Driving the bus:

The journey of national education coalitions

Disclaimer

The descriptions of coalitions provided in this report are based on the data available to the research team, and are a snapshot of certain coalitions at a particular point in their development. Coalitions change, and thus what is true of a coalition described here at the time of writing may have changed by the time the report is read. These case studies should therefore be taken as illustrations of possible scenarios, rather than the permanent state of any given coalition. Equally this report is not a comprehensive survey of all education coalitions; rather it uses the examples available to the research team.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
CBO	Community-based organisation
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSO	Civil society organisation
DBS	Direct budget support
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
FDC	Foundation for Community Development

GWA	Global Week of Action
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RWS	Real World Strategies
UN	United Nations

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Coalitions discussed

ANCEFA	Africa Network Campaign on Education for All
ASPBAE	Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education
BEC	Basic Education Coalition (USA)
	Bo District Education Network (Sri Lanka)
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education (Bangladesh)
CEForum	Campaign for Education Forum (Lesotho)
CEFAN	Cameroon Education for All Network
CSACEFA	Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (Nigeria)
CSCQBE	Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (Malawi)
EFA	Education for All
EFASL	EFA Coalition Sierra Leone
EYC	Elimu Yetu Campaign Coalition (Kenya)
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FENU	Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda
	Gambia EFA Campaign Partners Network
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
G/NAQBE	Government/NGO Alliance on Quality Basic Education (Malawi)

GNECC	Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
HRDN	Human Rights Development Network (Pakistan)
INEE	Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies
	Lesotho Association of Non-Formal Education
MEPT	Movimento de Educação Para Todos (Mozambique)
NCED	National Coalition for Educational Development (Sri Lanka)
NNED	Northern Network for Education and Development (Ghana)
PCE	Pakistan Coalition for Education (Pakistan)
	PeaceNet, Kenya NGO Council
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal Network (Pakistan)
TEN/MET	Tanzania Education Network/Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania
WAF	Women's Action Forum (Pakistan)
ZANEC	Zambia National Education Coalition

Driving the bus: a toolkit for thinking about coalitions

Driving the Bus: The Journey of National Education Coalitions is a toolkit for reflection and analysis for use by anyone involved in or supporting a coalition. It is based on research carried out in 17 countries in Africa, Asia and the UK for the Commonwealth Education Fund (a fund established by the British government, co-managed by Save the Children, Oxfam GB and ActionAid, with a focus on establishing and supporting civil society education coalitions). It draws on examples of coalitions – most working in education – to illustrate possible answers to strategic questions that can be posed of a coalition, to help understand why it operates as it does, and what might be done to improve its functioning.

The booklet uses a bus as a metaphor for a coalition, as an image to bear in mind when examining where any particular coalition has come from and where it is going to. The bus is the coalition, the passengers are its members, the road is filled with other people or organisations working towards Education for All (EFA)[1], and the destination is what the coalition is trying to achieve.

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[1] International discussions in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 led to the establishment of the Education for All (EFA) targets, with a commitment to greater access, equity and quality in basic education, and to mobilise resources to enable this to happen. For more information on the history of education advocacy please see Chapter 2 of the companion report, *Funding Change: Sustaining Civil Society Advocacy in Education* (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007).

A bus is used for carrying passengers to a set destination. Relying to some extent on the skill of the driver, the bus negotiates holes in the road and wandering livestock, but sometimes also uses well-paved roads. It travels alongside other vehicles heading in the same direction, some of which may stop and help if the bus breaks down.

A coalition is like a vehicle too; it is used by its members to reach a particular goal. Assisted by those who lead it (such as a board or secretariat), members negotiate strategic plans and undertake advocacy activities in working towards that goal. Sometimes the experience is made easier by enthusiastic support from communities or sympathetic government officials. A coalition does not work alone though; it operates alongside other networks and civil society organisations (CSOs), government, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and donors. These actors can hinder or support the coalition in differing ways, some of them paying for coalition activities or staff salaries.

Defining a coalition as 'a group of organisations that come together to work towards a common goal', enabling members to speak with a stronger voice, the toolkit regards coalitions as advocacy vehicles. Within education advocacy, the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 acted as an important bus factory, with international stimuli (both donor interests and international NGO action) leading to the establishment of multiple national education coalitions. In considering the extent to which international and national stimuli have affected the development of the coalition, and the formal or informal structure through which it works, coalitions may situate themselves within a typology of coalitions, and consider where they might wish to be placed in the future.

As with buses, coalitions need to have a clear idea of where they are going, as well as the activities they need to undertake in order to reach their destination. Too often, it seems, national education coalitions work with very broad aims that are difficult to achieve, and plan activities that their members do not have the skills to undertake. Just as coalitions need achievable goals, so they need to be coordinated by a competent, but not overbearing driver, indicating that secretariats have a vital but particular role to play, in representing rather than acting for their members.

Who pays for the journey is a delicate subject, as debates about money often are. It is clear that coalition buses cannot survive on members' payment for tickets alone, even where they do contribute. But international funding can, if not carefully managed, influence the coalition's agenda, creating dependency and even distorting the purpose of the coalition by making it into a grant-manager goods truck rather than a bus travelling towards a destination that its members have agreed upon. One solution to these problems is to encourage the establishment of Civil Society Education Funds (CSEFs) to provide a nationally-managed conduit for funds to CSOs, and thus relieve coalitions of their grant management baggage.

Coalitions do not travel the road to social change alone, and the other vehicles on the same path can help and hinder their progress. Funders, governments, INGOs and other networks engage with coalitions in particular ways. If managed with care, these relationships can be mutually beneficial and help everyone progress further along the road, negotiating the road blocks and straying livestock or other hazards that inevitably affect any bus journey, and helping the coalition to find and stay on well-paved roads.

While coalition buses do not always travel in a direction that satisfies everyone or take the easiest route, this toolkit recognises that, although some buses might break down, most achieve successes along the way. Signposts, in the form of strategic critical questions, are provided to help coalitions travel along the road to their destination, and to develop their own specific and detailed maps.

1 Introduction

This booklet is intended as a tool for reflection and analysis for anyone involved in or supporting a national coalition, or wanting to get involved in one, either in education or other sectors. It is written around a set of strategic questions that help to identify what is happening within a coalition, what might not be working well and how this might be corrected. It provides evidence-based possible answers to these questions, using examples of coalitions examined during a 17-country research project in Africa, Asia and the UK.[2]

The research, which was carried out for the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), examined nationally appropriate ways to sustain funding for CSOs working in education advocacy, as well as the experience of building and supporting coalitions. The research team conducted 529 interviews with individuals from governments, donors, INGOs, national NGOs and CSOs, as well as the private sector, the UN, funds and foundations. Focus groups were also conducted with coalition members, and structured observations carried out in coalition meetings. In each country the researcher produced a national report on sustainable funding for civil society advocacy in education and most wrote a case study of a coalition in their respective countries.[3] Not all of the coalitions examined during the research were national education coalitions; and the questions arising regarding coalitions are of value beyond education.

The UK team conducted a review of literature[4] about coalitions. Notably this found only two documents that addressed the formation and management of national coalitions directly: Building and Maintaining Networks and Coalitions (2005), produced by PACT Tanzania,

which is intended as a 'how-to guide' for setting up coalitions for different purposes and The Rise and Pitfalls of Civil Society Networks in Malawi (2006), produced by INTRAC. The remaining relevant literature addressed national coalitions indirectly, either as one part of a wider strategy of capacity building for policy advocacy (Blagescu and Young, 2006); as case studies among other examples of how CSO organisations have influenced World Bank projects and policies (Brown and Fox, 2000); as one outcome

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[2] Research was conducted in the UK, where the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) Secretariat is based, as well as in the countries where CEF operates: Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Although the research was limited to these countries, there are interesting experiences in other regions, including Latin America and the Caribbean.

[3] The national reports fed into an international report on sustainable funding: Funding Change: Sustaining Civil Society Advocacy in Education (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007).

[4] For details on databases searched, please see the companion report to this document (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007). Keywords for the searches were civil society coalitions, civil society partnerships, civil society alliances, civil society networks.

of the interplay between national and global contexts that influence CSO performance in the south (Hakkarainen et al., 2002); as one manifestation of the role that national NGOs adopt in the interplay between the state, donors and civil society for the provision of basic education services (Miller-Grandvaux et al., 2002); or as one aspect of a wider move towards democratisation and the influence of foreign aid in Africa (Robinson and Friedman, 2005). Thus the literature on national coalitions is slim but growing. It also positions this document as, seemingly, the only resource to date that considers coalition building and management based on a broad range of country experiences and a wide range of respondents' views.

Coalitions only emerge in certain contexts, and without an understanding of how groups have negotiated these contexts in practice, and the roles of the other vehicles on the Education for All (EFA) road, lists of criteria for building a good coalition are of limited use. This report uses the examples of existing coalitions [5] in and outside education to provide possible answers to the questions that need to be asked when developing or supporting a coalition. Each chapter starts with questions arising from the text that may be used by those involved with coalitions to understand how the coalition operates and what might be hindering its potential.

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[5] It must be recognised that the descriptions of coalitions provided in this report are based on the data available to the research team, and are a snapshot of certain coalitions at a particular point in their development. Coalitions change, and thus what is true of a coalition described here at the time of writing may have changed by the time the report is read. These case studies should therefore be taken as illustrations of possible scenarios, rather than the permanent state of any given coalition. Equally this report is not a comprehensive survey of all education coalitions; rather it uses the examples available to the research team.

2 Why a bus?
(What is the meaning and role of coalitions?)

The research produced a remarkable consensus about the *meaning* of 'coalition' from the wide range of people (CSOs, donors, governments, INGOs) involved with them.[6] Their comments combined produce a definition:

A coalition is a group of organisations that come together to work towards a common goal. Working together enables members to speak with a stronger voice.

Bodies like this – groups of organisations that come together to achieve a common goal – often come with different names: networks, alliances, forums, campaigns, collaborations, committees, movements. Some feel quite strongly that a particular coalition either is, or is not, something else; for example, *'[it] is nothing but a network of NGOs working on education'.* But without a common and agreed definition of both a network and a coalition, this distinction is of limited use. Others are slightly more helpful. Movimento de Educação Para Todos (MEPT) (Mozambique) is a movement rather than a coalition because 'coalition' was seen as something for the elite, but a 'movement' would be more down-to-earth, and accessible to everyone – from the lady selling wares in the market to the man in the office.

Like bus names, 'coalition' means something specific in context and very little outside of it. A *bemo* in Indonesia means nothing to a Tanzanian riding a *dala dala.* But they are riding the same sort of thing: a small bus taking them on a set route to a particular destination. Essentially the name is far less significant than the function. As long as the body in question is a group of organisations that have come together to achieve social change, an advocacy purpose, rather than simply acting as an information-sharing body – for the purposes of this report it is a coalition.

The aspect of speaking with a stronger voice is central to the **role** of coalitions.[7] Time and again interviewees noted that it is not effective to work in isolation, because the voices of individual CSOs are weak and not heard where it matters. As a donor said, *'One well-organised coalition is better placed to compel governments to alter policy decisions than several uncoordinated ones'.* Together, coalitions can act as a strong pressure group on governments, and have greater bargaining power. Clearly a bus is more visible than a lone bicycle.

This united civil society voice helps governments too; it *'simplifies the dialogue process'* (bilateral donor)[8] by enabling governments to consult with one organisation rather than hundreds. Therefore in

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[6] Note that those interviewed were in some way related to the work of CEF, which supports CSOs working in advocacy, therefore they do not form a comprehensive sample of all people engaged with coalitions in all their forms.

[7] This report examines the role of coalitions over and above the role of civil society, which is discussed in the companion research report, *Funding Change: Sustaining Civil Society Advocacy in Education* (Tomlinson and Macpherson 2007).

[8] Information and quotes taken from the CEF research project interviews are attributed this format, parenthetically by general interview source, rather than by name in order to preserve anonymity

principle a well-functioning coalition is the answer to all national actors' problems: civil society is well represented and governments save time. If only everything were this simple. In practice, money comes in and complicates matters. International funding is a constant theme running through national government-civil society engagement, facilitating, forcing and distorting the interaction. This complexity is encapsulated in the comment by a coalition member that, *'We believe unity is power. Often it is a donor requirement'.* This report seeks to dissect these complications, and recommend ways to enable coalitions to carry out the role they take on, while limiting the disruption caused by the meddling effects of money and those who hold the purse strings.

Some coalitions do also play other roles for their members, as a forum for sharing experiences, ideas and information, or by helping to avoid duplication of efforts and acting as a body looking at the bigger picture while individual organisations focus on thematic areas. These activities are important in their own right, and indeed some of the coalitions examined were established for these purposes, and only later took on an advocacy focus. However, the definition of coalition that arose from the data is specific about their role as advocacy organisations, and therefore this report focuses on the aspects of coalitions that relate to this consolidation of voice for advocacy purposes.

3 Where do buses come from?
(What are the origins and stimuli for coalition building?)

Questions for consideration

- Has the establishment of the coalition been internationally motivated by funders[9] or INGOs, or stimulated within the country by national civil society?

- Was the formation of the coalition driven by available funding?

- How has the cultural context influenced the establishment of the coalition?

There has been a rush of national education coalitions emerging to drive along the road to EFA in recent years. This outpouring is a result of the convergence of several stimuli emanating from international and national developments. While both sets of factors affect all coalitions, it is clear that some coalitions came about much more as a reaction to, or as a result of, international developments as opposed to being wholly nationally built entities. Money is never far away from these developments.

