

Resource mobilisation capacity of civil society education coalitions: A review by the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF)

1. Context-setting and background

The Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) is a unique and ambitious programme that supports citizen engagement in the areas of education sector policy, planning, budgeting and monitoring, within developing countries where the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is active. The CSEF is founded on a shared understanding among key stakeholders that strong, broad-based and locally-driven civil society participation in these education sector-related processes is crucial to delivering on national and international goals, and to holding governments to account for their commitments to education. As such, the CSEF supports broad-based, democratic, and representative national civil society education coalitions working towards achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, in over 60 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. The CSEF provides these coalitions with grants to support their advocacy activities, offers capacity-building and related support to strengthen planning, implementation and impact, and promotes cross-country learning and networking.

Since 2009, the CSEF has been primarily funded by the GPE, a multilateral partnership devoted to “ensur(ing) inclusive and equitable quality education and promot(ing) lifelong learning opportunities for all” – with particular emphasis on children located in the world's poorest countries.¹ With the CSEF entering its third phase of action (CSEF III) in the 2016 to 2018 period, the GPE Board Committee that is responsible for grant approvals and performance reviews (the ‘Grants and Performance Committee’ or ‘GPC’²) urged the implementing Global Secretariat of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to address a number of recommendations of relevance to delivery on CSEF III. One of the recommendations related to the need for increased financial sustainability of coalitions.

This paper discusses various aspects pertaining to the concept of ‘sustainability’, and reports on the outcome of a 2017 survey that focused on this area. Findings Included here are based on data collected during the 2017 financial year only. It is feasible that different findings may emerge from future research. As a result, it may be difficult to extrapolate trends from the available data, or draw long-term conclusions from the findings as reflected.

¹ GPE. 2016. GPE Strategic Plan for 2016-2020. Online publication, Washington DC.

² At the point that the CSEF programme for 2016 to 2018 was approved, this committee was called the ‘Country Grants and Performance Committee’ (CGPC). It has subsequently been renamed the ‘Grants and Performance Committee’ (GPC).

The objective of this study is to provide a picture of the capacity of CSEF-funded coalitions to mobilise resources from external sources. The study reflects on an important conclusion: that core CSEF funding is crucial for the continuation of advocacy and social accountability work carried out by civil society education coalitions.

The CSEF funding model includes support for institutional and staff-related costs – with these areas of support seen as fundamental, given the impact in terms of sustainability and increased efficiencies. Most importantly, although the range of donors is limited and diminishing, CSEF funds have been used effectively by coalitions to leverage other resources. The value of and extent to which other resources can be leveraged is however highly context-dependent, varying significantly across locations.

2. Sustainable coalitions

The CSEF programme has an interest in the long-term sustainability of the national education coalitions that it supports financially. Financial sustainability is part of, and key to, institutional sustainability and indeed, these two dimensions reinforce each other.

The CSEF 2013-2015 synthesis report³ focused on the main outcomes of the CSEF's second phase of delivery (i.e. CSEF Phase II). This synthesis report and a parallel [independent evaluation](#) found that the CSEF programme was successful in significantly increasing the “*institutional sustainability*” of supported coalitions – in terms of their legitimacy with the communities they represent, their credibility with decision-makers, and their relationships with partners, allies, media.”⁴ These studies also found that institutional sustainability was a prerequisite for securing financial sustainability, with legitimate, credible, well-capacitated structures being more likely to succeed in securing additional funds beyond the CSEF's annual funding provisions.

Arising from this, one of the GPC's recommendations, reflected with the approval of CSEF III, was for the CSEF to increase its focus on improving the financial sustainability of coalitions.⁵ The GPE Secretariat's Inception Report, as prepared for the GPC, reiterated this view.⁶ The GCE's Inception Report emphasised the issue of sustainability: “*Ensuring sustainability of civil society engagement in education sector policy processes has been an important focus of CSEF, despite the challenges that exist around attracting funding for such work. GCE recognises the need to further explore long-term funding strategies to secure continued resources, and the CSEF 2016-2018 phase will see a scaled-up focus on assisting coalitions in developing and diversifying partnerships with donors and allies. Developments and progress in this area will be monitored regularly through the enhanced CSEF M&E system*”.⁷

³ <https://drive.google.com/a/campaignforeducation.org/file/d/0B2GY2wUBeXf6TC1HQmpUQ2FVcm8/view?usp=sharing>

⁴ GCE Final Synthesis Report of the CSEF 2013-2015 phase, June 2016: 48.

