to secondary education and beyond. Some of the world’s poorest countries have registered impressive gains, demonstrating that low income is not an automatic barrier to accelerated progress. (UNESCO 2011, p. 4)

Since its inception, civil society has been a key partner in the global EFA action framework and, consequently, it can be considered that it has made an important contribution to the (more-or-less modest) progress towards the achievement of most of the goals. Nevertheless, as we have insisted in this report, it is not easy to attribute causality to particular civil society groups and/or actions in this terrain. Such an attribution of causality is even more difficult to establish when analysing particular projects like the CSEF that, even when they have mobilized an important number of resources on a large scale, have been implemented in a very short period.

Thus, in analysing the relationship between medium-term and long-term goals of the CSEF, the level of attribution of the project needs to be seen as lower than in relation to the type of relations explored above. Here, our analysis focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of Assumptions B (see Table 6.3), which, to a great extent, focus on the conditions that may enhance or hinder the CSEF strategy in achieving its long-term goals. As in the previous section, the data we use for the analysis is a combination of the results of the evaluation, evidence retrieved, perceptions of key stakeholders and academic research, when available.

Table 6.3. Testing B Assumptions  
Source: authors

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<b>B1. Favourable political environment conducive to policy reforms, transparency and accountability</b>	
<p>Most coalitions operate in contexts where laws on freedom of association have been enacted</p> <p>Several NECs have contributed to the introduction of policy changes even in political contexts that were not apparently favourable</p>	
<b>B2. National Education Plans and Local Education Groups are key policy instruments when it comes to the development of the EFA goals at the country level</b>	
<p>Most NECs are part of their country’s LEG.</p> <p>The CSEF has become a platform to inform NECs about GPE related processes and to make them</p>	<p>In many countries LEGs are not yet central actors or spaces in national educational politics.</p> <p>In several LEGs, NECs are not the main voice</p>

more aware about the importance of getting involved in them	representing civil society concerns and proposals
<b>B3. Tracking governments' education budgets is an effective way to avoid financial mismanagement by government agencies</b>	
<p>Most NECs have received training on budget tracking and many of them have implemented budget tracking mechanisms (especially in Africa)</p> <p>Via budget tracking, several NECs have detected financial mismanagement of education budgets by the Ministry and guaranteed that public funding reaches the most needed areas</p>	<p>For budget tracking to become effective, it needs to operate at the district and school levels. In most countries, such a level of decentralisation in budget tracking initiatives has not happened due to the fact that most activities of NECs are still highly centralised in the capital.</p>
<b>B4. Political space and recognition influence governmental behaviours/decision-making</b>	
<p>Most case studies document the achievement of political impact by NECs in terms of educational reform and legislative change in the period in which the CSEF has been implemented</p> <p>Many governments, which traditionally perceived civil society as an obstacle for policy-making, now conceive NECs as partners in education policy processes</p>	<p>Risk of co-optation and attenuation of confrontational action repertoires that in some political contexts may be necessary, and even more effective than dialogue (Giugni et al. 1999)</p>
<b>B.5. Getting more resources (and their effective management) is a necessary condition for NECs becoming credible interlocutors in education policy related debates at a range of scales (global, regional and national).</b>	
<p>In most coalitions, the CSEF grant represents more than 50% of the total budget (see Table 5.3)</p> <p>In most countries, the CSEF has had a clear impact in reinforcing the visibility of NECs in society and their political recognition by governments and other stakeholders</p> <p>In most cases, managerial challenges have been addressed via effective control mechanisms and a capacity building strategy</p>	<p>When the CSEF is too central in NECs' finances, it can generate economic dependence</p> <p>Not all regional organisations have taken advantage of the CSEF to raise their advocacy strategy at the regional level</p> <p>Increasing funding has generated management challenges and, occasionally, confronted mismanagement issues</p>
<b>B6a. Donors would be more effective if they coordinated better at the country level. They are willing to enhance their coordination within the education sector by supporting National CSEF (or related mechanisms) and hence use their resources more effectively</b>	
<p>Some donors have championed the NCSEF initiative in countries like Mozambique</p> <p>The NCSEF initiative directly engages with some of the core principles of the Paris Declaration (aid coordination, ownership, harmonisation), which have been embraced by most international donors</p>	<p>In several countries where the CSEF operates, donors have supported other civil society funds and are not willing to duplicate</p> <p>A needs assessment was not done before the project was designed to find out about donor coordination in different contexts</p> <p>Private/corporate donors are not very willing to provide budget support because they usually need to associate their brand to aid flows (Van Fleet 2012).</p> <p>Most donors have so far demonstrated low commitment to making the necessary changes to adapt aid delivery to the Paris Declaration principles (Woods et al 2012)</p>
<b>B6b. If funds like the NCSEF were created, CSOs would be able to catalyse much more support for their advocacy tasks</b>	