Internationally, bilateral donors have indirectly stimulated the building of coalitions as a result of a shift in how they fund both governments and civil society. They have rarely been involved directly in the establishment of coalitions, but rather their shifting interests have contributed to the contextual change that brought coalitions to the fore. With the shift towards regarding governments, rather than CSOs, as responsible for delivering services to their populations, many donors have moved to providing lump sum aid to recipient governments in the form of direct budget support (DBS). In parallel, civil society is seen as having a role as a watchdog to monitor and regulate the government, as well as to contribute to the

development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) that will be funded with this aid (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007). These issues converge into a donor desire for civil society to ensure the relevance of education policies, and to also make certain that government funds are spent according to allocation. In the eyes of donors, in order to play these roles, CSOs should come together to engage with governments. As PACT Tanzania argues, *'Donors who support advocacy are often eager to support coalitions. Coalitions have, in some cases, been promoted as the "perfect" vehicle for NGO collaboration. As a result, some coalitions are donor-initiated or donor-created.'* (PACT Tanzania, 2005a, p. 15).

Alongside this funding impetus for coalition building, there have also been international education advocacy stimuli for their development, largely by INGOs. While partnership working between INGOs and national NGOs, as well as between NGOs and governments, had been pursued since the early 1990s, the lead up

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[9] Throughout this document, the term 'funder' refers to any organisation that provides financial resources to coalitions. This can include bilateral donors and foundations or funds such as the CEF. In some cases, where they provide financial resources, it includes INGOs.

to the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar was instrumental in generating massive interest in national coalitions. In this sense Dakar can be seen as the location of the coalition bus factory, the place from which a huge number of coalitions emerged, many established or supported by INGOs.

> During the late 1990s ActionAid, Oxfam International, Education International and the Global March Against Child Labour launched international education campaigns. Representatives of these organisations brought their concerns together, along with the South African NGO Coalition, the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) (Bangladesh) and the Brazilian National Campaign for the Right to Education, to form the **Global Campaign for Education (GCE)** in 1999. The GCE was initially envisaged as a short-term campaign to achieve recognition for the global crisis in education and to pressure decision-makers to provide resources and implement reforms to address the EFA goals set in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990.

International NGOs were therefore deeply influential in bringing together northern and southern NGOs into a united front on education issues in light of the largely unmet EFA goals. Though tensions existed, GCE came to be seen as the de facto representative of the 300 or so NGOs that arrived in Dakar.

While GCE achieved palpable results in Dakar, there were concerns that it was over-represented by northern NGOs. Additionally, while global INGO pressure was extremely influential in pushing education up the political agenda, there was recognition from southern NGOs that this was no substitute for national level action and that the global EFA goals needed to be articulated in context by national civil society. In light of these issues, the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) was born, developed from and giving strength to existing national coalitions. Thus global and domestic awareness of the benefits and needs for collaborative working began to gain pace.

Many of the coalitions established around the time of Dakar were the direct result of funder and/or INGO beliefs in the desirability for such organisations to exist:

The **Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE)** in Malawi was established by INGOs following research by Oxfam and ActionAid in 1999. The research showed that the quality of education had been deteriorating since the introduction of universal primary education in 1994, and it was felt that there was the need for a civil society structure to advocate for improvement. While Oxfam and CARE felt this structure should only involve CSOs, ActionAid felt that the government had to be involved. As a result, two organisations were formed: CSCQBE supported by Oxfam and CARE, and the Government/NGO Alliance on Quality Basic Education (G/NAQBE), supported by ActionAid. However, by 2003 it had become clear to the INGOs and members that the two organisations were duplicating their efforts and undermining each other. They were therefore combined into one organisation (CSCQBE) and government officials and donor representatives that had been members of G/NAQBE were excluded. The INGOs took the lead in running the coalition *'because of their access to resources and information [and because] they had trust and credibility from the Government and donor community'* (White, 2006, p. 4), but this caused considerable tensions between them and the members. And while this power imbalance remains, it has been partially minimised by the members encouraging the INGOs to concentrate on capacity building of local NGOs.

The **Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE)** is an example of a coalition initiated with a strong donor lead. During 2003-2004, the CEF held national consultations with prominent education NGOs to stimulate the formation of a national coalition for education. Because of common agreement on the benefits of such co-working, the coalition was established following these consultations. However, within one year it had collapsed because of the complexities of the NGO/CSO situation in Pakistan. Between 2004 and 2005 CEF conducted another range of discussions and regenerated the coalition by establishing a formal structure and paying for a secretariat. PCE was formally established in 2006 with funds from

CEF and set about finalising its constitution and *'trying to identify the dominant themes on which it would like to develop advocacy campaigns'* (Bano, 2006, p. 30).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that the research behind this report was commissioned by CEF (a fund managed by INGOs, whose remit specifies establishing and supporting coalitions), most of the coalitions studied had significant influence from international funders and/or INGOs. For example, Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC), Elimu Yetu Campaign Coalition (EYC) in Kenya, Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) in Nigeria and Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) were all established when either Oxfam or ActionAid brought member organisations together. Notably CEF then took over the support role – in both financial and development terms – from its constituent agencies. CEF itself was instrumental in establishing the Cameroon Education for All Network (CEFAN), the Bo District Education Network in Sierra Leone, the National Coalition for Educational Development (NCED) in Sri Lanka and the PCE discussed above.

There is an inherent risk of excessive funder influence on the agenda of coalitions that are established at the prompting of funders (which can include INGOs). Funders play a huge part in supporting coalitions by providing them with the resources with which to operate. Yet *'donors would only support a coalition if it had a very clear objective that was in line with their own objectives'* (foundation member). As a result, coalitions may be established because there is money to establish them, and follow the agenda of the organisation that facilitated their establishment.

National motivation for setting up coalitions occurs when national or local actors come together around a common aim, without the involvement of funders or INGOs in the process.[10]

The **Women's Action Forum (WAF)** was established in Pakistan in the late 1970s in response to the President General Muhammad Zia ul Haq's Shariat law that oppressed liberal forces; he had hanged an elected Prime Minister and victimised those in support of the socialist values

of Bhutto. Initially WAF functioned as an umbrella organisation encompassing a range of women's organisations, groups and individuals to act as a lobby-cum-pressure group for women's rights, not as a separate issue, but as integral to the overall governance problems of Pakistan. In addition to

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[10] It is recognised that, increasingly, international NGOs are staffed by country nationals, and that national CSOs are so dependent on international funding that their agendas are internationally defined. Thus the distinction between international NGOs and national CSOs is not always clear. Yet the key international NGOs involved in supporting coalitions are generally recognised by others as being international (in origin, funding, agenda or staffing), thus the distinction serves some purpose for this discussion.

domestic political conditions, the establishment of WAF was helped by the fact that the UN platform was giving women's rights international attention. WAF maintained a non-hierarchical structure; there was no secretariat and the group worked out of the houses of the members. Members organised demonstrations and worked with the media to project their concerns. After the Zia era, WAF lost much of its momentum and many of the members set up their own NGOs due to the availability of international funding.

Most of the national coalitions examined during this research were funder- or INGO-stimulated national education coalitions. There are examples of coalitions whose establishment was more nationally or regionally stimulated, including the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), established in 1964 by a group of academics, and the Lesotho Association of Non-formal Education, established in 1979 by adult educators with support from government representatives, though funded by DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association.[11] It is notable that these internally-driven education coalitions were established between the 1960s and early 1990s, while the period around Dakar (late 1990s to early 2000s) witnessed an explosion of internationally-driven coalitions, reflecting the increased global attention (particularly from donors) to this mode of working.

The distinction between nationally and internationally driven coalitions is not clear cut; indeed many lie somewhere between these two poles.

> In Mozambique in 1999, a small group of national and international NGOs that were interested in promoting access to quality education rallied together to ask the government to publicly present the results of its assessment of the country's progress towards the 1990 EFA goals. The

disappointing outcomes of the assessment were in themselves a deciding factor for several of these organisations to send representatives to the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000. Some of these individuals also attended a pre-Dakar meeting in Brussels arranged by GCE. As a founding member of the coalition explained, *'We went as individual organisations. While we were there we had the idea of building a network of civil society organisations working in education. When we came back from Dakar we decided to start the* **Movimento de Educação Para Todos (MEPT)***'.*

Armed with information and inspiration from Dakar and the GCE meeting, this small group of highly motivated individuals set about the task of creating a coalition in Mozambique. The original criterion for individuals and organisations to join MEPT was simply an interest in education. At the time, many organisations working in education were only involved in service delivery, but some were trying to engage with the government to bring about change. The coalition is therefore said to have been born out of the post-Dakar need to do things differently. *'We realised that we were not being effective by approaching government as individuals. We needed to build consensus first and then present our case as one stronger voice speaking for many. We also created an opportunity to improve the way we did business.'*

In considering national and international stimuli for establishing coalitions, there are **regional differences** in the nature of coalitions, particularly notable in comparing Africa with Latin America and Asia. According to an international coalition representative, the latter areas have a longer and stronger history of social activism, and hence a well developed NGO society with professional staff. As a result, said one bilateral donor, CSOs there have *'the ability to organise, plan, monitor and evaluate,*

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[11] India has several examples of education coalitions that were established at the instigation of national actors, including the National Alliance for Education as a Fundamental Right (NAFRE). Unfortunately this research did not gather sufficient data to discuss them in detail here.

knowledge of related and relevant topics, and even access to knowledge'; in short, a capacity that many African NGOs still lack. Moreover, it means that coalitions have links with broader and grassroots organisations in Asia and Latin America, whereas, according to an INGO representative, NGOs, and often INGOs, dominate in Africa. For one academic, NGOs in Africa are more of a *'donor fabrication',* whereas in south Asia they are *'rooted in the historical development of education'.* But this does not mean that coalitions are necessarily more enduring in Asia than in Africa. On the contrary, strong ideological CSOs with specific agendas are in some cases less likely to come together as coalitions, unless they see the benefit in terms of achieving a joint aim. As one international coalition member put it, *'NGOs in India are a circular firing squad'* – they are so grounded in their own social movement that they work against each other. But when they do coalesce, it seems that Asian and Latin American coalitions are driven more by the ideological agenda, *'la lucha'* (the fight), than by the funding, as in Africa.

The extent to which the establishment of coalitions was internationally or nationally driven has often had an **impact on the development of the coalition.** Coalitions that evolve from national civil society hinge on the willingness of members to be active and to identify a common cause. Coalitions that emerge from funder or INGO interests are not necessarily supported by the same enthusiasm of member organisations. As a result, PACT Tanzania argues that *'Coalitions are usually strongest if they grow organically out of common interests. Experience shows that they are unlikely to survive if they are externally imposed'* (PACT Tanzania, 2005a, p. 15). But what is interesting in the context of national education coalitions established around the time of Dakar is that, although almost all are to a greater or lesser extent driven by international factors, they have survived until 2006. In part this is because, while the stimulus for

establishment may have come from international (and to some extent external) actors, coalitions change as they develop, and for some the national agenda has become more significant in their operation. Engagement of a broader range of CSOs, including teachers' unions and parent–teacher associations, is one way in which the national influence on coalitions' activities is strengthened. Meanwhile, international funding and support remain important, if not pivotal, for many of the national education coalitions under consideration. Before looking at how or why this has happened, it is necessary to examine what these coalitions are trying to achieve.

In summary, Dakar was instrumental in the formation of many national education coalitions. The enthusiasm and degree of support offered by funders runs the risk of coalitions being established because of international actors' belief in their value, rather than emerging from the enthusiasm and conviction of national civil society. In and of itself, this is not necessarily a bad thing, but those involved in coalitions would do well to comprehend the motivating forces behind the existence of a coalition (for those already involved in one) or for setting up a coalition (if this is the intention). Such analysis is the starting point for understanding the power dynamics that influence the establishment and performance of coalitions; it is about identifying the clients of the bus factory.

The next step is to consider what the coalition aims to achieve.

4 Where is it going?
(What are the coalition's aims and activities?)

Questions for consideration

- Are the coalition's aims clearly defined and detailed in achievable objectives?

- Are these aims drawn primarily from international agendas? If so, how do they relate to national priorities?

- What activities are planned to meet these aims?

- Do members have the necessary skills to carry out these activities? If not, what measures can be followed to ensure that these skills are acquired?

When a bus sets out on a journey, its destination is clearly stated and all who travel on it know where it is going. The same should be true for a coalition; when it starts operating, it needs to decide what it is trying to achieve: its **aims**.[12] Existing coalitions tend to have either broad or narrow aims, which is a determining factor in how successful the coalition is in articulating these in terms of activities and identifying the strategies to actualise them, and therefore in having an impact. Two particular factors affect the formulation of the coalition's aims and its ability to act on these: external influence and skills. External actors have had significant influence in determining the aims of many coalitions; and many coalitions do not possess the skills base to carry out their aims.

[12] Many coalitions use the terms 'mission', 'vision', 'aims' and 'goals' interchangeably. For the purposes of this report, 'aims' is used to connote the core purpose of the coalition and activities to denote the specific action to meet the aims.

