

# Civil society advocacy: good practice case studies

Civil Society  
Education Fund



## About the Civil Society Education Fund

Launched by the **Global Campaign for Education**, the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) has paved the way for civil society to be a credible partner in engaging with governments and donor groups on education. It was funded initially through the Education Programme Development Fund of the former Fast-Track Initiative for Education For All (now Global Partnership for Education), and now by the Australian Government.

From 2009 to 2012 CSEF has supported National Education Coalitions in 45 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia and the Pacific, ensuring increased engagement of civil society in GPE processes. During this period CSEF has seen the number of coalitions involved in Local Education Groups rise from 18 to 32, leading to vital contributions by civil society to education sector planning and policy. The number of civil society organisations joining national coalitions has almost tripled - from 1129 to 3341 - broadening the national support and advocacy base and reach.

Substantial change to national education policies and systems has been brought about by civil society involvement and advocacy, from ensuring that the right to education is enshrined in national constitutions to the abolition of users fees. CSEF has been instrumental in enabling this level of change.

### Learning from National Education Coalitions

A fundamental element of strengthening the capacity of coalitions is shared learning. This booklet provides three examples of good practice delivered by civil society coalitions through CSEF, making explicit the ways in which campaign breakthroughs were achieved with the intention of supporting other national coalitions achieve their own aims.

# GHANA: Influencing policies on education

## **Coalition: Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition**

In Ghana, the national coalition has influenced policy development through broad-based civil society engagement in the government's education sector review.

## Context: Education in Ghana

- Primary and junior secondary school education is tuition-free and mandatory.
- The enrolment rate for children of official primary school age is 77%
- In primary school the pupil-teacher ratio is 31.
- The transition rate from primary school to secondary school is 91%
- 80.8 % of youth are considered literate.
- Public expenditure on education is 5.5 % of GDP and
- 24.4 % of total government expenditure.

*Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2010 and EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011*

The Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) is the leading education advocacy network in Ghana. GNECC was formed in 1999 and since then the membership has grown to around 300 member organisations and individuals. GNECC aims to create awareness and influence government and development partners' practices and policy-making on education through mobilising and strengthening civil society.

Since the CSEF grant the coalition's membership base has grown from 200 to 300 organisations, boosting its education policy advocacy work. Through active lobbying of the government and the involvement of civil society, the coalition has made an important impact on education sector planning and policy development.

## What did the coalition do?

In 2005 the Ministry of Education had its education strategic plan endorsed by the Fast-Track Initiative (FTI, now the Global Partnership for Education – GPE) for the first time. In an effort aimed at ensuring accountability and efficient use of the resource, the Government initiated a monitoring structure called the National Education Sector Annual Review (NESAR). At the time of the FTI endorsement, civil society was not a part of education sector planning and policy formulation. This changed however when GNECC lobbied the government for broader participation in educational development processes and was allowed to join the annual review, representing civil society. This has since become a vital platform for strategic dialogue on education.

The coalition involved its members in this assessment process by setting up an annual Society Education Sector Review (CSO-ESAR). The CSO-ESAR brings together civil society movements to prepare a contribution to the annual governmental review.

Collecting evidence-based information is a vital part of the process and GNECC supports its members across the country to

conduct studies and tracking surveys focusing on the provision of education according to the education strategic plan. The coalition has also started to build the capacity of members to participate in regional and district education sector reviews.

The findings from these efforts, as well as from GNECC's ongoing national monitoring and tracking initiatives, guide the discussions at the Civil Society review. The participants then agree on a position paper highlighting issues, concerns, policy demands and recommendations. This paper is then presented to the government for the National Education Sector Annual Review, and used as a resource tool during the review process. Following the Annual Review, members of the coalition are tasked with pushing the concerns and demands raised in the CSO position paper during relevant meetings with the government. Through GNECC's broad-based membership and its participation in the education sector review processes, the coalition can actively advocate for civil society's position with the government. In addition, civil society is given a platform to speak with one voice.

## What was the impact of the coalition's work?

GNECC has seen clear results of its advocacy efforts in the current Education Strategic Plan. These results include focus on gender and the protection of girls in school, expansion of the school feeding programme and the introduction of pro-poor policies such as free school uniforms, exercise books policy and free education for persons with disability from primary to tertiary level.