⁵ CGPC/2016/04 DOC Country Grants and Performance Committee Meeting, April 2016: 4.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid: 21.

Later, in its 2016 CSEF Annual Report, the GCE provided an update on the work being undertaken to increase and diversify financial support⁸, and committed to deliver a more comprehensive overview of resource diversification successes achieved by national coalitions. Extending from this commitment, the GCE developed and circulated a survey to all CSEF-supported coalitions in March 2017. The main objective of the survey was to establish a better understanding of the coalitions’ plans, and to gain clarity on the financial resources that the coalitions had succeeded in mobilising via external funding sources during 2017 and 2018. The sections that follow reflect on the methodology employed during this brief study, and the survey findings arising.

3. Methodology

Before launching the survey, the GCE reviewed information and data already submitted by the coalitions, as part of their proposals for the 2016 to 2018 period. Data was noted as lacking in precision: currencies were not indicated, and the purpose and duration of funding was not clearly defined.

The proposal template for the 2016 to 2018 period requested coalitions to present information within the tabulated format provided below.

Table 3.1: 2016 to 2018 proposal template, as provided to coalitions in 2016

| Non-CSEF financing: Please indicate source and amount of non-CSEF financing the coalition expects to receive in 2016, 2017 and 2018. | Funding source | What the funds support | Amount (in US\$) | Year |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Fundraising and financial sustainability: Outline your fundraising objectives, target and plans for 2016-2018 and your plan to work toward financial sustainability. <i>Please attach your fundraising strategy if you have one.</i> | Click here to enter text. | | | |

The data obtained in 2016 was not analysed at the time. The GCE only went back to the recorded data in 2017, with the intention of reviewing whether the non-CSEF funding commitments reported on by coalitions at the beginning of CSEF’s Phase III (i.e. funding for the 2017 year) were in fact realised. The template used to gather input from the coalitions in respect of the 2017 financial year was amended slightly, as reflected below.

⁸ 2016 Annual Report: Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) 2016-2018: 39: “...assuring sustainability of national coalitions is not only measured by access to third party funding; growth of membership ... is also a benchmark which indicates sustainability gains.... Over the year, 31 coalitions (57.4%) increased their efforts to access alternative funding to CSEF and reported having worked towards building new partnerships and strengthening relations with international agencies such as GIZ, UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, Oxfam, IBIS, and Save the Children. Forging new and developing existing partnerships has partially been aimed at increasing the sustainability of specific coalition programmes.”

Table 3.2: 2017 proposal template, as provided to coalitions in 2017

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Non-CSEF financing: Please indicate source and amount of non-CSEF financing the coalition expects to receive in 2017 and 2018. | | | | |
| In case you had listed in 2016 non-CSEF funding commitments, have all of these commitments been realised in 2016? Please elaborate. | Funding source | What the funds support | Amount (in US\$) | Year |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

In May/June 2017, a follow-up survey was launched to verify some of the information provided by coalitions in their 2016 and 2017 proposals. The survey raised a set of questions, as reflected in the table below.

Table 3.3: Questions of clarification, as provided to coalitions in May/June 2017

- Kindly confirm the exact amounts and the currency as highlighted in your 2017 proposal. Has a contract been signed?
- Briefly provide an explanation of how you were awarded this funding. E.g. Is it that:
 - You have a good relationship with the donor?
 - The donor has funded your coalition before?
 - The donor is interested in the work that you are doing?
- Are you anticipating more funding in 2018? If so:
 - Who is the donor?
 - What is the amount?
 - What parts/themes of work will they cover under this grant?

4. Limitations of the rapid assessment

Limitations associated with the current study relate to the following issues:

- Time taken to finalise the assessment
- Access to information required for verification of data pertaining to third party funding commitments
- The veracity of the study – and with this, issues relating to reliability and validity

Each of these is addressed further below.

In terms of the first limitation, this study was, in effect, a rapid assessment that was organised internally within the GCE. The organisation was not able to set aside dedicated human or financial resources to ensure optimal delivery. While the survey was launched in March 2017, the review of data and corroboration of figures and facts was only completed in September 2017.

Secondly, those responsible for the study did not have access to contractual documents and agreements that would have been useful in validating the existence of funding commitments received by coalitions from third parties, given that the coalitions were not asked to provide evidence in this regard.