All national education coalitions examined in this research have a focus on the EFA goals and on the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) developed by the UN in 2000, after the World Education Forum in Dakar renewed the pressure to achieve EFA. Members of EYC in Kenya stated that its mission is to *'campaign for the EFA and MDGs'* and *'to advance the EFA goals'.* Another added that part of the EYC mission was *'to bring together organisations that work on education advocacy in the country'* in pursuit of those goals. In similar fashion, the EFA Coalition Sierra Leone (EFASL) takes the *'achievement of the EFA goals'* as its aim. Instructive in how these statements came about is the genesis of MEPT in Mozambique; a collection of national and international NGOs which, after attending the World Education Forum in Dakar, decided to set up a network for education organisations in Mozambique to address the EFA goals and MDGs. Similarly, EFASL was established after a workshop run by ANCEFA, and EYC by ActionAid Kenya to address the EFA goals. In all these cases, considerable influence was exerted by

regional and international organisations to **domesticate the EFA goals** in their own contexts. As an observer of MEPT in Mozambique argued, *'in the early days MEPT was driven more by international campaigns than the situation in Mozambique'.* The result of broad aims – often either influenced or even imposed by international organisations – is that coalitions may not be clear about what, exactly, they aim to accomplish. In all the cases mentioned here, both insiders and outsiders questioned how focused or effective the various coalitions were.

For instance, a donor said of EYC, *'it could have much more impact if it was sharper about what it wanted to achieve. For example, it could focus on one key goal, i.e. children out of school and push that single-mindedly'.* In a similar vein, a member of CSCQBE in Malawi argued that 'we have no strategic plan and as a result of this we are not well focused and there are no clear roles', while a member of the National Education Coalition in Sri Lanka claimed that *'there was no consensus on the issues on which to undertake advocacy… there was no clarity of objectives'.* Conversely, a CSO member in Lesotho said of a coalition that *'it has a strategic plan, it therefore was focused in terms of what it wanted to do and achieve'.* And likewise, a member of Rede da Criança in Mozambique reasoned that *'our success lies in having been able to define what our objective and goal was'.* These comments indicate that having too broad a mission statement and vague aims can lead the coalition to struggle to articulate lucid activities and strategies. Neatly captured by a coalition member in Pakistan, *'the main issue in running a coalition is to have clear issues on which to advocate. Often NGO coalitions come together without a clear objective'.* Members of coalitions need, therefore, to think very clearly what the domestic, contextual issues they wish to address are; *'there are lots of unsuccessful coalitions that tend to be talk shops. These are usually when the agenda is set elsewhere'* (INGO member). Thus the EFA goals and the education-focused MDGs can provide a unifying framework to bring together diverse actors, including CSOs, governments, INGOs and bilateral donors. However, as they stand, the EFA goals and related national targets are usually too broad to provide an adequate focus for coalition consolidation and action.

Similarly, many coalitions state a broad range of **activities** to meet their aims. For instance, CEFAN in Cameroon claims to be engaged in *'capacity building, advocacy, coordination of education CSO work and follow up of government policies on education'* while the Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU) lists *'raising awareness and creating debate on policy issues, training in policy analysis, advocating for the implementation of policy on disadvantaged groups and mobilising district networks'* among their activities.

Yet coalition members do not always have the necessary skills to carry out activities in, for example, policy engagement. An INGO member contended that while some coalitions have been quite successful in mobilising communities around particular issues and working with the media, *'they have nothing to say and nothing to bring to the policy table: they don't know what the legislation says and what the policy is about*

because they have basic messages but the debate on education goes over their heads'. Numerous donors, INGOs and CSO members commented on the lack of evidence-based advocacy carried out by coalitions. An INGO representative reasoned that this was *'not because they want to do the wrong thing but because they don't know how to do the right thing'.*[13] Lack of capacity to conduct activities can either be because of a lack of member skills or because there are not enough members to do them; after all, it is the members and not the organisation that carry them out. The converse can be when there are so many members with diverse skills that members form themselves around thematic groups to carry out specific activities, as discussed below.

Equally, while numerous coalitions engage in budget tracking, often the focus is on tracking the actual budget without accounting for the social impact, which *'makes the assumption that if adequate funds reach the district level then children will be educated'* (INGO). However, as an INGO member pointed out, what is needed is to know the significance of the budget, what difference *'the years spent in school has made in their lives, what relevance schooling has had for negotiating HIV, sexual debut and income generation; if you don't look at these issues what is the point of budget tracking?'* Similarly, for some coalitions the GCE's Global Week of Action provides a focus for advocacy activities, but the advocacy is not always sustained beyond this short time period. These points imply that coalitions may embrace aims and activities that they are unable to carry out effectively or sustain. This is not to say that all coalitions are prone to this, but that great care needs to be taken so that activities are matched with skills and, where these do not exist, measures are put in place to develop them.

Thus it seems that effective coalitions usually have a small number of clear aims and well defined, specific activities. Often such coalitions have been established by national civil society with minimal support or input from international organisations. In such instances, activities have been matched with skills, either through

existing ability or acquired through the process of carrying out activities. Conversely, coalitions that adopt broad, loose aims lacking focus tend to be those that are heavily influenced by funders or INGOs, which tend to be poorly matched with members' skills or the means to gain the necessary skills.

As one INGO representative reasoned, a coalition 'can only be successful if civil society is organised around a specific issue, rather than first forming a coalition and then finding a cause to promote'. A coalition member in Tanzania expressed this view as 'do not form a coalition for [the] sake of forming a coalition!' Establishing a coalition simply to achieve strength in numbers is futile; a coalition needs to have a clear, united voice on an issue otherwise it will not go anywhere. The Real World Strategies (RWS) project of the GCE has as its central objective the capacity building of coalitions across Africa, Asia and Latin America in order to develop the strategic planning necessary to focus in this way (GCE). Such developments are vital if coalitions are to achieve success.

It seems important for those involved in coalitions to consider carefully the aims and activities of the coalition. This analysis should include an understanding of the influence that international actors have in shaping these aims and how international treaties (such as the EFA Framework for Action) are situated within the domestic political context. Additionally, close attention needs to be paid to whether members possess, or can acquire, the skills needed to carry out activities. The importance of these analyses lies in the fact that those coalitions that do not have clear aims and activities, or that do not associate international directives with national priorities, and do not match activities with skills, are those that appear directionless and are therefore ineffective; they have no map to the destination and they have no fuel.

The next issue for consideration is how the aims and activities relate to the structure of the coalition.

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[13] The attention to evidence-based advocacy is part of a shifting international agenda as INGOs themselves have only recently been focusing on the importance of this themselves.

5 What does the bus look like?
(What is the coalition's structure?)

Questions for consideration

- Is the coalition an informal or formal organisation? Is this structure appropriate for the aims that it is trying to achieve?

- Does the structure need to incorporate thematic groups? Would this help to provide focus for individual interests?

- How do resources affect the structure of the coalition?

- Where should the coalition be housed in order to avoid dependency on or leadership by one organisation?

- Has the legal structure been chosen in order to obtain funding? Does this have an impact on how the coalition functions?

- How have the coalition's structure and stimuli evolved? Where would you like to see it positioned in the future?

Having decided where they want to get to, passengers pick the bus most appropriate for their journey. In theory at least, a coalition should behave in a similar way: once it has decided on its aims, it needs to work with a structure that fits closest with its aims. As a funder commented, *'All coalitions should be issue-driven and not structure-driven, and it should be the issue that influences the structure'.*

Coalitions can be categorised according to whether their structure is formal or informal. Although these distinctions are not clear cut – in reality coalitions lie at some point along a continuum between formality and informality, and may move along this continuum during their history – the distinction is helpful in understanding how different coalitions work. At their extreme, **formal** coalitions have an executive committee and secretariat and are strongly supported by a facilitating agency (either a funder or INGO) in terms of resources. In some cases they may be housed within a facilitating agency. Membership tends to be broad.

The **Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU)** is a formal coalition. It is heavily dependent on external funding and has a cascading structure of a General Assembly, a Coordinating Committee, a Secretariat, District Networks and County, Sub-county and Parish Committees. The membership of FENU is diverse, as it is open to all Ugandan CSOs.

Conversely, at the other end of this continuum, very **informal** coalitions are loose collaborations that have no executive committee or secretariat. They rely on the voluntary contributions of members' time and resources.

> The **Women's Action Forum (WAF)** in Pakistan is an example of an informal coalition. It was an umbrella group, established by women's groups and individuals, which had no secretariat and operated from members' houses.

Most of the coalitions examined during this research have a formal structure. The most common structure includes a board, under which sits an executive committee (including a treasurer, secretary and chairperson). Below that is the secretariat, managed by the coalition's coordinator. In the main, members of the executive committee and secretariat (where these exist) are elected by the members, the general assembly. Annual general meetings (AGMs), where these take place, are to be attended by all the members and all those in the management structures.

The intended aims of a coalition (should) determine the formality of a coalition's structure. Coalitions set up to address long-term issues with interrelated activities and foci (such as 'education' coalitions to address EFA goals) may require a permanent secretariat to manage the process. In such cases, their durability and formalised structure may be as important as the ability to disseminate information, mobilise a broad range of support and share roles and responsibilities as, it is argued by PACT Tanzania (2005b, p. 15), permanence can give the coalition clout and leverage at the policy table. Conversely, those set up to address a specific objective, such as on a particular policy implementation issue, may be short-term, demand less of their members and therefore be adequately organised through voluntary contributions of time and resources (CSO representative). In such cases, once the objective has been reached, the coalition may disband; as an NGO director stated, *'It should be possible to have a coalition that is built on particular issues and break up when that objective is met. They do not have to have a legal body but the coming together itself must be legal'.*

Another factor that shapes the coalition's structure is the scale and reach that the coalition intends. A national coalition may in fact be made up of purely capital city-based NGOs, which raises questions about legitimacy and accountability that are addressed in the following section. Broad representation and inclusion of many NGOs and CSOs may necessitate a national secretariat and district representatives to coordinate the coalition. But district divisions of the coalition may also start operating independently.

> **MEPT** in Mozambique has developed from a Steering Committee of seven people, five of whom were based in the capital Maputo, to a Steering Committee of eleven, four of whom are based at provincial level. An INGO member observed that, *'The INGOs are definitely contributing to the fragmentation of the coalition at the provincial level [because] instead of looking to the central level for leadership on what they should be doing, they get pushed and pulled in the direction of what the INGOs want them to do in order to get funding'.* Indeed, interviews with various INGO supporters of MEPT revealed that they were focusing on 'supporting the decentralisation process' and consequently felt that *'MEPT is definitely stronger at the provincial rather than the national level'.* Yet they equally felt that 'without a clear structure and strategy, MEPT at the national level will remain ineffective' and that *'MEPT at the national level does not communicate with MEPT at the provincial level'.*

One way coalitions focus on specific issues within a broad overall aim is for members to meet as working or thematic groups. For example, in EYC in Kenya, a research group was established in order to enable the coalition to make headway in certain areas whilst allowing members to maximise their respective strengths and expertise. This structure can encourage greater participation by members who are interested in a particular issue.

In the case of the Kenya NGO Council, **PeaceNet** was formed in 1998 to focus on peace and security issues, a common cause *'that we all identified with, kept us together and identified a specific goal'.*

PeaceNet was particularly active in the lead up to the 2002 elections and conducted a range of activities including radio campaigns, car stickers, TV publicity, T-shirts and banners. All of these activities contributed, it is claimed by an insider, to a 40 per cent reduction in violence surrounding the elections, which was acknowledged by the government and donor community.

Yet such a structure is not always successful, particularly in a formal coalition.

> In order to conduct its business, the **Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC)** is organised into Thematic Groups, on Early Childhood Care, Education and Development, Universal Primary Education for Children with Special Needs and Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Life Skills for Youth (Vocational and Psychosocial), Adult Education and Gender Parity. Each member organisation of ZANEC is represented in one or two of these groups, each of which has a lead agency charged with coordinating its activities. It is from the Thematic Groups that ZANEC hopes to develop cohesion around a common agenda. However, there is a concern that the Thematic Groups have just enhanced the bureaucracy and encouraged a loss of purpose for the members. It was noted by one of the respondents that Thematic Groups work as 'Standing Committees' that are expected to meet even when there are no issues to discuss.

The legal framework may also influence what a coalition looks like. In some cases, for a coalition to be recognised as such by government requires that it be formally registered with an executive committee and board. Further, the way a coalition looks is also influenced by who sets it up and how it is supported; whether it is internationally (externally) or nationally (internally) driven.

