

Learning Exchange Brief

Research for Advocacy – Using evidence to drive change: Case examples from the Civil Society Education Fund programme

Learning Exchange Briefing Series

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is a civil society movement that calls on governments to realise the right to education. With members in more than 90 countries, the network brings together grassroots organizations, teachers' unions, child rights groups, NGOs, parents' associations and community groups. GCE's collective work as a network encompasses collaboration at global level to influence international frameworks and policy debates. It also includes networking, and communication between members for shared learning. This work helps to strengthen impact at national and regional levels, and to build the movement-based character of GCE. This learning exchange series is produced by the Global Campaign for Education to support greater shared learning and capacity development on key strategic areas for the network, by synthesising knowledge and lessons learned across the network.

Purpose and origins of this learning exchange paper

This is the second paper in the learning exchange series¹. It aims to share learning emerging from the CSEF program (information on CSEF is provided below). This paper utilises information gathered from country level experiences within the CSEF program as well as data generated through CSEF's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system². This second learning exchange brief takes a deeper look at lesson 5 of the first paper in the series which focuses on national coalitions engagement in Local Education Groups (LEGs). The lesson briefly highlights the critical value of engaging with good evidence to build national education coalition advocacy credibility.

This Learning Exchange Brief presents 11 case examples of practice and lessons learned from national education coalitions. The case examples are detailed below by region and in alphabetical order. The lessons are linked to some guiding tips on good practices in effective research for advocacy, identified from a synthesis of the body of existing knowledge on this subject.

¹ The first learning exchange brief was published in March 2018 and focused on national education coalitions' engagement in Local Education Groups (LEGs).

² The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) online system is a core reporting and information management tool of the CSEF program which exists to collect, transmit, process, and store data and programmatic resources systematically to understand the progress being made through various interventions at three different levels: national, regional and global. Data used to inform this learning exchange brief was extracted from the MEL online system, specifically from sections of 2016 and 2017 biannual and annual reports, where coalitions reported on their research and analytical work.

Executive Summary

The CSEF programme requires all national education coalitions to generate and use relevant documentation and/or original and credible research, data collection and evidence building to inform sector policy. To align with this objective, a total of 135 analyses/studies were completed by 38 coalitions during the 2016 and 2017 years of CSEF implementation. Case examples from 11 coalitions in [Africa](#) (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone), [Asia](#) (Indonesia, Philippines), [Eastern Europe and the Middle East](#) (Moldova, Sudan) and [Latin America](#) (Bolivia, Honduras) were selected to inform this learning brief.

The selected coalitions opted for various type of research, most of them relying on partners, experts and external consultants, to conduct and finalise the analysis. Coalitions worked on topics as diverse as privatisation, inclusive education, education financing and taxation, school attendance, teacher trainings, accountability on SDG4, conflicts and the realisation of the human right of education.

The research, both qualitative and quantitative, were grounded in fact-checking, interviews, thorough data collection and reviews, and they helped coalition strengthen their credibility, profile, and policy advocacy. In many cases (like in Sierra Leone and Indonesia), the reports produced had a direct impact on the national education policy debate, and positively influenced the decisions made by stakeholders.

Despite the very different national contexts and research made, some key points contributed to the successes of the coalition studied: the relevance and timeliness of the study; the involvement of partners and discussions with policy-makers; solid evidence-based and fact-grounded reports; and a strong engagement and communications strategy to disseminate the findings of the research.

The following learning brief is divided into 3 parts: [an introduction](#) and definitions on the criteria used to select the case examples; the [description](#) of the research made by the 11 coalitions; and [key learnings](#) to draw from this analysis.

Definitions

The Global Campaign for Educations' focus on research as a foundation for successful advocacy

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) promotes education as a basic human right and mobilises civil society organizations (CSOs) to put pressure on governments and the international community to fulfil their commitments to provide free, high quality and inclusive public education for all. GCE aims to influence policies and practices of governments and other decision-makers. GCE does this in a number of ways, and a crucial mechanism is GCE's support to civil society engagement in education sector planning and implementation in over 60 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and Eastern Europe through the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF). The CSEF is coordinated by GCE and regional partners and financed largely by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that aims to strengthen education systems in developing countries by supporting governments to develop good quality national education sector plans.

The CSEF program seeks to ensure consultative national policy dialogue and strengthened government accountability to citizens for the achievement of equitable, inclusive and quality public education in all countries in which it operates. In order to achieve this, the CSEF works toward three mutually-reinforcing objectives related to policy participation: First, civil society and citizen awareness and engagement; secondly, quality research and analysis; and thirdly, building of knowledge and networks across countries and regions.