<p>Increasing and upward trend in the NECs' capacities to mobilise resources has been identified</p> <p>CSEF funds have raised the credibility of NECs and their capacity to attract other funds and new partners</p> <p>A NCSEF could help to harmonise funding procedures, and to introduce efficiency gains in M&amp;E</p>	<p>Since the NCSEF could not be implemented, this assumption cannot be assessed empirically.</p> <p>The planned pilot experiences could not be developed</p> <p>Some NECs feel that a single fund could have the opposite effect: a lower level of resources available in aggregate terms</p>
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### 6.3. Recommendations

As seen in the analysis presented above, the CSEF theory of change, in the way it has been conceived and brought into practice, has numerous strengths. These strengths have contributed to important progress in the achievement of the CSEF project goals and, more indirectly, to the advancement of the EFA goals in many countries. However, several weaknesses in the way the CSEF has been constructed and executed have also been identified (see Tables 6.2. and 6.3). The following recommendations are an attempt to address some of these weaknesses in an eventual second stage of the project (CSEF II).

The recommendations are organised according to the main themes covered in this evaluation: strategy, national funds, institutional setting, human resources management, gender approach, M&E, financial management, learning, and processes at the country level.

#### Strategy

*Fitting global and national strategies together.* When combining the CSEF with other global awareness campaigns also promoted by the GCE (like the GAW or the 1Goal), leadership and management need to be strong to guarantee the consistency of the two approaches. The GCE board and secretariat need to make sure that the international campaigns feed the locally defined strategies of NECs (instead of interfering with them) and that the international campaigns do not absorb excessive capacity of the secretariat so that it is able to effectively support the primary processes carried out at the national level in the context of the CSEF.

*Bottom-up approach.* The CSEF should contribute to developing and strengthening a bottom-up approach within the GCE. The CSEF needs to be flexible enough to allow for different project re-contextualisations based on the variety of local realities in which the GCE operates, and the trajectory, capacities and strategies of the coalitions that are engaging with the programme. Thus, the value of the CSEF depends on its level of adaptation to the needs and strategies of the GCE members. To make this possible, a proper inception phase for the development of



the national projects should be guaranteed.<sup>33</sup> Adopting a bottom-up approach is compatible with – and actually requires – the adoption of strong leadership from the centre of the programme.

*Regional advocacy.* CSEF II should think about the regional as a political space and, accordingly, guarantee sufficient resources to allow regional coalitions to develop and carry out advocacy initiatives at the regional scale.

*CSEF opportunities for all.* To avoid the exclusion of GCE members from funding opportunities and generating tensions within the GCE network, ideally, non GPE-eligible countries should be able to benefit from CSEF II. If GPE rules do not allow this possibility, compensation mechanisms should be explored. The Latin American experience shows that regional organisations may be very effective in attracting donors to fund NECs in countries with an intermediate level of human development.

*Time availability.* Time has been one of the main constraints in the development of the CSEF project. The parties involved in CSEF II would benefit from having more inception and execution time in the development of such an ambitious and pluriscalar project modality. A funding cycle of around four years would allow for predictability, better planning (at all levels: human resources, capacity development, advocacy, research, etc.) and higher levels of institutional learning. It would also contribute to counteracting problems like human resources turnover and the prevailing rush at the time of developing the most complex components of the project, such as the NCSEF one.

## **National funds**

The NCSEF idea has the potential to promote the adoption and development of more sustainable advocacy strategies in the context of NECS, and to avoid NECs having to implement donor funded projects that so often take them away from their focus. NCSEF could be seen as a process for “pressing” donors to finance civil society under ‘budget support’ modalities and harmonising M&E frameworks and requirements.