There are strengths and weaknesses to both a formal and an informal structure. In the case of an informal structure:

> A **Women's Action Forum (WAF)** member in Pakistan commented how working from the houses of the members allowed the organisation to stay out of the public eye and organise demonstrations on women's rights in response to the Zia ul Haq martial law. Yet, *'after the Zia era WAF lost its momentum; the main reason was that the key issue uniting all the members was gone'.*

In Bangladesh, a CSO director reflected on how a loose forum can lack the means to strategise activities and, similarly, a bilateral donor commented of an international coalition that *'because it's a loose, nebulous organisation it's hard to know what you're dealing with, who you're dealing with and what their status should be. When someone comes to meet you it's hard to know what hat they are wearing'.* Thus it may be necessary to formalise the structure in order to secure the ear of the government where a loose collective of organisations may not be seen as sufficiently serious or organised. But while a highly formalised structure may be necessary to coordinate activities in line with a coalition's aims, and to accommodate and coordinate growing numbers of members, formal structures also have their problems. As a member of an international coalition pointed out, *'A lot of networks at the peak, flush with funds, become institutionalised and invest in assets. This becomes too constraining and builds a bureaucracy*

Internationally stimulated

Informal structure

Formal structure

Nationally stimulated
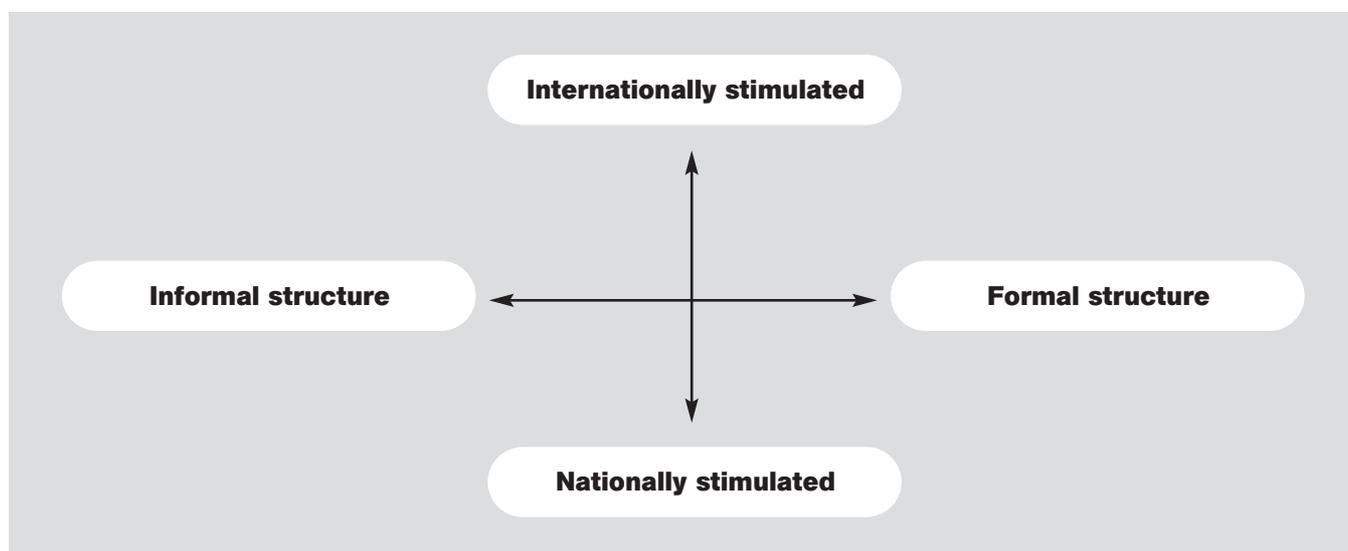
which is very unmanageable and inflexible'. The problems that this entails in driving the coalition's work are discussed in Chapter 7.

Experience therefore suggests that *'much of the success of a coalition has to do with whether the organisational form fits with the function within the context'* (researcher). The same person added that *'Those coalitions that are set up by civil society and grow organically from the centre rather than being artificially constructed by an external agent such as the government or donor, with a managerial structure imposed upon them are less likely to be weak and, consequently, not be very successful'.* Whether or not this is the case for national education coalitions will be returned to overleaf.

The structure of these coalitions is influenced by their origins and the nature of their agenda. In turn, the structure shapes the work that these coalitions undertake, how members and secretariats interact, and plays a key role in the coalition's achievements. These distinctions, between internationally and nationally-driven agendas and formal and informal structures provide a typology of coalitions. Is a particular coalition, or should it be, an air-conditioned intercity bus with fancy curtains and an on-board television (a formal, internationally stimulated coalition)? Or are the passengers enjoying a ride

in the back of an open truck, with frequent shouts to the driver through the open windows (an informal, national or grassroots coalition)?

Most of the national education coalitions examined during this research would be positioned in the top right-hand corner of the diagram, as formal, internationally-stimulated coalitions. In reality, coalitions move between different points on this diagram. Frequently, but not always, the direction of movement is from a more informal to a more formal coalition, but with the stimulus for action (developing from the motivations for establishment) becoming more national rather than international. MEPT in Mozambique, as discussed above, is one example of such developments; the GCE is another.

The **Global Campaign for Education (GCE)** provides an example of a coalition that has developed in structure, activities and position over time. Established in 1999, the GCE was initially envisaged as a short-term campaign. However, GCE has become an established and powerful player in international education circles, providing key members with access to senior players in the World Bank, the UN and bilateral donor agencies. Additionally, the Global Week of Action (GWA) has become a focal point for coordinated activities and popular mobilisation on education issues

throughout the world, with coalitions in over 100 countries undertaking campaigns in this period. Some suggest that the GCE is popularly known only for the GWA rather than the wider campaign for education, and that some organisations undertake activities during GWA, as the funds obtained sustain their core costs for the next six months, without developing a sustained advocacy campaign. Structurally, the GCE secretariat has developed from a core staff of two to six, who in part provide information and analysis for their partners to use in external forums. This illustrates a shift, as the coalition becomes formalised, to the secretariat providing services to its members, rather than simply coordinating their joint action. Some see the GCE as indeed now a *'campaign'* or a *'platform'* rather than a coalition.

CSCQBE in Malawi also illustrates development in both the structure and the extent of international and national influence, with a shift from INGO-stimulated establishment to the teachers' union now playing a key role in the coalition's operation. Thus coalitions change direction, just as buses take on new routes

and fixtures, as better roads are developed or the needs of their passengers change.

Those involved with coalitions might use this diagram to discuss where they would place their organisation at present, where it has come from, and where they would like to see it in the future.

While there are a range of factors that shape the structure of a coalition, the most significant issue for reflection is whether (and how) the coalition's structure tallies with its aims. Scrutiny of this issue is central to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of a coalition, to streamline potentially over bureaucratised coalitions and to maximise their prospective impact. An important point within this, however, is how the coalition may have changed over time and whether the structure has shifted apace, either becoming less or more (as is most often the case) formal.

The next sections examine the composition and functioning of coalitions in terms of the people and roles involved by looking at issues of membership and leadership.

6 Who are the passengers?
(Who are the coalition's members?)

Questions for consideration

• To what extent is the coalition representative of CSOs working in its field?

• To whom is the coalition accountable?

• Which key individuals can add political weight to the organisation?

• Is there a membership criterion that limits the involvement of organisations whose contribution is minimal?

According to the definition given in Chapter 2, coalitions are groups of organisations that 'come together' to work for a common cause. In theory, then, they are self-selecting organisations that choose to come together; they are passengers who get on this bus because it is going where each independently wants to go. In practice, however, far more frequently the coalition bus (directed by funders and/or INGOs) drives around and picks up passengers, inviting them along for a ride. That is, potential members of the national education coalitions studied in this research were often 'brought' together by an external agent.

Given the aim of coalitions, as groups of organisations that come together to achieve social change, political weight is important. This can be achieved by a number of means. One is to have strong and charismatic individuals as members. For instance, the involvement of the Foundation for Community Development (FDC) in MEPT in Mozambique, with Graça Machel[14] as a member, gives the organisation political clout. Similarly, the Inter-Agency Network on

Education in Emergencies (INEE) has a range of individuals who are *'well respected in government, donor and NGO worlds'* as members. Indeed, as Brown and Fox (2000) state, key individuals and organisations can act as bridges in global networks that *'can have influence wildly disproportionate to their wealth or formal power'* (p. 22).

Another way to accrue political weight is through a large membership base. Indeed some argue that, if a coalition is not big enough, it cannot be representative. However, while *'broad social bases enable credible representation and local voice'* (Brown and Fox, 2000, p. 17), in attempting to achieve representativeness, networks often go for breadth and lose their focus. As a result, rather than becoming more representative, coalitions become less so, because *'when coalitions become too big they are less connected with the grassroots and they really are*

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[14] Former Minister of Education and widow of Mozambique liberation leader and first president Samora Machel.

just a mouthpiece' (bilateral donor). Additionally, too broad a representation can invite power struggles among members and between the members and the management structures.

The **Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)** in Bangladesh faces this problem. With a membership of about 1,500 organisations, CAMPE *'theoretically represents all NGOs working in Bangladesh'* (CSO member), yet one NGO commented that *'CAMPE does not have regular communication with even 15 NGOs, rather it feels comfortable to work with a few large corporate NGOs which have huge establishments and great reputations'.* He went on to say *'I feel frustrated when I see that Dhaka-based giant treat local and small scale NGOs as subordinates'.*

Furthermore, a broad representation can be a disincentive for some organisations because they can *'lose their individual identity'* by being *'swallowed up in the huge umbrella'* (CSO representative). These points indicate the importance of a coalition being focused before it is spread out to a large number, and that the focus is not diluted by increasing the membership.

Funders and INGOs often assume that CSOs are **representative** of civil society. Yet these organisations are formed, in the main, by an educated minority, individuals with career paths and appropriate skills rather than being elected by civil society to represent them. Thus although some community-based organisations (CBOs) represent their communities, in most cases CSOs work to improve the lot of beneficiaries rather than constituents. This assumption of representativeness is sometimes carried over into the idea of coalitions; that they are united and coordinated representatives of civil society, and therefore conduits linking civil society, government and donors at the micro–macro levels. Under such an ideal view, the accountability of the member CSOs,

and of the coalitions themselves therefore, is to the community they represent. However, the reality of coalitions (and CSOs) is often removed from this ideal. Community members may be beneficiaries of a CSO's achievements, but the CSO is often neither accountable to nor representative of the common people (although where teachers' unions, parents' groups and some social movements are involved in the coalition, these organisations carry a membership mandate and can therefore justifiably claim to represent their constituency). Coalitions are also not established to be representative of civil society; they are established to give certain organisations working on a particular issue a stronger voice.

However, while coalitions may not themselves be representative of civil society, the **issues** that they advocate gain legitimacy through the involvement in the coalition of organisations working at grassroots level. In the words of an academic, *'National level*

coalitions or networks that have no representation from the community level are less legitimate than those who are connected to activity on the ground. The latter have, therefore, a high degree of legitimacy and visible impact'. Coalitions that claim (or aim) to be 'national' are often made up of large organisations based in urban centres, and are therefore divorced from realities in rural areas. Additionally, forming or strengthening national coalitions runs the risk of building power at the top of the pyramid rather than at the community level.

Representative or not, coalitions grow, gain pace, develop and attract new organisations. And indeed there can be clear **benefits to organisations joining a coalition,** but these are not always seen to include contributing to the cause for which the coalition was established. For instance, in Sri Lanka an NGO commented how organisations want to join the National Education Commission (NEC) because it is good for their image and, in particular, how it can be a means to access funds. Similarly, a CSO member of the Tanzania Council for Social Development (TACOSODE) stated *'our capacity is strengthened when we are under this coalition, we get easier access to resources like money and information; it is difficult to work and survive outside coalitions these days'.* They went on to explain how in order to access funds from Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) they must be members of a coalition, adding that *'if a CSO is self-sufficient in terms of resources, it may not be necessary to join a coalition'.* Coalition secretariats are also complicit in encouraging members to join for the sake of increasing membership rather than ensuring all are committed to the joint cause. One reported that:

> *'We feel that there is value-added in being [coalition] members. The problem is that not all potential members are joining, maybe because they do not understand the benefits of joining. We are currently running a huge membership campaign by, inter alia, posting newsletters, brochures, position papers, information on various sources like scholarships and funding possibilities… to entice members to stay and non-members to join as they see the benefits of doing so.'*

This does not seem like a campaign that will contribute to bring on board members committed to working for a common goal; rather it will initiate a sign-up for members' own interests alone.

Equally, membership can wane over the lifetime of a coalition, often in response to the above issues. These views point to the tension inherent in having a broad membership that is countered by some organisations not contributing to the aims of the coalition and being extractive, which can lead to a loss of the vision that binds the coalition. Indeed, commitment to the cause is a difficult thing to ensure in members, yet experience shows that those coalitions that do have committed members are those that are able to build critical mass and move their agendas forwards, such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in Kenya; in their own words, *'the challenge is to identify which are the ones who are committed'.*

These points raise questions about ownership; do the members own the coalition? Who 'is' the coalition (the management structures or the members)? And are members merely participating in an institution for their own benefit? Ignoring these questions runs the risk of coalitions becoming monoliths whose legitimacy and accountability is dubious and, consequently, whose impact is questionable. PACT Tanzania recommends that organisations know what they want to get from joining a coalition, adding that *'there is no value in joining just to join'* (PACT Tanzania, 2005b, p. 26). The evidence presented here suggests also that those currently involved in coalitions need to assess why they are involved, and for management structures to assess what the members contribute. Additionally, as with the structure of a coalition, its membership needs to be tied with its aims. Since collective organisation to achieve social change is the intention of coalitions, membership needs to strike the balance between gaining political power and not being over-subscribed. The bus needs to be full but not over-crowded.

Given these vital questions about membership, it is equally important to examine the leadership of the coalition, and to look at the relationship between members and the leadership.

7 Who drives the bus?
(Who leads the coalition?)

Questions for consideration

- Who leads the coalition?

- If the coalition is hosted by another organisation, does the host have undue influence over the work of the coalition?

- Who implements activities?

- Does the coalition have a strong facilitating secretariat balanced by a strong executive committee?

- Does the secretariat communicate and meet regularly with the members?

Ideally, a coalition should be led by the interests of its members. But practically distilling and representing the interests of all members is a complex and time-consuming task. As a result, coalitions often appoint a secretariat to undertake the daily management of the coalition: in theory to be led, themselves, by the interests of their members, usually represented by an elected executive committee (see Chapter 5). The reality is rarely so ideal. The Elimu Yetu Coalition is an example of the need for a good driver, and the problems that ensue when leadership roles are unclear.