Aligned with its second objective, the CSEF requires all national education coalitions involved in the program to actively generate and use relevant documentation/analysis and/or engage citizens in original and credible research, data collection and evidence building – to inform sector policy dialogue on one or more of: a) domestic financing for education; b) equity and inclusion in education; c) quality education and learning; d) quality and inclusivity of education sector dialogue processes.

In working towards successful attainment of the second objective of the CSEF program, **GCE and CSEF implementing partners understand that research is a foundation for successful advocacy.** It is important for both:

- **An effective advocacy strategy** - by enabling thorough strategic analysis; and
- **Successful advocacy work** - by providing authoritative and accurate evidence to support advocacy.

Box 1. What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is generally understood as a process of engaging power-holders that aims to bring about change in process, policy or practice, so that structural causes of inequity and inequality are reduced. There are many definitions of advocacy, which can also use participatory approaches (social audits and accountability monitoring, mass lobbies, petitions, opinion polls, citizen’s juries, bringing rights-holders to testify to government bodies etc). Many organizations, movements and coalitions, including GCE, want to base their advocacy as much as possible on the voices of those who are primarily affected by the issues. Indeed, it is desirable that advocacy work creates space or opportunities for those affected by the issues to advocate on their own behalf.

Advocacy can therefore be seen as an approach to development and to securing the human right to education – with strategy being the defining characteristic of effective advocacy. It is a deliberate and planned process and takes place around a policy position held by an organization, movement or coalition. The key distinguishing feature is that it is heavily based on collecting facts and evidence and putting compelling solutions in front of decision-makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences and acting as a voice in policy processes for sets of more marginalized voices.

A commitment to research for advocacy among CSEF-supported Coalitions

It is said that every dollar spent on research is worth ten spent on lobbying, and that evidence works as fuel for advocacy. When research is thorough (gathered in a rigorous and systematic way), it is easier to develop a winning advocacy strategy.

Through CSEF support, national education coalitions have demonstrated a positive and wide commitment to investing in research and analyses to inform their advocacy strategies and efforts. A total of 135 analyses/studies were completed by 38 coalitions during the 2016 and 2017 years of CSEF implementation³.

Reflections on research quantity and quality

While the production of 135 research ‘pieces’ represents an extensive CSEF investment and an achievement in itself, GCE has learned that CSEF has historically lacked a definition of what should be counted as ‘quality’ research. As a result, it has been difficult to distinguish and assess research products of high and low quality. Similarly, GCE has learned that a shared definition of what counts as research which meets advocacy goals has also been unclear; and that ensuring shared and common understanding of these basic concepts in CSEF should be important aspects of the CSEF program. The net effect is that there have been deficiencies in the systematic analysis or tracking of the quality of

³ During 2016-2017, 54 coalitions were directly CSEF grant-supported. 38 therefore represents 70%. For the remaining 30%, while it may suggest a different degree of commitment, in most cases it is related to capacities, resources or prioritization of other activities.

studies, their use in coalition advocacy, or a deeper analysis to understand whether the research has enabled changes in policy, legislation processes or practice⁴.

Learning from these limitations, in 2016 GCE introduced an online Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system as an important step to help overcome some of the issues with accessibly collating research produced through CSEF support; the online system has in-built functions that can enable better sharing, learning and review of research products. Building on this step, in 2017 CSEF implementing partners collectively defined aspects of quality research, as shown in Box 2.

Box 2. CSEF's working definition of quality research elements

Research which is credible and original is capable of systematizing, connecting, relating, interpreting and constructing insights, knowledge and realities in order to demonstrate or defend a point of view, or to analyse and evaluate a given situation⁵.

The introduction of this Learning Exchange series is another important step towards addressing the limitations and enriching understanding of how CSEF-supported research has fuelled changes in education policy, processes or practice. Why is this important and why, especially, is research important for advocacy?

Box 3. Why is research important for advocacy?⁶

Research helps education actors gain a clear understanding of the otherwise complex causes and effects of inequity and disparities in public education, from the perspective of identifying practical and feasible policy solutions that make it possible to build a consensus in favour for change. ***It is impossible to argue logically and coherently for policy change without strong understanding of the issue that research provides.*** Advocacy research can:

- Give substance to coalitions' advocacy, and establish a coalition's reputation as an expert on the issue
- Provide feasible and workable solutions to a specific education rights issue
- Provide case studies, anecdotes and examples to make critical education issues 'come alive'
- Provide cost-benefit arguments, including the (often hidden) cost of alternatives and inaction
- Demonstrate public support or public concern
- Help to analyse an issue from different perspectives, including from the voices of those the issue affects most
- Help to disprove myths, rumours and false assumptions
- Analyse and provide counter arguments to positions held by stakeholders who may not be sympathetic to the human right to education agenda
- Provide evidence for policy positions
- Explain why previous strategies have or have not worked
- Provide the basis for media and public awareness work

Bringing an evidence base from the community or robust evidence-based information to policy discussions is a particularly unique role for civil society.