Finally, while the light-touch approach employed by the GCE in respect of this study was selected with the intention of establishing a 'rough' indication of external resource mobilisation by the coalitions, and the associated impact for financial sustainability, the GCE would not claim that the findings are scientifically corroborated. This point must be acknowledged, despite the fact that the figures reported on in the findings section have been collated and analysed as rigorously as possible. A more detailed, robust survey would need to be undertaken for findings to be confirmed as valid and reliable.

Nonetheless, the findings assist in supporting the GCE to identify successful practices, alongside areas that need to be addressed further. They also highlight the contextual realities and challenges faced by various coalitions – with these differing both within and between regions. Coalitions in need of support could learn from outstanding performers. Recognising this, one of the emerging recommendations relates to the value that could be derived from exchange programmes for CSEF coalitions in the Global South.

5. Findings

All but seven coalitions responded to the survey. The tables below reflect highlights from the resource diversification efforts of national coalitions, and present some of the emerging conclusions. Please note that all funding amounts detailed are in US\$.

Table 5.1.: Comparison of CSEF-approved coalition funding in FY 2016, with expected and contracted funding for FY 2017

| Region | No. of respondents | RFC ⁹ -approved amounts for CSEF funding, for FY 2016 | Expected and contracted funding agreements, excluding CSEF funding, for FY 2017 | Expected and contracted funding mobilised (excluding CSEF funding), as % of CSEF funds |
|--------------|--------------------|--|---|--|
| Africa | 23 | 2,195,461 | 6,247,849 | 285 % |
| Asia | 14 | 1,603,446 | 4,422,297 | 276 % |
| MEEE | 7 | 561,505 | 115,090 | 20 % |
| LAC | 5 | 546,000 | 126,869 | 23 % |
| TOTAL | 49 | 4,906,412 | 10,912,107 | 222 % |

If one includes amounts expected but not yet confirmed, then the figures in the table above show that coalitions which are CSEF-supported succeeded in mobilising more than twice (222%) the amount of the CSEF-approved funding, via third party donors (i.e. US\$10,912,107).

⁹ Regional Funding Committee

Table 5.2: Comparison of CSEF-approved coalition funding in FY 2016, with contracted funding commitments for FY 2017/2018

| Region | No. of respondents | RFC-approved amounts for CSEF funding, for FY 2016 | Contracted funding commitments, excluding CSEF funding, for FY 2017 | Contracted funding commitments, as % of CSEF funds |
|--------------|--------------------|--|---|--|
| Africa | 23 | 2,195,461 | 4,400,168 | 200% |
| Asia | 14 | 1,603,446 | 4,422,297 | 276% |
| MEEE | 7 | 561,505 | 90,090 | 16% |
| LAC | 5 | 546,000 | 123,291 | 23% |
| TOTAL | 49 | 4,906,412 | 9,035,848 | 184% |

If the amounts of expected (but not yet contractually confirmed) funds are discounted (see table above) in order to establish a more realistic understanding of forthcoming funding, then CSEF-supported coalitions still record incoming funds amounting to US\$9,035,848. This is effectively 184% of the funding received via CSEF grants.

Table 5.3: Comparison of CSEF-approved coalition funding in FY 2016, with contracted funding commitments for FY 2017 only

| Region | No. of respondents | RFC-approved amounts for CSEF funding, for FY 2016 | Reduced amounts due to multi-year commitments, excluding CSEF funding, for FY 2017 | Contracted funding commitments for 2017, as % of CSEF funds |
|--------------|--------------------|--|--|---|
| Africa | 23 | 2,195,461 | 3,081,015 | 140% |
| Asia | 14 | 1,603,446 | 2,482,124 | 155% |
| MEEE | 7 | 561,505 | 90,090 | 16% |
| LAC | 5 | 546,000 | 123,291 | 23% |
| TOTAL | 49 | 4,906,412 | 5,776,523 | 118% |

To assess resource diversification success more cautiously, the study made an assumption that only 50% of the recorded, contracted fund agreements would be realised. In doing so, the amount received through externally mobilised funding comes to US\$5,776,523. This is equal to 118% of the total CSEF 2016 baseline of approved funds for coalitions.

There are clear differences in the findings arising between the respective regions. Coalitions within the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Latin America did not fare as well as those located in Africa and Asia, in terms of their regional pro-rata ability to mobilise additional funding. Findings reflect that coalitions located in the Middle East and Eastern Europe only mobilised additional resources amounting to approximately 20% of their 2016 CSEF regional funding envelope. In addition, only two out of the seven countries in the Middle East and Eastern Europe included in the study appear to have succeeded in resource mobilisation, with Sudan emerging as the most successful country. This does not necessarily mean that these coalitions are expending less effort to diversify their resources. It is also important to note that at least four countries in the region are currently under a state of emergency, in one form or another.