The **Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC)** in Kenya has suffered from a triangular leadership structure. It is officially managed by an Executive Committee appointed by the General Assembly of all members. However, EYC is based within ActionAid Kenya, which has financial responsibility for the coalition, and, having played a role in its establishment, maintains an element of control. Additionally, the coordinator is the only staff member, responsible for engaging with 120 members. The last two years have seen three different coordinators, one of whom resigned after tensions with the Executive Committee, when it was felt he was answering more to ActionAid than to the Executive Committee. But the committee itself is described as weak, unable to manage a forthright coordinator.

These competing power agendas have had a negative impact on the coalition's operation and its image. In the absence of a coordinator, the coalition came to a standstill, with members reporting that they were not attending meetings as they had not been called to them. When it is able to attend Ministry meetings, EYC's contribution is said not to be valued, but rather

used as a rubber stamp for government policy. With a new coordinator, EYC is taking steps to rectify these problems, including taking on additional staff and working towards independence from ActionAid. But given the potential for political engagement offered by its early success in achieving free primary education in 2003, it is unfortunate that EYC has suffered so much from competing and unbalanced management structures.

EYC's experience illustrates the need for independence from any one member organisation, an executive committee that is strong enough to both manage and support the coordinator, and sufficient staff to undertake basic administration so that operations do not collapse if one person goes away or leaves. EYC is not alone in experiencing these difficulties. On the issue of overbearing **host** members, the Campaign for Education Forum (CEForum) in Lesotho is hosted by the Lesotho Association of Teachers (LAT), with the result that other members feel the LAT dominates, and even that this position is *'tantamount to excluding others from participating'.*

The **Pakistan NGO Forum (PNF)** is the largest NGO network in the country. Although initially established with the understanding that it would take no funder money, as a result of hosting the PNF secretariat, the NGO Shirkat Gah received money from the Aga Khan Foundation, which it did not disclose to all members. This led to other large NGOs wanting to host the secretariat. Smaller organisations were also unhappy that the secretariat could only be hosted by a national NGO with offices in all four provinces. As a result there is now a proposal to develop an independent secretariat.

A lead role is often taken by the coalition's **coordinator;** indeed some interviewees asserted that coalitions rely on charismatic individuals in this position.

CAMPE is widely recognised, itself a sign of strength in a coalition. This recognition is in no small part due to the director. A dominant personality with authority, she is recognised as a

leader by the members. But this charismatic leadership could have its problems. With such a *'power hoard'* (INGO representative), if she were to leave, there is a grave danger the coalition would lose its high profile, as it relies extensively on her personal contacts.

Coalitions need to ask themselves how they can best institutionalise the connections and knowledge that are held by a person within the organisation, so that the benefit transcends the individual. Several coalitions are blighted, like EYC, with insufficient **staff** to carry out basic administration. The Education for All Sierra Leone (EFASL) coalition has an office but no staff, and as a result is said not to be functioning effectively.

MEPT in Mozambique has two staff. The coordinator was appointed only when the administrator was so busy that MEPT's activities *'almost came to a standstill'.* There are calls for additional staff, but at the same time it seems that Steering Committee members are too busy to take on roles such as approving documents or attending meetings on behalf of the coalition. For example, MEPT secretariat staff find themselves attending Ministry meetings instead of members. *'While the movement complains that the Ministry of Education does not include them in strategic planning, when we are invited we don't show up because we are all too busy'.*

But increasing staff to take on tasks that could – and often should – be undertaken by members is a slippery path that increases the danger that *'the secretariat of the coalition starts having a "life" of its own'* (coalition member). Interviewees complain of secretariats that *'are beginning to behave like directors',* with an emergent tendency to *'bully members of the coalition'* (CSO), or operate as independent NGOs.

The **Civil Society Campaign for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE)** in Malawi has 67 CSO members, and a secretariat of eight staff. Currently without a strategic plan, and not having met all its members at a General Assembly in three years, the secretariat has increasingly taken on the role of

implementer of activities. Many members thus see the secretariat as driving the agenda of the CSCQBE, while the secretariat feels that members do not have the capacity to advocate or influence policy. Despite this, many of its own activities are not strategic, with good budget monitoring not followed up with policy advocacy.

The CSCQBE is thus close to being an independent advocacy NGO with only a limited relationship with its members. Its large staffing is in part responsible for this situation; with fewer staff, activities would have to be implemented by members. The work and power of coordinators or secretariats would in principle be contained and supported by an executive committee, elected by the members. In some places coalitions are led by a combination of coordinator and chair. The danger with this situation is that, by relying on a few individuals, the secretariat neglects to consult all its members. As in Malawi, the EFA Campaign Network in the Gambia has not held a general meeting of its membership for three years, thus compromising accountability to the members, to say nothing of representativeness.

One solution to these problems may be to ensure that coalition coordinators, and associated secretariat administrative staff, act as **facilitators** of members' actions, rather than as implementers of activities themselves. As a CSO representative asked:

> *'When they start implementing, what will members do? It is the members – the grassroots CSOs that are close to the reality on that ground that should be actors and implementers. Lack of all these kills coalitions and makes them unsustainable.'*
> (CSO representative)

One international coalition that seems to have successfully achieved the balance between enabling action by members but also acting as 'the glue that holds the coalition together' (INGO representative) is the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE).

Described by a coalition staff member as *'very much a network driven by the priorities of its members',* the **Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE)** has deliberately avoided becoming a legal entity, relying instead on linking with its members for funding and functioning. Its steering committee consists of senior members of UN agencies and INGOs active in education in emergency situations, with national members linking through training and consultations. Steering and Working Group members are accepted only after a long application process, and they are required to commit a percentage of their time and institutional funding to participate. They are usually senior members of staff in a position to achieve change in and through their organisations. The secretariat facilitates their work through administration, organising advocacy through their members and providing high-level linkage between members and others. The two coalition employees are hosted by different member organisations, and, although not without tensions, they have fought to stay impartial and not be seen as staff of those organisations.

The INEE is thus a good example of a coalition in which the secretariat and steering committee together lead a coalition, and it is the members who act as 'force multipliers' (coalition coordinator), giving the strength to the coalition and its activities. While this is an international coalition, the same principles apply nationally: that if coordinators are facilitators rather than directors, and if they are managed and supported by proactive executive committees, there is likely to be a better balance of power and work between the secretariat and the members.

> The secretariat of the **Tanzanian Education Network (TEN/MET)** seems to fulfil these criteria. It has a small staff, of three individuals, who see their role as coordinating issues and undertaking strategic activities, including compiling a directory of members and writing proposals. *'The secretariat is mainly a facilitator and looks for funds',* with district members the main actors in lobbying and advocacy.

If the secretariat plays this role then the coalition bus driver is just that, a driver. The driver makes sure the passengers get to their destination. Drivers do not decide the route, or what colour to paint the bus – this is up to the managers of the bus company. That said though, drivers need to be good at their job. They need to be skilled at negotiating the road, patient and polite, but with knowledge of short-cuts and ways to avoid traffic jams. They may need training or the support of a conductor in order to keep their minds on the road and not on issuing tickets. The driver is responsible for ensuring that optimal progress is made, so must be able to foresee and interpret various scenarios that occur on the road and negotiate obstacles. Within a coalition this means going beyond a strictly technical role and being able to read political scenarios and negotiate conflicts.

Thus, those involved in coalitions need to reflect carefully on who does what in the coalition, and decide whether there are sufficient staff to facilitate the coalition or too many management staff who come to dominate it. The guiding premise is that management staff need to support members to carry out activities and not take over from them, and that they must be responsive to what the members feel should happen. The passengers need to tell the driver where to go while the driver's role is to use his/her skills and knowledge to steer the bus as quickly and safely as possible.

The next step is to look at the existing and potential funding for coalitions, bearing in mind the effect that funding can have on a coalition's functioning.

8 Who pays for the ticket?
(How is the coalition funded?)

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Questions for consideration

- Is funding provided to the coalition for core costs and/or for activities?

- What contingency is there if international funders withdraw their financial support?

- Do members contribute funds or in-kind to the coalition? If not, why not?[15]

- Has international funding affected the purpose of the coalition by turning it into a fund manager?

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In Chapter 3 it was noted that many coalitions' **agendas are funder driven.** The rise of direct budget support as a funding strategy for low-income governments is associated with bilateral donor desires for CSOs to both monitor governments' spending and engage in policy planning. Neither donor nor recipient governments want or have time to listen to a throng of different CSO voices, so they have encouraged (sometimes reluctantly in the case of recipient governments) the formation and use of national education coalitions to 'speak with one voice' and represent civil society in PRSP processes.[16] INGOs involved in education advocacy have similarly encouraged the development of national coalitions, drawing on positive experiences with the GCE at Dakar and beyond. These international voices, and the international goals for EFA and the MDGs, as well as the Northern agenda of advocacy as a whole, thus drive the agendas of civil society education coalitions at a national level. As a foundation member argued, *'If*

a donor gives money then it is likely that they will have a bigger say in what the coalition does'.

Funders are able to drive coalitions' agendas because coalitions (and often their members) are **dependent on funders** for their resources.[17] All the national education coalitions examined in the course of this research are supported almost exclusively by funding from CEF, INGOs or bilateral donors. As a result, for many, *'All campaign results are because [the funder] funds them'* (Gambia coalition member). Moreover, all

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[15] Although the research did not specifically investigate in-kind contributions, such as volunteer time, office space and equipment, these are common among coalitions, and should be factored into their overall picture of sustainability.

[16] Note that there has been widespread criticism of the failure of PRSPs to achieve this (see ActionAid, 2004).

[17] Dependence on donor funding can even prevent coalitions from working collaboratively as civil society organisations (that is, potential or actual coalition members) compete with each other for available funds.

Some non-formal coalitions have managed to avoid such dependency.

The **Women's Action Forum (WAF)** in Pakistan took an early decision not to accept international funds, for fear that it would lead to member frictions over the use of funds, and place the legitimacy of the Forum in question. From its establishment in the late 1970s it has retained this stance, although many of its key members head prominent women's rights NGOs that do receive funder resources, and WAF has accepted money from international development agencies for hosting national conferences.

However, this non-formal coalition is unusual in relying entirely on **member resources,** and most formal coalitions collect few if any member dues. Certainly all of the national education coalitions examined during this research are almost entirely funder-resourced.

TEN/MET in Tanzania reports that internal sources form 4% of their total funds (although much of this is from three INGO members – ActionAid, Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK), while CEF supports 90% of its costs. TEN/MET has successfully raised funds from the European Union (EU) and from a private bank, constituting a relatively impressive range of funders when compared with some other national education coalitions in Africa.

the coalitions in question are supported by CEF, a fund with the express aim of supporting national education coalitions.

An academic declared that, *'It's also important that coalitions do not get sucked into the aid orbit and become detached from the grassroots',* but in funding terms, national education coalitions were sucked into this orbit as soon as they set out on the road. The dangers of such dependency are the problems arising when funders withdraw. Given that CEF is coming to an end in 2008, many of the coalitions supported by it recognise that they will lose their stable financial support and may simply stop functioning. When coalition members and coalition supporters speak of the *'limited fundraising capacity'* of coalitions endangering their future sustainability, it is questionable whether providing nearly 100% funding does anything to encourage such capacity. How are funders expecting to 'wean' their coalitions if they have been sole funders for most of the coalitions' existence?

Reasons vary as to why members are said not to contribute to coalition coffers. In Zambia, ZANEC members are expected to pay dues, but neither the members nor the secretariat (at the time of the research) knew when the fees were due, nor who had become a legal member by paying them. And the draft constitution of the Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) asserts that *'once the coalition has been established'* members will be required to pay annual fees; yet the coalition has been in development since 2003, formally established since early 2006, and still it is not clear when it will be

considered to be *'established'* enough for members to start contributing funds.

That PCE members are only expected to start paying after the coalition is established, rather than in order to help establish it, points to a widespread expectation that international funders will resource the coalition. Several interviewees explained that, in order to fill the gap left when CEF closes, they will first send proposals to other potential funding agencies. Even the Network on Disadvantaged Children in Sierra Leone, which has not yet received any external funding, has problems obtaining membership contributions from ordinary members due to a perception that, because it is an NGO, it attracts lots of funder resources. Similarly in Ghana, GNECC members (correctly) look on CEF as bringing funds, hence encouraging contribution from members remains a challenge.

Coalitions that did collect membership fees reported that, even when requesting small amounts, not all members paid. And some coalitions that were considering instigating membership dues were concerned that they would frighten away potential members because they could not pay. Large coalitions like the USA's Basic Education Coalition (BEC) and INEE address this problem by having a sliding scale of fees depending on the size of the member organisation. But even INEE, which is two-thirds funded by its members (many of whom are themselves large INGOs and multilateral donors), relies on funders for the remaining third. BEC *'would have a really tough time surviving without the Hewlett Foundation'.* But their members contribute because they see the value of the coalition's work, and banking member dues over five years means the BEC could survive a year while seeking new foundation funding if necessary.

If members contribute financially to a coalition, they are buying into a certain kind of relationship; they are committing themselves to contributing to and being owners of the coalition, and they are also indicating that they have a stake in what the coalition does. Membership fees do not need to be large in order to achieve this sense of ownership. And these examples indicate that, even in the best member-paying context, coalitions need external funding to survive. But there

are different ways for funders to support coalitions, which minimise the damage done. Sustained **core support** without interference allows a coalition to grow and change according to changing contexts.

The **Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE)** was founded in 1964 as an informal group of academics who formalised themselves into a federation of adult education associations in each country, largely university and government institutions. But by the late 1980s, much of the creative work in this sphere was being undertaken by grassroots organisations and NGOs. So ASPBAE changed direction, taking NGOs as members, moving from 'one country, one member' and making an associated shift in philosophy to become more activist and developmental, a campaigning group.