During the previous National Education Sector Annual Review (2011), GNECC utilized findings of its research that revealed large numbers of girls dropping out in higher grades of basic education in Ghana. This was frequently due to lack of girls friendly facilities in schools and adolescent pregnancies. The findings were put forward in the 2011 CSO position paper,



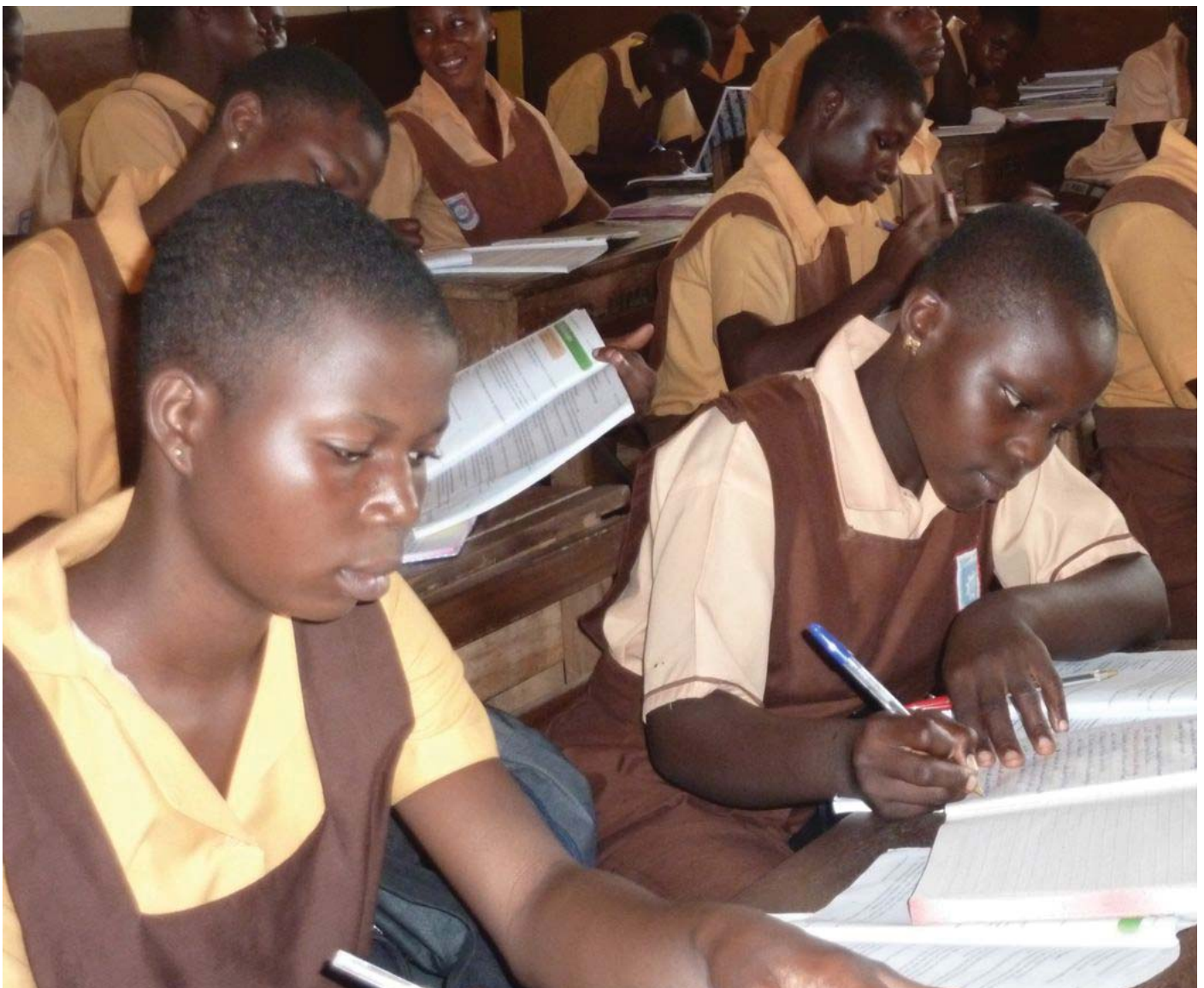
demanding a comprehensive policy on education for women and girls, with specific provisions on the re-entry of girls who drop out of school for example due to adolescent pregnancy. These demands were also presented by GNECC in a position paper to the Ministry of Education during the Global Action Week 2011. As a result the Education Ministry of Education pledged to develop a Gender Education Policy, as part of the government agenda for 2012.