Actually, NCSEFs have not been implemented widely due to a number of contextual and organisational factors. Contextual particularities really matter here, but difficulties of a more internal nature regarding designing and organising such types of funding have also become apparent. The NCSEF idea could be re-considered in the CSEF II, but should not respond to a blueprint schema. The NCSEF might work in some countries where, for instance, there is room for improvement in donor coordination and might not be taken up in countries in which donors have built another civil society fund – since they will feel they are duplicating efforts. Different funding

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<sup>33</sup> In general, an important inception phase might be strongly considered to be in place if CSEF continues with a second phase. This will allow it to put the learning systematisation and software in place, and also will allow clear common understanding by the NECs on the system and the concepts, through on-line training, visits and, if necessary, in-person seminars.

mechanisms might be considered in countries without a strong presence of international donors. It might also be the case that NCSEFs do not develop into concrete and legalised funds, but instead provide support for consistent fundraising strategies by NECS.

Achieving national CSEFs (or similar funding mechanisms) will require leadership and dedication at global, regional and country level. A NCSEF should be independent and separate from the NECs, to avoid coalitions becoming fund managers and allow for a mechanism that successfully supports civil society and meets the challenges of resource mobilization.

### **Institutional setting**

The CSEF architecture responded to a very new institutional design. It involved the creation of new bodies and committees and the adoption of new roles and functions by many of the agents involved. At the initial stage a lot of energy had to be put into setting up the architecture. With the passage of time, the agents involved learned many lessons from the experience, and communication and cooperation between agencies improved substantially. However, several changes could be introduced to improve the effectiveness and coherence of the CSEF architecture.

*First*, 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. The organisation in charge of the global FMA could be an INGO. However, in case this organisation is directly related to the GCE or to its members (via a funding or membership relationship) clear mechanisms and rules should be in place to guarantee transparency in the procedures and to avoid conflicts of interest emerging.

*Second*, financial reports and narrative reports should be better coordinated. The M&E system should be much more simplified since this is something that would liberate the CSEF secretariat to focus on programmatic work. At the same time, the M&E system should not only aim at external reporting, but also at internal learning and exchange. By introducing these changes in the M&E approach, the tasks of the regional CSEF secretariat would be more consistent with the tasks of the Regional Coalition (which focuses on programmatic and strategic aspects of coalition building and EFA advocacy). We develop this point further in the M&E section below.

*Third*, the Funding Committee would benefit from being predominantly – and, preferably, completely - composed by external and independent persons. By doing so, there would be fewer chances that NECs confuse the role of regional coalitions with that of a donor agency, and power relations between the regional and national organisations would be altered. The CSEF regional secretariat should attend the FC meetings to provide information and support to the Committee members and to make sure that their recommendations are effectively transmitted to the NECs. However, the regional secretariat members should not take decisions concerning which

proposals can be funded or what level of funding they deserve. The FC independent members should receive economic compensation for their participation. By doing so, we would expect that the level of absenteeism of FC members – which was especially high in some of the regions - would diminish, and that they would prepare better for the Committee meetings – for instance, by reading the proposals and other documentation beforehand.

## **Human resources management**

*Strengthening of HR planning.* CSEF II will require a better planning of human resources, to make sure that there are sufficient competent people to cover all the tasks that need to be done, that the capacity gaps at multiple levels are overcome, and that key positions are created and covered on time. Vision and strategic framework on competency requirements and competency development should also be taken into account in HR planning. The experience of the Capacity Support Plan in CSEF I should set the basis of future interventions in this terrain. However, again, sound coordination and leadership are important to make sure that these sorts of plans reach their full potential.

*Facing turnover.* The turnover problem was already present in previous programmes like CEF and RWS, and seems to be a persistent problem for CSOs that operate in different policy fields. A plan or strategy to face the turnover problem should be adopted. Among other measures, equity in labour conditions within the CSEF framework should be guaranteed (i.e. similar salaries for similar job responsibilities).

*Organisational Assessment and Technical Assistance to Grant Management.* An organisational assessment of the different technical needs would help to allocate resources and technical assistance according to the needs of the different contexts where the CSEF is implemented.

## **Gender approach**

In organisational terms, a systematic gender-mainstreaming approach is missing within the GCE/CSEF network. Thus, the CSEF would benefit from the adoption of a more explicit organisational gender approach. Gender power relations need to be understood as embedded and normalised within power structures and power relations. Transforming such embedded relations is often a daunting task. When related to internal and organisational aspects, challenging unequal gender relations needs strong leadership and clear political will. Some examples of gender fair practices are: (a) Eliminating overt and covert biases in hiring, firing and promoting male and female employees; (b) Promoting gender equality in access to opportunities for training, education, participation in decision making; (c) Developing organisational policies and personnel services that address gender issues (i.e. sexual harassment, harmonisation of work and family life, etc.) (d) Sex disaggregation of data (e) Adoption of non-sexist practices (e.g. in language, inter-

personal relations, communication) (f) Empowering parents (mostly, mothers) so that they actively participate in school councils.