Learning what counts as quality research for advocacy in CSEF

While collectively developing a more comprehensive, shared and commonly understood definition of 'what counts as quality research', and 'what counts as research which meets advocacy goals' remains in the CSEF discourse and agenda, in this learning exchange brief, orientations and some lessons have been distilled from two sets of information sources: i) the vast body of existing knowledge and documentation on research rigour (quality) and research for advocacy, and; ii) case examples of

⁴ This observation was highlighted in a UNESCO desk study of research and monitoring carried out during the CSEF 2013-2015 phase, and similarly referenced in an independent Mid-Term Review of the CSEF 2016-2018 program.

⁵ Working definition developed in June 2017 following an extended face-to-face meeting of global, regional and some selected national CSEF implementing partners in Johannesburg, South Africa in May 2017.

⁶ Adapted from: *Participatory Advocacy: A Toolkit for VSO Staff, Volunteers and Partners*, VSO, November 2009, pp23-24.

practice and lessons from CSEF-supported experiences. Drawing from these information sources, determining 'what counts' could be informed by the following considerations:

Tensions between quality research and research for advocacy:

There have long been debates around what and who defines (high) quality research – with a commonly and widely held position that **quality research ensures the investigation processes are methodologically robust and systematic** – and can stand up to rigorous critique or questioning. There is little argument against this, but there are tensions when it comes to discussions about the neutrality of research, especially policy-orientated research. Traditionally it has been argued that an important determinant of research being methodologically rigorous and of high quality is that the research must be value-free; data and information are gathered and processed objectively. For this reason, research for advocacy is viewed by some as an inappropriate activity for researchers, as it is believed to undermine the neutrality of the research, and potentially to negatively affect research rigour and quality. This is because research for advocacy is (usually) deliberately designed for, and intended to, influence or attempt to influence governments (local and national), parliaments and/or political parties' policy, process or practice.

However, more recent positions recognise and underscore that “(policy) research is not neutral in its analysis. Even if exhibiting academic rigour and excellence, research is shaped by the political context in which it is produced and used to further the values of those who produce and commission it...(some) researchers have been more comfortable with a 'research uptake' model where researchers simply re-package research for non-academic audiences, believing this to be more neutral. However, this allows knowledge brokers and policymakers to cherry-pick the evidence that appears to support an existing position, and thus is no more neutral, and perhaps less rigorous, than engaging directly with advocates”⁷.

This position holds that high quality, methodologically sound policy research is not in itself a determinant of policy research effectiveness, and that debates about quality research versus research for advocacy posit a false dichotomy. When effectiveness is measured by responsiveness or uptake of research recommendations, policy research **critically involves engagement with advocacy actors who are experts in the local political realities** and can enable contextualization of the research.

The case examples of research for advocacy practice presented in this learning exchange brief bear testament to this latter position. Some commonly experienced lessons in CSEF on what counts as quality research for advocacy have emerged, and these are shared in Box 4.

Box 4. Some CSEF lessons on 'what counts' as quality research for advocacy

In addition to being methodologically rigorous and systematic to uphold legitimacy and credibility, quality research for advocacy:

- Is **designed and used in a way that recognises there is rarely a direct linear relation between a piece of research and policy change** – impact (policy, process and practice change) takes place over time and requires investment in significant, strong, purposeful advocacy efforts. While CSEF-supported coalitions understand that research is a foundation for successful advocacy, this usually takes long-term engagement by education coalitions and networks which understand the context, the politics and have relationships with key stakeholders.
- Is **grounded in local realities** and supports the coalition's longer-term goals, such as advocating to include education in political manifestos in Nicaragua.
- Has a **strong emphasis on policy engagement and communication**, and translation of the research into local contexts and for local audiences (including communities, local and regional authorities and policymakers), and a sensitivity to the complexity of the policy process: In some instances, a multitude of processes – both closed and open – contribute to the formulation of one policy or legislative framework, and the quality of the relationships established by the coalition at different levels with government and with the legislature is a key factor in being successful in using research to positively influence change.

Without these features, methodologically robust research alone is likely to have a slim chance of effecting change.