*“By working this way, we are likely to see our concerns and demands being included in plans by the government each year.”*

Leslie Tettey, GNECC

### Lessons learned:

1. It is important that a space for civil society is created at the national level. Once this is initiated, coalitions need to build their capacity to utilise the space available. GNECC has for example trained its members in tools such as policy review and budget analysis and supported them to conduct comprehensive research studies and surveys. This enhances credibility, leading to recognition of the coalition as a partner in education sector dialogue with stakeholders.
2. Creating a platform for civil society to speak with one voice is vital. By coming together in an annual meeting, education-focused civil society in Ghana is able to develop a joint position paper that can be shared with the government and pushed by a range of coalition members.



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# KENYA: Making education a priority in the constitution

## **Coalition: Elimu Yetu**

In Kenya, the national education coalition ensured civil society participation in education reform processes, which influenced new legislation and constitution.

## Context: Education in Kenya

- The enrolment rate in primary education is 82%
  - Over 16% of primary school children are out of school.
  - In primary school the pupil-teacher ratio is 47, but in rural areas and slums the ratio is as high as 100:1.
- Public expenditure on education is 6.7 % of GDP and 17.2% of total government expenditure.

*Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2010 and EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011*

The Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC) is a network of civil society groups working towards the fulfilment of the Education For All (EFA) Goals in Kenya. Set up in 1999, the coalition brings together 76 civil society organisations that actively advocates for the provision of quality basic education for all boys and girls in the country.

In 2009 Elimu Yetu joined the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) programme which gained financial support for the coalition to strengthen its advocacy campaigns, particularly at grassroots level; carry out budget tracking and analysis; lobby for enhanced funding mechanisms and influence constitution-making as well the drafting of a new national education policy and legislative framework. As a result of these initiatives EYC is now recognised by the Ministry of Education and donors in the country as a credible partner which represents civil society in education sector policy dialogue and planning processes. The coalition holds seats on government and donor review committees and technical working groups.

## What did the coalition do?

In 2008, after the post-election violence in Kenya, the government set out to draw up a new constitution. A draft was shared with a variety of stakeholders, including Elimu Yetu. In response to the constitution-making process, the coalition crafted a technical team of experts, consisting of consultants, civil society actors, legal advisors and various education advocates to review and make recommendations concerning education in the draft document. Elimu Yetu also mobilised members across the country to conduct campaigns, lobby parliamentary members and address the media in efforts to make civil society's voice heard.

The final draft of the constitution, which was presented to the public for approval, had taken more than 60% of EYC's recommendations into account and rightfully reflected the views of Civil Society. On the 4 August 2010 a constitutional referendum was held in Kenya and the new constitution was voted in by 67 % of the Kenyan population.

The formation of the new constitution prompted the need for revising the education sector policy and legislative framework in Kenya. The 1968 Education Act had become largely outdated and for a long time provision of education was governed by several regulations and scattered statutes. However, good legislation is the basis of good quality education. EYC therefore initiated a process of fast-tracking the repeal of the old legislation, aiming to encourage the authorities to develop a comprehensive National Education Policy and an Education Bill, ensuring legislative reform in close linkages to the ongoing constitutional process. In collaboration with County Education Networks, EYC developed a Shadow Education Bill and a draft policy framework, which was to influence the education reform process of the Ministry of Education. These documents provided policy recommendations to the government, based on civil society's perspective. Throughout the process, EYC operated under a wider banner of civil society organisations working on economic, social and cultural rights.

## What was the impact of the coalition's work?

The new Kenyan constitution expressly provides for the right to free and compulsory basic education. This means that it is the obligation of the state to ensure that all children of primary school age are enrolled in school and remain there until they complete the cycle and make the transition to the next level. The section of the constitution in which the education rights is placed is a protected chapter making it difficult for any attempts of amendments.

Elimu Yetu is now carefully monitoring the full realisation of the right to basic education in Kenya through the implementation of the constitution. The coalition is also working with technical teams of the Ministry of Education to contribute to the finalisation of the new Education Bill and National Education Policy. EYC has proven to be a vital stakeholder in the Education Reform Process, ensuring that the recommendations of civil society organisations are taken seriously by the government.



## Lessons learned:

1. Public participation in all policy review and development processes is essential if meaningful gains are to be made. This is crucial in ensuring public acceptance and ownership of the outputs generated by the process for enhanced sustainability.
2. Synergy among all the stakeholders, both the state and non-state actors, is paramount. This is only possible if when the stakeholders engage through consultations founded in the spirit of genuine cooperation and mutual understanding without any form of attempt to outdo one another. Yet, civil society must balance this relationship with maintaining their independence and principles.
3. Involving partners with expert knowledge on education in the legislative and policy processes is of critical importance if quality of the output from the process is to be guaranteed.