## **Monitoring & Evaluation**

*M&E approach.* Ideally, M&E instruments should be sufficiently flexible and adaptable to the needs of the core processes, and this might be the unique way that the different strategies of the organisations could be implemented, consuming the minimum resources. M&E should be a tool for internal learning, reflection and acceleration of positive change, instead of being seen as a burden. But for this to happen, more agile tools need to be designed. A stronger focus on Management for Results (cf *Reuber and Haas 2009*) instead of Project Logframe implementation, could be considered. In the future any fund addressed to engage civil society organisations in education advocacy should endeavour to produce more precise benchmarks of progress in terms of primary processes and expected synergies between them (mostly, between research and advocacy, and capacity, training and innovation).

*Towards a new M&E platform linked to financial management.* Ideally, M&E instruments and reports should be better coordinated with the financial reports. The M&E system should be much more simplified since this is something that would liberate time for the CSEF secretariats (at global, regional and national levels) to focus on programmatic work. At the same time, the M&E system should not only aim at external reporting, but also at internal learning and exchange. This would allow fulfilling the accountability requirements of donors, without consuming as much time as the previous system. This is something that, at the same time, would contribute to improve organisational efficiency and reduce costs. The M&E platform should be user-friendly and, preferably, developed through free software. This ICT tool might be connected with the existing Community Learning/Knowledge platform through some interfaces. By introducing these 'technical' changes in M&E procedures, the tasks of the regional CSEF secretariat would be more consistent with the tasks of the Regional Coalition (which focuses on programmatic and strategic aspects of coalition building and EFA advocacy).

*Planning M&E solutions in advance.* Overcoming accountability issues (including M&E and financial management reporting issues) requires a more proactive direction and guiding process, and the planning of solutions in advance. It is important to plan and identify alternative solutions to disbursement delays, cash-flow problems or lack of financial management capacity at different levels, especially the national one, to make sure that managerial and financial issues do not affect the core processes of CSEF II.

One recommendation in this respect would consist in the M&E and the FMA externally contracting technical support to an organisation with no membership relation (even without a funding relation) with the GCE and their members, to avoid the organisational inconsistencies that appeared with the former FMAs, as well as potential conflicts of interest. We also recommend the constitution of a Collaborative

Team group or Task Force to design the basis for a unified software application to be used for project management and for accounting purposes.

*M&E training.* More intensive training to those that are going to be in charge of M&E procedures at the country level would be needed. Among others, the M&E training should attempt to achieve the following objectives:

- Clarification of concepts (*campaign, advocacy, lobbying, workshop, organization, branch, meeting, etc.*) in order to avoid ambiguity or a wide variety of interpretations depending on the coalition.

- Learning to write for an international audience (especially those reports that are going to be publically available, like the completion reports). This means making explicit what (local) acronyms mean, providing short definitions of the key institutions/organizations that are mentioned, background data on policies and laws, monetary amounts in USD, etc.

- Ensure that NECs have in place the adequate data collection skills to provide the quantitative data required.

During the project cycle, more feedback should be given to reports from central and regional structures to make reporting more consistent and useful for NECs.

*M&E and transparency.* To enhance the transparency of the CSEF II, reports should be made available to the public as soon as their final version is ready. For the same purpose, minutes and key decisions of the Funding Committees would need to be available on a webpage as well.

## **Learning**

GCE should take advantage of being a global network to play a more active support at promoting cross-fertilization of experiences and south-south collaboration. The creation of a Knowledge Platform is a positive step in this direction, but does not automatically lead to effective information and knowledge sharing across different geographical contexts. A clearer focus on what to learn and what to share, as well as a proper assessment of knowledge needs, their applicability and requirements are necessary. As mentioned above, the Knowledge Platform should be more clearly connected to the M&E platform and to the strengthening of learning processes, not only regarding advocacy, but also about organizational and operational issues. Technologies like KARL have the potential to facilitate learning and the exchange of experiences among the CSEF participants in a cost-effective way. However, for these technologies to be appropriated by the participants, they will need active coordination, at least at the initial stages.