They were able to make this sizable shift in part because they had '*strong and stable support'* from one main funder, DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association, who was *'willing to see us through. They gave us a free hand to do what we thought was necessary, and they continued to support and fund us.'* In addition, ASPBAE deliberately did not build a large bureaucracy, but has kept the secretariat small (administration, finance and two full-time programme officers) and mobile, moving to wherever the secretary-general is based. Other staff are based in partner organisations, and ASPBAE contributes a little for the space they use. Thus without a large infrastructure, *'it wouldn't be so painful if we had to downsize'.* And crucially, 'If one is able to organise the work so that members are constantly participating in the coalition's activities, they see that their voice is heard, and they benefit from the coalition in very real ways, then they are energetic in telling us how to do things better.'

ASPBAE's experience adds weight to the argument that coalitions need long-term funding for core costs. Funding core costs (a lean secretariat's staff salaries, rent and administrative costs) but few activity costs enables secretariats to carry out their coordinating role while encouraging members to take on responsibility for carrying out and accessing funding for the

coalitions' **activities.** Seemingly without a coherent policy one way or the other, the national education coalitions examined for this research were funded for *'project implementation',* with their *'funds disbursed gradually against agreed indicators',* for activities that matched the funders' goals (coalition members). There is a risk that such an approach to coalition funding leads to a kind of dependency on itemised funds that allows people to state, *'Normally we should meet once a quarter but because of funding constraints we sometimes meet less often'.* How has a coalition reached the point at which a meeting of its executive committee is a funded, or non-funded, event?

Such micro-management results in part from some coalitions' inadequate financial reporting processes. But to enable coalitions to plan ahead with flexibility, take risks and be proactive (rather than activity-related and reactive), funders too may need to take risks and accept that some coalitions will not turn out the way they hope they will. A Kenyan non-education coalition member advised that:

> *'A network should have limited funding in comparison to their membership. Just enough to support the secretariat and do advocacy work. It needs to make sure it is not being seen as competing with membership for funds. It has a strict role of supporting members, so any funding has to be thought through and strategic… Membership should also contribute a small percentage to the coalition to be made to feel part of it.'*

One approach that may help would be for funders (be they bilateral or multilaterals, foundations, CEF or INGOs) to encourage members to access funds for coalition activities. Often the funding source may be the same; only the responsibility for accessing funding and implementing activities would shift.

As well as avoiding funding coalition activities through the coalition (as opposed to through its members) funders might avoid treating coalitions like activity-implementing NGOs. As a researcher stated, *'donors should not impose external and artificial accounting and monitoring and evaluation, which limits coalitions' capacity'.* Coordinating coalitions, like much advocacy work generally, involves developing relationships through talking to people, attending meetings,

managing databases, all of which are activities that have few direct outputs. If those providing funds *'micromanage how they are spent'* (researcher), they risk making a coalition accountable to its funders rather than its members. There is a danger that coalitions therefore spend time running activities rather than focusing on building strategic relationships, and worrying about accountability to funders rather than representing the interests of members.

The experience of non-formal coalitions provides an interesting alternative to this picture of the relationship between member-ownership and funding for activities.

> The **Participatory Rural Appraisal Network (PRA)** in Pakistan was established to enhance understanding of the PRA methodology in the development sector. It was dynamic for about five years, but as members stopped gaining new skills from participation, it lost momentum. The network had a policy of not taking funding for its core activities, in order to avoid tensions between members, but did seek funding for specific activities.

Like the WAF discussed above, the PRA is a non-formal coalition deliberately reliant on member contributions for its core costs. These examples highlight that external funding does not unavoidably consign coalitions to being funder marionettes, and resonates with the view of Robinson and Friedman (2005), who state that:

> *'…dependence on foreign aid does not always produce deleterious effects, especially when used effectively and strategically by recipient organisations. Nor does foreign aid necessarily compromise their objectives, limit their credibility or skew their agendas as civil society organisations employ institutional devices to maintain their independence and legitimacy.'* (p. 38)

In the case of PRA, the deliberately selective use of funder resources to pursue particular activities insulated it from the potential of being co-opted. The research suggests that non-formal coalitions are, by their very nature, sufficiently owned and directed by their members that occasional funder resourcing for coalition activities is less likely to have a detrimental impact on overall coalition dynamics.

In the companion report from this research on sustaining funding for civil society advocacy in education, it is clear that there is little support from anyone (other than coalition members) for coalitions to take on the task of managing a Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) to support advocacy work (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007). For the most part it is recognised that **fund management** is not within a coalition's remit, and to take on that role would distort its core purpose and lead to division between members. Yet, although many funders recognised these issues, as well as the change in power dynamics resulting from giving financial power to a coalition (secretariat) rather than its members, for funders the key issue preventing coalitions from managing funds is that *'the ability to manage funds is dependent on the capacity of those within the coalition'* (bilateral donor). They identified legal and financial management arrangements that would have to be overcome before entrusting such sums to coalitions. Thus, while most of the coalitions covered by this research (i.e. those in lower income African and Asian Commonwealth countries) were felt to lack sufficient transparency and accountability to take on this task, were they to achieve these criteria, many funders would consider them as a conduit for funds. Strikingly, many funders did not seem to have considered the impact on the core purpose of a coalition – to bring members together to work for a common cause – that results from using them as a conduit for funds to their members.

One bilateral donor noted that, although accessing and managing funds on the part of members does change the power dynamic within coalitions, *'the temptation for donors to work in this way is huge'.* In part this is because donors are 'not sure what another option would be' (bilateral donor). Donors recognise a role for civil society, but struggle to engage with them as their staff decrease while available funds increase (bilateral donor). A UK Department for International Development (DFID) representative explained that it is not tenable for them to *'give piecemeal money to a whole range of different organisations'.* At the UK level this is resolved through Partnership Programme Agreements (PPAs), which involve block funding an organisation in alignment with DFID's aims. With coalitions, while this channelling of funds is more

difficult, if they have a secretariat *'you can channel funding through it to the members of the network'.* Thus coalitions are used to serve donor purposes, with seemingly little attention given to the fact that this does not serve a coalition's purpose, as a coalition. Moreover, competition between donors wanting to support coalition activities means that many coalitions are not at a loss for potential donors, seemingly because donors are at a loss for other ways to channel money to CSOs working on advocacy in education.

Donors using coalitions as conduits for funds to member CSOs not only affects the agenda of coalitions, but it **distorts the very nature of coalitions** themselves. It affects coalition power dynamics, resulting in members looking to secretariats for funds, rather than secretariats looking to members for direction (and, possibly, funds). As Hakkarainen *et al.* (2002) argue, the availability of donor funds can cause members to compete among themselves for these funds, disrupting the supposed synergy of the coalition. This is potentially even more damaging than the distortion of agendas, or the dependency of coalitions on donor aid, both of which are fairly widely recognised, as this distortion of purpose is not made explicit.

If coalitions are freed from this role of grant conduit, they may be better able to focus on their core purpose. One solution is for donors or others to divorce the funding mechanism from coalitions but retain it as a national body by establishing a **Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF):** a transparent, nationally managed pooled fund supporting civil society advocacy in education through grants and capacity building. There is widespread support for this concept, as discussed in *Funding Change: Sustaining Civil Society Advocacy in Education* (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007), the other report emerging from this research. This companion report uses models of Local Funds already operating in many sectors, to explore how to follow on from the work of CEF, currently the only similar (though internationally managed) source of funds specifically for education advocacy. By taking this route, donors would separate a fund management body from the organisation taking forward social change, and thus allow coalitions to
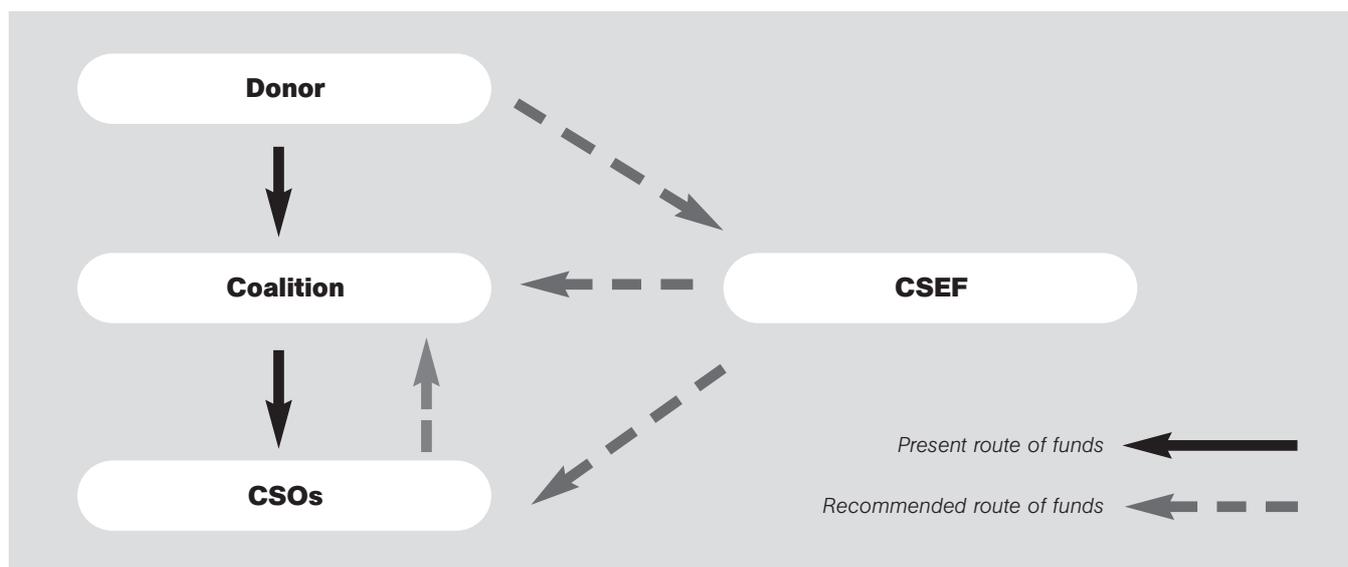
return to (or take on) their intended purpose: as a coordinated group of organisations working for a common goal. CSEFs would give donors a body through which they could channel significant sums of money to small organisations without needing the staff or resources to manage the grant-making process themselves.

To make this shift would require agreement on the part of donors, while coalitions would need the strength of conviction and strategy to allow themselves to be released from this role of grant manager. The most significant shift for many coalition members would be to see themselves as responsible for the financial stability of the coalition, either through direct membership fees, or through applying for funds from a CSEF or other donor in order to undertake activities with the coalition. The coalition would no longer be seen as a potential source of financial gain. It does not make much sense for a passenger to be paid to ride on a bus; that is, it is strange for an organisation or individual to receive financial benefits from being a member of a coalition. Passengers should pay for their own tickets to ride the coalition bus. In formal coalitions funders might pay for the driver's salary but members should pay for their own tickets.[18] That is, funder resources for a small coordinating or facilitating secretariat may be inevitable. But if this extends to also funding all of the activities of the coalition, members seem less likely to carry out or feel (financially) responsible for the coalition's activities.

Analysing the impact of money on a coalition is key to understanding its dynamics. It seems that international funding can distort a coalition's agenda, lead to dependency, and distort its core purpose from that of working together for social change to that of grant management. While it is highly unlikely that coalitions can be supported by member subscription alone, those involved in coalitions might examine whether instigating, increasing or even effectively collecting fees from members would increase member ownership of the coalition. It might be questioned whether costs for activities can be sourced by members rather than the secretariat. In the long term, it would be beneficial for all involved in support for education advocacy to examine whether there is the national potential for establishing a CSEF to nationalise fund management and remove responsibility for grant management from national coalitions.

Coalitions must be aware not only of their relationship to sources of funds, but also of their relationship to other actors. As education coalitions do not operate in isolation, the next chapter explores the traffic on the road to EFA.

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[18] Since non-formal coalitions pay for their own driver, through donor funding for specific activities, occasionally giving passengers a free ticket is not detrimental to the purpose of the bus.

9 Who else is on the road?
(Who else is working towards EFA?)

Questions for consideration

- Are other networks working in the same sector as the coalition?

- How could the coalition link with other networks or coalitions for mutual benefit and to avoid duplication?

- Are teachers' unions involved in the coalition? If not, why not, and could they be encouraged to join?

- How are INGOs contributing to the coalition?

- What is the relationship of the coalition to the government?

Coalitions do not drive down the road to EFA alone. They are accompanied by a range of other vehicles, most of which are committed, formally or otherwise, to achieving the same MDGs and EFA goals that the coalition members have in their sight. These other bodies – donors, INGOs, other networks, teachers' unions and government[19] – have the potential to both support and hinder the work of the coalition, intentionally or otherwise. This section therefore examines the role of and interaction with these other organisations, once coalitions have been established and started on their journey.

National education coalitions do not operate in a vacuum. Most countries have a **range of networks, alliances and coalitions** alongside the education coalition, several of which are working on related themes. In Tanzania, for example, TEN/MET is a significant force, but it shares its road with the Tanzania Association of NGOs (TANGO), Tanzania Pastoralists, Hunters and Gatherers (TAPHEN),

Tanzania Council for Social Development (TACOSODE), Masasi NGO Network (MANGONET), Arusha Education Network (AEN), among others. With so many coalitions vying for their attention, it is not always clear that CSOs join up in order to contribute to the common goal, rather than to access money or information; one CSO reported that *'it is difficult to survive outside coalitions these days'.* Equally, in an over-networked context, CSOs may see *'nothing new to benefit'* from joining another coalition.