Latin America is largely seen by the donor community as ‘less needy’, as most of these countries fall into the category of lower-middle or middle-income countries. This makes it more difficult for national coalitions to mobilise other resources. In 2017, Latin America coalitions obtained non-CSEF funding amounting to US\$123,291 (23% of the amount granted by CSEF), the lion’s share of which went to Bolivia. One coalition, Haiti, reflected no external funding. Nicaragua succeeded in receiving confirmation of funds amounting to US\$3,000, although these amounts have not been contractually confirmed as yet.

In Africa, the situation is very varied and context-dependent. No data was received from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and South Sudan (with the latter coalition being a new entrant into the CSEF fold). At least nine coalitions mobilised substantially more than the amount granted by CSEF: Benin (US\$207k), Burkina (US\$193k), Malawi (US\$546k), Mozambique (US\$332k), Niger (US\$247k) and Zimbabwe (US\$394k). This does not, however, diminish the importance accorded to the CSEF funding, given the finding that such funding provides the foundation for the recipient coalition to be recognised as part of a larger community of reputed campaigners. The existence of CSEF funding provides other would-be donors with assurances in terms of viability, governance and administration principles of funding applicants.

It is also important to reflect on the role of BackUp GIZ, which provided at least eight coalitions in Africa with support in capacity building, budget tracking and other activities in 2017 – with delivery on these activities in turn hinging on the existence of office and administrative structures and resources. GIZ cannot use their present funding instruments to fund personnel costs or overheads.

In Asia, the situation is also very varied: Bangladesh and Cambodia are success stories. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) in Bangladesh runs a multi-year portfolio of US\$1.7 million, funded by DFID, UNESCO and EU. Cambodia has attracted an impressive US\$1.3 million in funding over two years from the EU, UNICEF, Misereor and DVV, for advocacy work. India has sourced external funding of US\$13k. South Pacific countries are however trailing behind. The experience of coalitions in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in sourcing additional funding is unclear, given that no responses have been received following requests for feedback.

As indicated in the 2016 CSEF Annual Report, seven coalitions¹⁰ have also focused on improving their sustainability through mobilising additional resources via increased/improved collection of annual membership fees, and special contributions towards specific activities. Unfortunately, this survey did not pose direct questions on the issue of membership fees. This is an aspect that should be investigated further, given that the ability of coalitions to raise membership fees and retain sound membership registers is an important measure of good governance.

6. Conclusion

As demonstrated through the rapid assessment outlined above, the CSEF is a significant mobiliser of alternative funds across all coalitions. The feedback from coalitions demonstrates that it is often only because of the available CSEF core funding that they are able to attract other donors, many of which do not offer institutional support for personnel or overhead costs. The positive outcome of resource diversification is welcomed. However, it is important to consider the more granular analysis, which reflects a situation characterised by stark disparities between coalitions. Thirteen coalitions across the

¹⁰ Albania, Bolivia, Georgia, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

regions are not attracting any additional funding. Five coalitions did not complete the table in the proposal template, and have not participated in the survey. Ten coalitions have only attracted one external funder. As such, the GCE cannot be completely satisfied with the successes registered in terms of resource diversification.

What the above analysis does show is that coalitions are working towards financial sustainability, and that these efforts are more effective when the institutional foundation of coalitions are supported and strengthened. There are however some coalitions that rely solely on CSEF funding. It would be good to look at ways to assist and support these entities in diversifying their income streams and donor funding sources.

Recommendations in this regard include:

- The development and implementation of a learning programme, centred on mechanisms through which to ensure successful resource mobilisation. To support this effort, a teaching plan will need to be developed, with the format providing for more successful coalitions to partner with newcomers and young coalitions that have as yet been unable to increase their external funding base. This learning programme could include the following activities:
 - Learning and knowledge-exchange meetings (face to face and/or online)
 - Peer visits (with those coalitions that have been less successful in accessing external funding engaging with and learning from coalitions that have succeeded in this area)
 - Structured training (e.g. on aspects such as proposal development)
- A parallel process, led by GCE on behalf of the civil society constituency, to locate alternative resources outside the sphere of traditional donors