The linguistic diversity of the GCE network is also important to take into account when organising learning process. Resources for translation need to be guaranteed.

*M&E and Learning.* The M&E system should not only aim at external reporting, but also at internal learning and exchange. By introducing the changes mentioned above in the M&E approach, the tasks of the regional CSEF secretariat would be more consistent with the tasks of the Regional Coalition (which focuses on programmatic

and strategic aspects of coalition building and EFA advocacy). At the same time, a more clear connection and synergies between core and support processes would be established:

In the context of Theory of Change, core processes are also cooperation and learning processes. In traditional Project Management, a supportive role is normally ascribed to these processes. In TC contexts, projects operate as cooperation networks and are geared toward learning. As well as the output processes designed to achieve the project objectives and results, cooperation processes (moderation of a large number of actors) and learning processes (i.e. capacity development) should therefore also be considered core processes (GTZ, 2009: 177)

## **Supervising entity and the role of the GPE**

The CSEF II will need 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. This entity should engage in virtually every stage of programme development and offer assistance when grants run into difficulties or delays.

The GPE secretariat has not always felt comfortable with the role they had to adopt within the CSEF structure in the past. They wanted to become a proper partner of civil society, but they ended up working as a *de facto* supervisory entity, monitoring progress and providing technical assistance. Within CSEF II, GPE might play a supervisory role at the normative level, but not at the technical one. In other words, in the future, the GPE should engage with the CSEF in a different way: instead of 'one more project' being funded by them, the GPE should incorporate the CSEF into its strategy and, accordingly, into its everyday operations at both the international and country levels. The last GPE strategy plan and, specifically, its 'Strategy to Support Civil Society Participation' represent good steps in this direction (GPE 2012a, GPE 2012c).

## **Processes at the country level**

The experience of the CSEF project at the country level has highlighted an array of issues and challenges that suggest some recommendations:

- In line with the 'budget support' idea that is increasingly accepted by the international aid community, the CSEF should tend to support the strategies of coalitions (instead of requiring coalitions to design 'projects' to be financially supported by the CSEF).
- At the country level, transparency, improvement of labour standards, development of a strategy for communication, widening the approach to gender issues, and accurate M&E are likely to contribute to the sustainability of NECs over time. On the one hand, transparent management, effective communication, a subtle gender approach which is aware of participation at the local level, and a clearer M&E scheme may underpin public trust in the

NEC, and conversely, any shortcoming in these processes may compromise its future. On the other hand, more satisfied human resources are necessary so that current improvements eventually become institutionalised.

- To strengthen their research capacity, NECs should consider the inclusion or establishment of more stable partnerships with local scholars and universities. To do so in a more organic way, they may consider introducing higher education themes into the coalitions' agendas, even when they are not directly related to the EFA goals.
- *Beyond resource related demands.* In the poorest countries, demanding more resources is a necessary condition to achieve the EFA goals. However, the EFA programme also opens up several debates on education policy reform, which are very political and contentious in nature, such as: What are the key policies that can contribute to the EFA goals? How should teachers be trained and what should their professional status be? How can education equity and quality at a large scale be promoted at the same time? Should low-cost fee schools be considered an ally or an obstacle for quality education for all? Through the development of the research and knowledge management capacities of civil society that CSEF II should aim for, NECs may be better able to engage in these types of education policy debates.
- *Overcoming donor dependency.* The GCE and their members need to continue putting pressure on the donor community to fulfil their international commitments within the EFA action framework. However, the global financial crisis, which is contributing to decline in donors' educational spending, is forcing NECs to engage in debates on alternative forms of education funding, such as debt conversion development bonds, the Tobin tax or diaspora bonds. Alliances with (global) tax justice movements and demands related to progressive tax reforms can contribute to generating the necessary resources to finance EFA from both exogenous and endogenous sources.

#### 6.4. Closing words

The CSEF programme has contributed to building stronger and more credible NECs in most countries that are part of the programme. Specifically, we have observed how NECs have improved substantially in terms of capacity building and advocacy, and have been able to design their own context-based strategies that, to a great extent, are highly consistent with the global CSEF strategy. Furthermore, to a greater or lesser extent, coalitions have achieved political recognition in the contexts in which they operate. The development of capacities in terms of research and knowledge management has been much more modest.