Where existing networks operate at different regional levels, they can be complementary.

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[19] The research did not gather sufficient data on the role of **private sector organisations** in specifically supporting coalitions to make a discussion of that role viable here. The availability of private sector support for civil society advocacy in education as a whole is discussed in *Funding Change: Sustaining Civil Society Advocacy in Education* (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007). Similarly, while it is known that coalitions' collaboration with **journalists** can result in positive exposure for education advocacy issues, the research data are insufficient to include detailed analysis here.

The **Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC)** and the **Northern Network on Education (NNED)** in Ghana are in this category. They cover different regions of Ghana (NNED in three northern regions, GNECC in the remaining seven) and cooperate to complement rather than compete with each other's campaigns. For example, for the Global Week of Action in 2005, NNED launched the campaign in the north of the country while GNECC launched it in the south. They shared budget tracking training in 2006 in order to be able to use the same reporting structure, and therefore to compare and use one another's data.

However, such complementarity is not always achieved.

In Sierra Leone, a number of active district-level education coalitions operate with very little interaction with the national education coalition, **Education for All Sierra Leone Coalition (EFASL).** They reported having agreed to register with EFASL, but the weakness of the national coalition (still without a secretariat) meant that there has been little engagement, including lack of consultation of the district networks by EFASL on national policy issues.

And at the international level, two very successful coalitions – GCE and INEE – have limited interaction or collaboration with each other.

It should not be assumed that all CSOs want to coordinate with coalitions, and particularly that they want to coordinate with NGOs (which seem to constitute the majority of the members of most national education coalitions). In Kenya, for example, **churches** own many schools, and as a result they are more interested in attending private sector meetings that seek to expand the use of private service delivery, in contrast to advocating for the greater role of government. Similarly, **women's rights organisations** have some involvement in national education coalitions, although not extensive. The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), itself an informal coalition of offices across the continent, is involved with some national education coalitions. In Nigeria the Civil Society Action Coalition

on Education for All (CSACEFA) reported working with a coalition of women's NGOs to help them develop from a pure service delivery role to taking on advocacy activities. One reason for limited engagement by women's rights organisations may be the gap between the agenda of national education coalitions, working towards EFA and the MDGs, and organisations supporting girls' education that feel secondary education is necessary in order to achieve real change; primary alone is insufficient (INGO representative).

More significant perhaps is a coalition's relationship with **teachers' unions**. In Sierra Leone (EFASL) and Uganda (FENU) the teachers' unions play a lead role in the coalition. Interviewees in Mozambique reported that interaction between the education coalition (MEPT) and the teachers' union, Organização Nacional de Professores (ONP), had developed from a point where the union *'felt MEPT was against us because of the way they attacked the teachers'.* It has moved on through a realisation on ONP's part of the problems in the education system partly lying with teachers and their responsibility to resolve these, with MEPT seeking to support the development of this sometimes troubled union. But teachers' unions and CSO coalitions do not always work together. Miller-Grandvaux et al. note that teachers' unions are often neglected by donors and international NGOs, as teachers' unions are *'often construed as a constraint to policy change and educational improvement'* (Miller-Grandvaux et al., 2002, p. 32). From the other side, in Mali and Guinea, union representatives viewed NGOs as a:

'…destructive force that is undoing the public education system. NGOs (both national and international) were usually equated with donors and constituted a complementary force of structural adjustment programs. They were considered to have no legitimacy in the education system and by extension in the education policy arena (op cit).'

As an academic explained, teachers' unions *'are strong political actors and should be strong in coalitions… [but] because they are the most important actors there is least incentive for them to join the coalition.'*

Where they do work together, teachers' unions and NGOs bring different things to the table; the former have a mandate as democratically run representatives of their members, as well as international links and participation, while advocacy NGOs bring lobbying skills that teachers' unions sometimes lack. In many cases teachers' unions have an established and recognised relationship with government on the back of this democratic representativeness. Education International, the international union of teachers' movements with a membership of over 30 million teachers, recognises benefits to extending cooperation with NGOs, and is working on developing partnerships, particularly collaborating with ActionAid International to strengthen links between NGOs and teachers' unions, thus building on their existing involvement in GCE.

Funders[20] and coalitions use each other and need to use each other. Funders use coalitions to carry out development work; coalitions use funders to resource the advocacy work they wish to achieve. However, funders are usually in the privileged position, as they give or refuse funding, and with this privilege should come the responsibility to manage the relationship with care. James and Malunga argue that funders *'need to take a much more aware and nuanced approach to supporting CSO networks. There is a grave danger that the irrational exuberance of the last five years for CSO networks will give way to disillusionment about the importance, not just of CSO networks to development, but civil society more broadly'* (James and Malunga, 2006, p. 1). In order to try to avoid the distortion of coalitions' agendas and purposes, and hence avoid such disillusionment, the importance of funders allowing coalitions to choose their own route, and not using their money to drive the agenda, was discussed in Chapter 3. The care with which funders should resource coalitions has been discussed in Chapter 8. In order to avoid distorting the purpose of coalitions, by using coalitions as conduits for funds to individual CSOs, funders might establish and support Civil Society Education Funds (CSEFs) as nationally owned fund managers. As one bilateral representative noted, *'the architecture of aid is changing'* and donors have a responsibility to help civil society change with the times, including by supporting coalitions through *'applying the principles of aid effectiveness, including pooled funds'*.

But beyond this role as providers of financial resources, funders are seen as important providers of capacity building, particularly in areas of fundraising and financial management, networking and researching. This was clear when investigating appropriate national models for a funding mechanism for civil society advocacy (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007). Some see this role as even more important than that of funding, as funding is not always the priority need (even if the coalition thinks it is); rather coalitions need support to engage in strategic planning. While bilateral donors are not always in a position (in terms of time and resources) to play this role, they can support others (such as a CSEF, GCE or INGOs) to take on this task and enhance capacity for strategic thinking.

The EFA Campaign Network in The Gambia has only recently achieved a cordial relationship with CEF, its main funder. Until a strategic planning intervention by a consultancy firm clarified the strategic direction of the coalition, the relationship was tense. The Network secretariat felt that CEF was meddling in its affairs, while CEF had concerns about the financial reporting, accountability and transparency of the Network's secretariat.

The problem of an overly close relationship stems not only from the fact that CEF often fully funds a coalition, and provides capacity support in financial management and advocacy skills. It lies in the continuing close interactions, where CEF has been instrumental in establishing, resuscitating, or strategically guiding and inspiring many of the coalitions it supports. When a coalition is receiving all its funding and its strategic guidance from external bodies, its viability as a sustainable, independent body is in question. In the words of one coalition member, *'I don't believe donors should forever be supporting us. They should rather empower us to enable us to stand on our own when their projects phase out'.*

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[20] 'Funders' includes any organisation or individual that provides funds, and includes bilaterals, multilaterals, foundations, funds and INGOs. Note that those organisations that are discussed here as 'funders' all have additional roles in relation to national government and/or civil society. INGOs in particular are often active agents in civil society themselves, as increasingly their staff are country nationals and many enjoy increasing independence from headquarters in developing their programmes.

INGOs can and have supported national education coalitions in the same ways as other funders: by providing funds, building secretariat and members' capacity and acting as a guide or inspiration for the coalitions' development. Even when not in a position to provide funds, they might be influential in the establishment of CSEFs to ensure that national-level grant management is kept separate from a coalition's core purpose of members working towards a common goal. And INGOs have played a huge role, and might continue to do so, in communicating and sharing ideas across countries and supporting coalitions to channel their energies in the most effective way.

Additionally international NGOs are also often members of the coalitions that they seek to support and develop.

> In Mozambique, Oxfam GB considers the national education coalition **MEPT** to be its key partner in education. As a result, Oxfam GB has an interest in developing the coalition, in part by helping it to develop a new strategy. Oxfam Intermon is also very involved in supporting MEPT, and was elected to sit on the MEPT steering committee in November 2005. Collectively the six Oxfams in Mozambique, working together as the Joint Oxfam Advocacy Planning (JOAP) committee, try to coordinate advocacy in the provinces and therefore harmonise MEPT's advocacy work at the provincial and district level. By way of contrast, ActionAid has made a conscious decision not to form part of MEPT's steering committee as it is the lead agency for CEF and hence manages the funding for MEPT, which is currently solely funded by CEF.

INGOs' involvement as coalition members is a topic of some debate. Some feel that the presence and name of big INGOs in a coalition can lend it credibility and legitimacy with both donor and recipient governments. But others feel strongly that INGOs should not be members of national coalitions. Although many of their staff are nationals, some people feel that they represent external interests, to the extent that some feel that they are *'not part of the civil society fabric of that country'.* Some large agencies are now working from the principle that, while they might do their own advocacy, legitimacy lies with local, national NGOs and coalitions. As one representative stated:

'ActionAid supports the coalition based on our belief that INGOs should strengthen CSOs in advocacy and policy influence. In the past we used to do the work ourselves but we used to face the issue of our legitimacy for doing the work. We believe as an international organisation we may have the moral obligation but we do not have the legitimacy.'

INGOs' presence can also be counterproductive in legitimacy terms, as governments may recognise them as representing an international, rather than a national, agenda. A further argument for not including them as members of the coalition is that they are frequently (also) major funders of the coalition, and this position has the potential to give them undue power and influence with strategic and operational decision-making. A high level of INGO involvement *'tends to skew things and ultimately the coalition becomes too dependent… INGOs often undermine the sustainability of coalitions in the long run'* (INGO representative). Whatever roles INGOs decide to play, they need to be aware of the power they hold, and to take steps to avoid over-using their privileged position by avoiding taking on dominant positions and by working to create capacity and space for national organisations.

It is notable that very few interviewees had anything to say about the role (or otherwise) of **UN agencies** in supporting coalitions. An INGO representative felt that the UN could play a strong facilitating role, but didn't think they would want to do so, while an academic commented that UN agencies involve civil society in very different ways, without being joined up or acting transparently.

It was generally felt that national **governments** should not support a coalition financially, as this would compromise the coalition's ability to create change or act as watchdogs of that government. But engagement with government was agreed to be vital for a coalition if it is to achieve policy change.[21] Most national education coalitions examined in this

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[21] There was little discussion in the research data of the role of coalitions in engaging with Members of Parliament, the democratically elected representatives of civil society.

research were in dialogue with their governments, and most were engaged in national planning processes. What varied was the extent to which this relationship was initiated by CSOs or the government, and whether, in the latter case, it was encouraged by funders or independently welcomed.

A key focus for the **Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)** is policy level engagement to influence decision-makers in favour of the access, retention and performance of girls in school. They work directly with Ministers of Education, holding ministerial consultations to highlight constraints on resolving gender issues, by sharing findings from policy analysis. They also work with Directors of Planning and Policies as the technocrats who actually formulate education plans and policies. Because many government officials struggle with the idea of gender, they are keen to work with FAWE on national plans. FAWE's position is enhanced by the involvement of many former ministers, university vice-chancellors and other senior individuals.

The EFA goals provide an ideal forum for coalitions and governments to come together, since they are all travelling towards the same destination. This is perhaps why, regardless of coalitions' internal problems and governments' reticence in discussing policy with CSOs, national education coalitions *are* generally involved in the national policy process.

The working relationship between the government and civil society in Kenya is much improved from five years ago, not least because almost 40% of the current government were members of civil society prior to election in 2002. Although four years later this connection is wearing thin, in general the government is seen as quite accommodating to civil society. The Ministry of Education has created political space for the national coalition, the **Elimu Yetu Campaign (EYC).** The coalition has been invited to donor meetings and government forums to discuss the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme, and reforms pushed by EYC have been implemented by the government. In addition to interaction with the Ministry of Education, EYC has been approached by the Department of Adult Education and Kenya Institute of Education as well as the Department of Technical Training at the Ministry of

Labour. Unfortunately, due to reduced staffing and other internal challenges, EYC has not been able to attend all the government meetings to which it was invited, which has had an impact on impressions of the coalition (Agg, 2006).

However, it should not be forgotten that, while governments have signed up to agreements to consult civil society, the implementation of these agreements is not always entirely voluntary. They are sometimes *'pressurised by external bodies'* (coalition member) to involve civil society in planning as a condition of donors' release of direct budget support to implement that plan. This relationship was established in the Dakar Framework for Action:

'Funding agencies are willing to allocate significant resources towards Education for All. The key to releasing these resources is evidence of, or potential for, sustained political commitment; effective and transparent mechanisms for consultation with civil society organisations in developing, implementing and monitoring EFA plans; and well-defined, consultative processes for sector planning and management.'
(UNESCO, 2000, Article 48)

In practice money may not actually be withheld if there is not *'full CSO partnership',* as all donors may not share the same view as to what the government–civil society partnership should entail.

This was an issue when the Tanzanian government banned the outspoken advocacy group, Haki Elimu, and as a result **TEN/MET,** the national education coalition, boycotted the government's policy review. The 15 in-country donors found it difficult to come up with a common position on the policy review going ahead, but as the review was government-led it went ahead anyway.

Such specific complications aside, bilateral donors play a significant role in encouraging governments to open the door to civil society. A distinction can be made between countries in which governments recognise the value of and actively invite coalitions' engagement in policy development (for example in Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania), and those in which CSOs take more of the initiative (as in Cameroon and Lesotho). But in practice the huge influence of donors means that the distinction is not clear cut.