*“ The general public and civil society organisations are called upon to hold the government to account on its commitment to the right to education. This calls for a vigilant general public who will interrogate government policies and plans and actively engage in education programmes. ”*

Elimu Yetu



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# MOZAMBIQUE: Influencing education sector strategies

## **Coalition: Movimento de Educação Para Todos (MEPT)**

In Mozambique, the coalition has made civil society a key partner in education sector dialogue with the government and development partners.

## Context: Education in Mozambique

- 80% of school-aged children are enrolled in primary education.
  - 8% of children of primary school-age are out of school
  - In primary school, the pupil-teacher ratio is 58.
  - The transition rate from primary school to secondary school is 57%.
  - 71.8% of youth are considered literate.
  - Public expenditure on education is 5% of GDP and 21% of total government expenditure.
- Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2010 and EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011*

The Movimento de Educação Para Todos (MEPT), founded in 1999, operates through a membership base of 200 organisations, conducting research and carrying out advocacy actions that target the government, public and private sectors to ensure access to inclusive and quality public education. Over the years, MEPT has strengthened its relationship with government and donors resulting into increased civil society participation in education sector planning.

In 2009 MEPT received funding from the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) to intensify its advocacy aimed at ensuring equitable management of financial resources, increased participation of School Boards in decision-making, providing civil society inputs for the development, implementation and monitoring of education sector strategy and to improve civil society impact on government in the provision of quality basic education for all.

The coalition holds seats on annual sector review meetings and technical working groups, representing the voice of civil society. Through its advocacy work efforts, MEPT and its members have strongly influenced Mozambique's Poverty Reduction and Education Sector plans and policymaking, and have contributed towards an improved education policy framework and its implementation in Mozambique.

### What did the coalition do?

In 2005 a structure for dialogue was set up between the Ministry of Education, development partners and civil society in Mozambique. By agreeing to these guidelines on how to engage with each other, civil society was recognised as a valued partner in education sector dialogue. The structure included two large annual meetings, one during which a joint evaluation of the education sector is conducted, and a second one at the end of the year to assess the plans of the coming year and ensure coherence with the Education Sector Strategic Plan. MEPT holds seats on both of these annual sector review meetings. The coalition has also played an important role influencing

education issues in Mozambique's Poverty Reduction Action Plan (PARP). Through review meetings and technical working groups, civil society organisations represented by MEPT have become integral to the planning and decision-making within the education sector in Mozambique.

In the making of the new Strategic Plan for Education (2012-2016), the coalition worked in several different ways to influence the government. MEPT participated in thematic working groups set up by the Ministry of Education. The engagement of civil society was particularly strong in groups on basic education, teacher training and literacy, where organisations brought issues to the table based on comprehensive research.

In addition, MEPT participated in decision-making forums as a full member, allowing them to influence important decisions that were being made concerning the education strategy. At the same time civil society was given the opportunity to present its views on the strategy in meetings at both national and provincial level.

Another priority issue for MEPT has been collaborating with the Ministry of Education in strengthening capacity and knowledge of Local Councils and Community Authorities to ensure their quality participation in developing the education chapters of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan.

### What was the impact of the coalition's work?

The participation of MEPT in preparing the new strategy and influencing the Poverty Reduction Action Plan has given clear results. For example, the reintroduction of pre-primary education, for which MEPT has advocated for several years, has gained priority in the new Education Sector Strategic Plan.



Through engagement by civil society organisations across all provinces in the country, the Poverty Reduction Action Plan strongly focuses on inclusive education, teacher training, school material, improved conditions for girls, early childhood and adult literacy. Through its advocacy efforts, MEPT has hence contributed towards an improved education policy framework in Mozambique and is also following up with monitoring at national and local levels to ensure the strategies are implemented.

### Lessons learned:

1. Agreeing on guidelines for methods of interaction gives civil society more influence on policy making and strategic planning by the government.
2. Advocacy must be fed by research that is extensively validated.
3. It is important to establish consensus among civil society organisations to advocate effectively on the issues.

*“You must be patient because policy changes and the making of government strategies take a long time. Sometimes you have to wait until the end of a government mandate to see the desired changes incorporated.”*

Dinis Machaul, MEPT



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# CSEF-funded coalitions