The CSEF project was better designed at the level of core processes (budget tracking, advocacy, etc.) than in terms of support processes (finance, human resources management, M&E, etc.). This meant that several managerial issues that emerged while the project was being developed had to be solved *ad hoc*. Time constraints, uncertainty with the future of the programme and delays in funding delivery marked the trajectory of the project and, to some extent, the level of

achievement of its goals.

The institutional setting designed by the CSEF is sophisticated and could be set up in a relatively short time, despite the unfavourable circumstances just mentioned. The institutional design raised a set of principal-agent and coordination problems, many of which could be addressed during the project cycle through the proactive role and leadership of the regional organisations. However, even then, these problems blurred the efforts to steer the whole organisation towards common objectives, especially in relation to those objectives that were more ambitious in nature, like the establishment of national civil society funds.

As this evaluation shows, the CSEF has contributed to civil society networks becoming key political agents in educational debates and has actively worked for the realisation of the right to 'education for all', effecting significant national policy change in many world locations. However, the contribution of civil society to the EFA action framework should not be seen only in terms of aid effectiveness. Well-articulated and competent civil society networks can contribute to advance the EFA goals, as well as to the democratisation of education politics at different levels. In relation to the latter, the CSEF has opened spaces for civil society organisations and individual citizens to have a say in education and to hold their governments to account.

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, simplifying the (supra-national) institutional setting, promoting further education policy debate, international exchange and learning, and providing core financial support to NECs' strategies.



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## APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY. MAIN DIMENSIONS, DATA SOURCES AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

VARIABLE	SOURCE	INDICATOR / INTERVIEW QUESTION
<b>CONTEXT<sup>34</sup></b>		
Openness of gov't	Literature Key informant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attitude towards civil society participation (not only in education)</li> </ul>
Civil society tradition	Literature Key informant Map of actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief story of CSOs in the country</li> <li>Dependence towards international donors</li> </ul>
Government ideas on education	Media Key informant National Education Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progressive, neoliberal, education as key for social cohesion, education for economic competitiveness?</li> </ul>
Legal framework on RTE	Key informant Countries Min of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is free education guaranteed by the state?</li> </ul>
Education indicators	UNESCO World Bank SACMEQ (Africa) Global Monitoring Report Countries Min of Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expenditure (as % of GDP)</li> <li>Access rate</li> <li>Dropouts rate</li> <li>Gender parity</li> <li>Public/private provision</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ol>
Public opinion - Education in the public sphere - Perception of public education	Media data bases Key informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Nature and centrality of the media debate on education</u></li> </ul>
<b>INSTITUTIONAL SETTING</b>		
Leadership & Governance		
Strategy & Vision		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Was there a national coalition before the CSEF started to operate in your country?</u></li> <li><u>Which was its strategy and vision?</u></li> <li><u>What was the role of the members of the NCE in the Strategy Development, who was leading it? Did it change with the CSEF? (*)</u></li> <li><u>How did the role and leadership of the NEC members evolve in relation with the strategy development during CSEF?</u></li> <li>What are the strategic objectives of your CSEF project?</li> </ul>

<sup>34</sup> Since the bulk of the relevant information will be obtained from secondary sources, it is not necessary to list particular questions on this topic. But it is important to remind that the reports on each issue should portray a short historical account of the last decades.

Management Capacity and Leadership	Interview NEC Interview key informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>What are the priorities in your strategy? (in other words, what is your main agenda?)</u></li> <li>• <u>Has the NEC compiled them in a document? (*)</u></li> <li>• <u>What actions does it carry out in order to meet these priority setting? (*)</u></li> <li>• <u>How does your organisation publicise the accomplishment of your priorities? (*)</u></li> <li>• <u>Is there a coherence between what you said, think, do and present in relation with priorities and accomplishments?</u></li> </ul>
<b>Partnership &amp; Alliances (Internal &amp; external)</b>		
Alliances	Interview NEC Interview key informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>What are your allies outside the NEC members?</u></li> <li>• <u>Has the CSEF contributed to building new alliances? How?</u></li> </ul>
Membership	Interview NEC Interview key informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Who were the original members of the national coalition?</u></li> <li>• <u>Has been any changes in NEC's membership during the CSEF?</u></li> <li>• <u>Which is the (territorial, ethnic, religious, political or other) scope of this coalition? To what extent does it include all the social groups who are present in the country?</u></li> <li>• <u>Are there some potential appropriate education stakeholders who are still out of the coalition at the moment? In other words, are key organisations missing?</u></li> <li>• <u>What would be the perspective of getting these outsiders in?</u></li> <li>• <u>What is the leverage and the value added of the coalition?</u></li> </ul>
Internal cohesion	Interview NEC Interview key informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>How would you define the relationship between the coalition members?</u></li> <li>• <u>Has the CSEF altered the relations between members? If so, in which way?</u></li> <li>• <u>Do you think all members have the same voice within the coalition?</u></li> <li>• <u>What mechanisms are there to guarantee internal democracy within the coalition? Has the CSEF contributed to think about this aspect?</u></li> <li>• <u>What is the relation of teachers unions and NGOs in the context of the coalition?</u></li> </ul>