In Mozambique, **MEPT's** relationship with the government has evolved from being barely recognised as an interest group to one of partnership, albeit somewhat unequal. This change has been heavily influenced by factors external to the coalition, including the changing role of civil society in Mozambique. In the new era of democratic rule, the government has become increasingly open to the participation of civil society. As a result, civil society has been invited to participate in developing key strategic documents and policies including the Mozambican Poverty Reduction Strategy (PARPA II) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan II.

Also important is the impact of introduction of direct budget support on the MEPT–Government relationship. As Remmelzwaal (2006) states, *'Donor reluctance to accept civil society's traditional role as implementers and vehicles for service delivery has to some degree coerced the government, if only inadvertently, into accepting that civil society can play more strategic roles. In the education sector, MEPT has benefited from the donors' need to explore different ways of calling government into accountability for how funds are being distributed and spent, resulting in them promoting the idea of civil society being present at all key review meetings.'*

Many interviewees reported that governments were happy for coalitions to be involved in policy processes (in which they could contribute ideas), but were less enthusiastic when coalitions engage in budget tracking or other activities potentially critical of the government, or issues that require additional money or a change in policies. But there are sometimes valid reasons for the limits to which governments want to involve coalitions. Governments are, in most cases, democratically elected to run the country. Putting aside arguments about the transparency of elections, this does mean that governments have a right and responsibility to decide the national agenda, and unsurprisingly that they are most likely to want to engage with coalitions where there are common interests. As a representative of the British government pointed out, *'We are interested when coalitions approach us on an issue we have a key interest in'.*

Why should this be different for any other government? Moreover, it seems that, for successful policy change through engagement with government (rather than pressure brought about by a critical popular mass), coalitions must work to contribute from the inside of the dialogue, rather than from the outside. As a coalition member acknowledged, *'If CSOs are always criticising and not contributing positively, then we will not be taken seriously. It is the job of the coalition to contribute positively to policy formulation rather than criticising it after it has become fact.'*

Sometimes coalitions can engage with other actors for mutual benefit in a way that governments cannot. An INGO representative in Mozambique discussed the problem faced by the government in being bold about confronting donors regarding their real budgetary needs. *'We understand that government is constrained by the rules of the game. It's like they are being told to play football surrounded by glass windows. But civil society can make noise, they can speak out.'* Collaborations between coalitions and governments in such situations would be of mutual and national benefit, and would help to balance the power that donors continue to hold over both. This also points to the need for coalitions to recognise that governments cannot do everything the coalition might want them to; governments have external restraints too.

But sometimes coalitions are not in a position to take their place at the policy table. It was reported in The Gambia, Kenya and Mozambique that government welcomed dialogue and invited coalition involvement, but that the coalition was either not skilled or not informed enough to make a positive contribution, or failed to appear at key meetings. Governments may thus accurately report that they have engaged with civil society; it is partly civil society's responsibility if this engagement is of poor quality. Governments may take advantage of this weakness by sending documents late for review, or using coalitions to *'rubber stamp'* (INGO representative) a government's decisions. This is particularly a danger if the coalition is weak or not generally critical of the government, and in places where the government (and CSOs) view CSOs as implementers of government decisions

(INGO representative). Additionally, where coalitions are actively involved and welcomed in government planning processes, there is a risk that governments then expect CSOs to work only within the plans developed with and by the government. As Robinson and Friedman point out, *'It is important to distinguish between distance and autonomy – organisations may sympathise with a political actor, and thus enjoy closeness to it and consequent influence, but remain autonomous because they continue to set their own priorities'* (Robinson and Friedman, 2005, p. 24). Coalitions need to work closely but autonomously with governments.

All these factors point to the need for a '*mature*' relationship between governments and coalitions, with both sides understanding that civil society can provide information and engagement (including criticism) to assist governments to do their jobs better (bilateral donor). As a Ministry official stated, *'We need civil society to push us for certain issues, just as we need them to trust us'.* A CSO representative agreed that openness on the part of the government makes their work easier, as they are able to align their programmes with the government's objectives. Thus everyone gains. However, not all governments, or coalitions, are yet mature enough themselves to build this relationship together.

Relationship to government also differs by geographical region. As CSOs are regularly critical of governments in Asia and Latin America, governments are less willing to engage with them, whereas in Africa CSOs are valued for the service delivery they can provide (particularly in marginal areas), and thus are engaged as (unequal) partners with the government. In the language of political space, in Africa CSOs are invited into a space created for them by government, while in Latin America and Asia the history of activism has enabled CSOs to create their own space (bilateral donor). The more radical the agenda pursued by the coalition, the more tense will be the relationship it has with the government.

Thus coalitions drive alongside a number of other important actors on the road to achieving Education for All in their country. In many cases, these fellow travellers provide support, though occasionally they leave an obstacle in the path of the coalition bus. It seems important for coalitions and those travelling with them to ensure that these relationships help rather than hinder the journey of the coalition. Where there are important actors, particularly teachers' unions and women's rights organisations, who might be wary of engagement with national education coalitions, members might consider how to develop this relationship to mutual benefit. Coalitions and their supporters (through financial resources, capacity building or other guidance) would do well to consider the balance in the relationship, and whether over-reliance on non-member supporters affects the relationship with members. The 'maturity' of a coalition's engagement with government is far from being the responsibility of the coalition alone, but an analysis of this relationship may indicate ways in which it could be improved, whether through increased formal or informal contact or deepening the evidence on which advocacy with government is based. Given the importance of relationships in advocacy work, if a coalition can improve on these, its journey will be smoother.

The final area explored in this toolkit encourages reflection on obstacles and advantages that affect a coalition's progress.

10 What affects the journey?
(What helps and hinders the coalition's work?)

Questions for consideration

- Does the coalition have a clear strategic plan and action plan?

- Do the strategic goals and action plan reflect members' concerns and skills?

- Does the coalition have adequate resources to carry out the activities?

- Does the coalition regularly self-evaluate where it is going? Is it self-renewing?

- Should the coalition dissolve once its aims have been achieved?

Buses set out with a planned destination; similarly coalitions have an aim in mind when they start their work. There are factors that can help or hinder the journey. And buses, like coalitions, meet with obstacles – toll charges, trees across the road and herds of livestock. Equally, they may encounter an accommodating policeman or a particularly well-paved stretch of road. Coalitions have had notable **successes** and made an impact at local, national and international levels. However, the extent of these successes does vary according to who is reporting achievements. It was not uncommon to find that claims of success by coalition members were contradicted by government or donor representatives in this study. Further, successes of coalitions were often attributed to facilitating agencies – INGOs – or supporting funders rather than the coalition itself.[22]

At the local level, the national education coalition in Sri Lanka asserts that it has built strong relationships with the government and that zonal education departments request their attendance at education meetings. At the national level, the EFASL in Sierra Leone assert that through their advocacy on girls' education, the government has rolled out its free Junior Secondary School education provision to the northern and eastern regions of the country. And in The Gambia, the EFA Campaign Partners Network declares that is has been able to persuade influential public servants to act as flag bearers for EFA. Indeed, numerous coalitions claimed to have influenced policy by

[22] Note that this research was not an evaluation of the impact of coalitions, so whether or not the changes attributed to the coalitions were in fact theirs to claim cannot be verified here.

advocating for the inclusion of particular issues, such as the NGO Coalition for Children's Rights (NGOC) in Lesotho that managed to include children's rights in the Education Bill.

In addition to direct impact, Brown and Fox (2000) contend that there can be significant impact made when measured by more 'indirect' indicators such as building links for future campaigns, strengthening local organisations, increasing awareness and skills for policy advocacy and shaping public awareness of critical issues. Likewise, in Nigeria and Mozambique, CSACEFA and MEPT respectively stated that they have occupied political space and secured the ear of the government through their advocacy work.

Where coalitions claimed to have made an impact, their success was attributed to the fact that they had *'clear workplans and strategies'* (coalition member). Further, having an *'agreed common agenda that accommodates divergent members' interests, skills and views'* (coalition member, Lesotho) was deemed critical. These issues were closely tied to having strong leadership. In addition, it was considered essential that the members had *'adequate skills'* (donor representative) and *'sufficient resources'* (coalition member) – in terms of funds and physical resources such as computers. Finally, the will of the government was cited by donor and civil society representatives in numerous countries as a key facilitating factor for the success of a coalition.

In the main, these factors are within the control of the coalition, all except perhaps the will of the government (though effective advocacy can influence this). Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the perceived challenges to coalitions revolve around the failure to adequately address or nurture these influencing factors.

As with the stated successes, the perceived **challenges** of coalitions vary according to who claims them. Overwhelmingly, those inside coalitions argued that their biggest restraint was lack of funds to carry out activities or meet core costs. Conversely, INGOs and donors argued that the biggest challenge was lack of skills such as in advocacy, research or financial management. Several coalition members

pointed to the fact that members – organisational and individual – often sought to profit from participation in the coalition and pointed to internal conflicts between leadership structures and the members that also influenced the inability to secure a common goal. Indeed, internal power struggles were integral to a sense of lost ownership by members and the domination of a coalition by a core group, in some cases amounting to manipulation and *'bullying'*. Poor transparency and weak accountability were cited by both coalition members and donors as a severe hindrance. Implicit in this was a lack of communication between the various structures and amongst the members. A further challenge for coalitions centres on the role of funders and INGOs in supporting coalitions, as discussed in Chapter 8. Adequate funds are clearly a requisite for impact, yet if this is the sole reason for funder involvement then attention to membership fees or alternative sources of funds is a worthwhile consideration for mitigating funder influence. Attention needs to be given to the consequences of being housed in an INGO or other organisation as this creates a certain impression of the coalition with the government and with civil society.

Many of these challenges occur because coalitions grow. Indeed, it is a natural process for coalitions to develop, for membership to wax and wane and for aims to change in response to this. It is critical that coalitions are *'self-renewing'* (foundation member) by *'members raising with management new issues and debating these'* (coalition member Kenya). If not, there is a grave danger that the coalition loses focus and lacks a shared purpose, that the management structures *'become'* the coalition and get cut off from their roots, which leads to dwindling member participation. As an INGO member stated, *'coalitions run like a rollercoaster – there are times when they are progressive and when they slow down. They need to self-assess to stay on track and reflect, refine and critique themselves'.*

At times, coalitions come to an end once their aims have been realised, or there is no real benefit gained from working collaboratively.

> An example is the **Participatory Rural Appraisal Network (PRA)** in Pakistan, established in 1997. PRA was active for five years then began to lose momentum, as members stopped gaining from it: *'Initially, they all had much to learn but after three to four years there were not that many new ideas coming forward in the meetings'.* In this case it seemed entirely appropriate that the network came to an end; its purpose – of sharing and disseminating PRA methods for development – had been met.

This corresponds with the view held by PACT, which argues that those coalitions with single, short-term goals should *'dissolve when the issue has been solved or the event has been coordinated'* (PACT Tanzania, 2005b, p. 14). Yet many coalitions persist even after their initial aims have been addressed. This often results when coalitions have been established with very broad and unspecific aims, for example, those relating to achieving the MDGs. This is the case for all national education coalitions established around the time of Dakar.

For those involved in coalitions, there seems to be a need for candid self-criticism. As it is the nature of coalitions to be in flux, to change and develop, the attention to self-renewal is a critical issue. It seems uncommon, given the evidence presented, that many coalitions will decide to disband. But without assessment of where it has come from, what it has achieved on its journey and where it is going next, a coalition may wander aimlessly along the road. Coalitions need to be regularly serviced to understand what condition they are in and how well equipped they are to reach the next destination. Having sufficient resources to achieve their aims and ensuring that they have the necessarily abilities to carry out their activities is critical. Part of the service may mean changing some parts, putting on new tyres and carrying out an oil change. It may also mean giving it a lick of paint but the key issue is that all of these activities are carried out in line with what the coalition aims to do. The bus – and the coalition – has to be fit for its purpose.

11 Helping the bus reach its destination
(Signposts to guide coalitions).

The Dakar bus factory produced a staggering number of national education coalitions setting out along the road to EFA. In theory these were national coalitions established due to national stimuli representing civil society's interests in dialogue with a government that welcomes its engagement, in order to bring about social change. In practice it seems that (at least initially), these were internationally stimulated funder-resourced national education coalitions that meet with governments, which themselves often agree to meet because donors require them to. Yet they have developed as they have travelled along the road, picked up new, national passengers, and in some cases refined their destination and thrown off some international baggage as they have continued on their journey. Several have been successful in achieving some level of change.

A bus in and of itself cannot be successful. It exists to reach a destination. It is just a vehicle. Once it reaches its destination it stops and turns off its engine, or it heads to another, specific alternative destination. So too with coalitions. There can be no successful coalitions, only coalitions that achieve successes. Once it achieves its goal, a coalition will either disband, or needs to set itself a new goal. But coalitions with broad aims often trundle on, never quite reaching the goal, but not disbanding either. Specific strategic aims, around which members come together (rather than being brought together) are perhaps now the greatest need for national (education) coalitions.

If a group of national organisations wants to achieve a very specific aim, there are real benefits of working together as a coalition, and there is support out there to help them achieve their aim. But establishing a coalition because there is money to do so is not a guarantee of smooth functioning, let alone of achieving success. And if a coalition is used by funders to channel funds to CSOs, the purpose of a coalition risks being distorted. Instead, such funds might be channelled via members, themselves having applied for funds from an independent and nationally managed Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF).

In order to help provide direction for coalition buses, whether they are heading towards EFA or somewhere else entirely, this toolkit provides signposts to guide them on their journey. Those involved in coalitions might use the section headings to ask critical questions of the organisations with which they work, in order to draw up their own, more detailed maps.

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