		Has it changed somehow with the CSEF?
<b>PROCESSES</b>		
Primary Processes		
Advocacy (Articulation of demands)	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Advocacy project NEC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have an advocacy agenda and plan?</li> <li>• What kind of advocacy methods have you used? (Bilateral initiatives, private negotiations, media relationships, parliamentary “advice” ...)</li> </ul>
Capacity building of NEC	Interview NEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would you do differently if you could start again with the CSEF? (To key informants: What the NEC should do differently in the near future in case new Funds come from the GEP?)</li> </ul>
Training initiatives	Advocacy project Completion report Interview NEC Courses documentation NEC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the training initiatives open? Who decided who was going to participate and under which criteria?</li> <li>• Who were in charge of organizing/training the courses (people/organizations within the NEC)?</li> <li>• How were the subjects/topics of the training established? (Or Why did you choose those topics?) (in relation to needs assessment)</li> <li>• Do these trainings belong to a broader training/capacity building strategy? Is it explicit (written)</li> </ul>
Research (surveys, Data management and diagnoses)	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Advocacy project NEC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you do it (analyzing secondary data, surveys, interviews, participatory processes...)?</li> <li>• How did the process of accessing national data function? (Access, openness, transparency of information)</li> <li>• How did knowledge building contribute to the process (relationship between actors; conflicts; empowerment...)?</li> </ul>
Financial Management		

Resources	Annual reports Interview NEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has been the evolution of the budget since the NEC exists? What about the evolution of human resources (staff)?</li> <li>• What has been the contribution of CSEF to budget/human resources? (if possible, in % of the total)</li> <li>• Which of the outputs, activities were partially or totally funded by the CSEF?</li> </ul>
Financial Management	Annual reports Interview NEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you consider that there are adequate financial systems in place? Why?</li> <li>• Was the time spent on funding agreements and disbursements efficient?</li> <li>• Any deficiencies therein?</li> <li>• Any cash-flow problem?</li> <li>• Do the resources correspond to the outputs to be provided?</li> <li>• Constraints and risks related with the type of funding</li> <li>• Are check and balances adequate?</li> <li>• What about corrective measures (e.g. on inadequate reporting, fraud?)</li> <li>• Were financial budgets, profit and loss statements well communicated and financial information shared within the members of GCE and the Regional Coalitions?</li> <li>• Is the funding volume, frequency and disbursement and structure (relates to type of funds) conducive for efficient strengthening the various organizational bodies and implementation of the programmes?</li> </ul>

Human Resources Management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the staff of your organisation well qualified and with the needed competences when CSEF started in the country? Did its qualification/ competences improved with the CSEF?</li> <li>• Does this staff perform well?</li> <li>• Is there a team? How does it perform as a team? How does the commissions/ work groups perform?</li> <li>• How would you describe the relationship between Staff and Board at GCE and Regional Secretariat in relation with CSEF?</li> <li>• Were there constraints for the stimulation and investment in professional growth?</li> </ul>
Gender	Annual reports Interview NEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is women participation promoted within the NEC?</li> <li>• Did the CSEF contribute to improve the 'gender perspective' within the coalition work and strategy?</li> <li>• Have you detected a higher level of involvement of women thanks to CSEF?</li> </ul>
Monitoring & Evaluation	Annual reports Interview NEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there M&amp;E Systems at place?</li> <li>• What are the strengths and weaknesses of the M&amp;E in place?</li> <li>• Does your budget include staff time and resources for monitoring and evaluating the impact of your work?</li> <li>• What additional support would you need to strengthen your M&amp;E?</li> </ul>
Communication (internal & external)	Communication plan Interview NEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you normally do in order to communicate your message (e.g. disseminate your activities, influence the public opinion, inform your members of the campaign's goals)</li> <li>• Did you have a communication strategy/plan when CSEF started?</li> <li>• If not, did the CSEF contributed to get one?</li> <li>• If yes, did the CSEF contributed to improve it?</li> </ul>
Regional coordination	Interview NEC Interview regional bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe your relation with the regional organization (CLADE, ANCEFA or ASPBAE)?</li> <li>• Did you receive sufficient support from the regional bodies to manage the CSEF projects? Which type of support did you receive?</li> <li>• In the context of the CSEF organization, was it clear the differentiation of roles between the finance agency, the CSEF secretariat and the funding committee to you?</li> <li>• In terms of the relationship with the regional bodies, which are the things that should be improved in the future?</li> </ul>
<b><i>OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES (structure, embedded in previous section)</i></b>		
Main outputs		
Training initiatives	Advocacy project Completion report Interview NEC Courses documentation NEC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many (and when) training initiatives have you undertaken during the period?</li> <li>• How many participants (male/female) and who attended the trainings?</li> <li>• Who was in charge of organizing/training the courses (people/organizations within the NEC)?</li> <li>• What kind of subjects/topics have the trainings dealt with?</li> <li>• Do these trainings belong to a broader training/capacity building strategy? Is it explicit (written)?</li> </ul>



Research (surveys, Data management and diagnoses)	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Advocacy project NEC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you elaborate diagnoses to support your strategies?</li> <li>• Researcher's evaluation of access, openness, transparency of information as regards as NEC documentation.</li> </ul>
Campaigns	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Advocacy project NEC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What, how and when</li> </ul>
Budget tracking and Monitoring of Government Education	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Advocacy project NEC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What, how and when</li> </ul>
Knowledge management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take into account the dimensions, how did you reinforce each of them): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Absorption of Knowledge</li> <li>○ Sharing</li> <li>○ Synthesis</li> <li>○ Application</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Key Results</b>		
Capacity building of NEC	Interview NEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would you do differently if you could start again with the CSEF? (to key informants: What the NEC should do differently in the near future in case new Funds come from the GEP?)</li> </ul>
Advocacy (Articulation of demands)	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Advocacy project NEC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the government bodies' position towards your agenda been evolving through time?</li> <li>• Are NEC actors being considered as legitimate actors?</li> </ul>
Learning & Innovation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any material created in relation to the trainings? Is it accessible?</li> <li>• What have you learnt?</li> <li>• What are the impacts of the training initiatives on the NEC? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you identify new training challenges, topics, needs to be addressed?</li> <li>- Are the diagnoses done documented?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have you systematized your approach and experience towards data gathering and diagnosis?</li> <li>• What are in your opinion the main results and constraints related with Learning and Innovation within CSEF?</li> </ul>
Recognition	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Completion report Press releases Media report of the NEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in different bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ LEGs</li> <li>○ PRSPs</li> <li>○ Consultation processes led by the MoE and other governmental bodies</li> <li>○ Parliament</li> <li>○ Technical assistance to gov't</li> <li>○ Visibility in the media</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How do you value your contribution in these bodies?</li> </ul>

Substantive outcomes (impact)	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Completion report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What have been the top 3 achievements of the NEC since the CSEF was put in place?</li> <li>• Have you influenced government decisions in terms of education budget allocation? Level of financing? Teacher salaries? Capitation grants? Etc.</li> <li>• Have you contributed to frame new education policies?</li> <li>• Have you contributed to improve accountability?</li> <li>• Have you contributed to the introduction of legislative changes in the education sector? And in law implementation? (NOTE: sometimes, good laws are already there but are not implemented)</li> <li>• Have you influenced agenda setting processes? In relation to which themes (especial education, gender, TVET, adult education, minorities/bilingual education)</li> <li>• How can you make sure that all these effects have been a consequence of your advocacy work?</li> </ul>
Women empowerment/participation within NECs	Interview NEC Interview stakeholders Completion report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you implemented projects about gender? Have you implemented projects with a gender perspective?</li> <li>• How have you empowered the role of women in the country's education sector?</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 2: STATE OF THE ART IN 45 COUNTRIES – DOCUMENTS COMPILATION AND SYNTHESIS

Download data-base [from here](#)