⁷ Pittore, K., te Lintelo, D.J.H, Georgalakis, J., Mikindo, T.; *Choosing between Research Rigour or Support for Advocacy Movements, a False Dichotomy?* IDS Bulletin Vol 47, No 6 (2016). Accessed online: <http://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/idsbo/article/view/2833/ONLINE%20ARTICLE>

As the lessons in the above Box indicate, CSEF-supported coalitions understand that research for advocacy is not a purely academic exercise. This is largely because its ultimate purpose is to generate knowledge that can be used to influence education policy, process or practice change, in order for the human right to equitable, inclusive and quality public education to be a reality, especially in the lives of the most marginalized peoples.

Yet, in a context of growing interest to understand how research evidence in CSEF is used to catalyse policy and practice change in the education sector⁸, methodology for measurement is constrained⁹. The process of assessing research to understand whether the research has enabled changes in policy, processes, practice or resource allocation is challenging. Research impacts are complex, non-linear and unpredictable in nature. True attribution is rarely possible and even assumptions around contribution need to be scrutinized and tested to avoid bias and enhanced perceptions of influence¹⁰. While a number of methods for assessing research impact have long been used (such as [Bibliometric Analysis](#) and Payback Model) and some new approaches continue to emerge (for example [Research Contribution Framework](#) and [Social Network Analysis](#)), all have important compromises¹¹.

Applying a case example of practice approach, this paper focuses on 11 research and analytical exercises undertaken by national education coalitions in the 2016-2018 phase of CSEF implementation to date. As CSEF coalitions have learned that research for advocacy impact takes place over time, the focus of these case examples is on how the research was undertaken, and how coalitions have been (or will be) using the findings to inform their education advocacy strategies, including their policy engagement and communication efforts. Some lessons on using research to influence positive public and government responsiveness and uptake are also presented.

Case Examples

Civil-society led survey of the prevalence of school drop-out and child labour at artisanal mining sites in Burkina Faso

The Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous du Burkina Faso (CN-EPT/BF)¹² was established in October 2000 following the World Education Forum held in Dakar in April the same year, and the coalition has been CSEF-supported since the end of 2009. CN-EPT/BF comprises 40 civil society organizations active in the education sector, and its membership includes national and international NGOs, teachers' unions and parents' associations, students' groups, disabled people's associations, youth and women's associations, organizations working in the field of literacy and the rights of the child, and the network of journalists and communicators in education, gender and development.

Contextual background: A landlocked Sub-Saharan country in West Africa, Burkina Faso ranks amongst the poorest countries in the world, and in 2016 the country was positioned at 185 out of 188 countries and territories on the Human Development Index¹³. In 2012, armed conflict and instability from neighbouring Mali brought about a humanitarian crisis and waves of refugees fled into Burkina Faso. Despite the country's name meaning "land of incorruptible people", corruption is a widespread and pervasive problem. In 2014, the country's head of state was ousted from the presidency in a popular uprising after having ruled Burkina Faso for 27 years. This political development was followed

⁸ Ibid, UNESCO 2015 and MTR 2018

⁹ This is the case across sectors, not only for the education sector. See for example: Milat, A. J., Bauman, A. E., & Redman, S. (2015). *A narrative review of research impact assessment models and methods*. Health Research Policy and Systems, 13, 18. Accessed online: <http://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-015-0003-1>

¹⁰ Start, D., & Hovland, I. (2004), *Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers*, [Research and Policy in Development Programmes](#), Overseas Development Institute, London. Accessed online: <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/194.pdf>

¹¹ Boaz, A., Fitzpatrick, S., & Shaw, B. King's College London & Policy Studies Institute, (2008). *Assessing the impact of research on policy: A review of the literature for a project on bridging research and policy through outcome evaluation (Final report)*. Accessed online: http://www.psi.org.uk/pdf/2008/bridgingproject_report.pdf

¹² English translation: The National Coalition for Education for All of Burkina Faso.

¹³ Source: HDR 2016, UNDP, Retrieved on 03 June 2018 from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/BFA.pdf

by the establishment of a transitional administration in November 2014. It was succeeded by a democratically elected government that commenced with the inauguration of a new president and a new National Assembly in late December 2015 and a new prime minister in January 2016.

Recent analyses have concluded that the primary education completion rate remains one of the lowest in Africa, at 57.6 percent in 2014¹⁴. In addition, 48 percent of children of official primary school age (6-11 years) were out of school in 2014, and there are significant disparities between the poorest and richest children, and similarly between children living in rural and urban areas¹⁵. Contributing to these formidable education challenges has been the proliferation of gold panning sites in the country, which are assuming alarming proportions with huge consequences for the education sector; increasingly high numbers of children have been dropping out of classes or refraining from entering school to work on gold mining sites in some of the worst forms of child labour. According to a report by the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity (March 2015), amongst miners there are 7,152 children, of whom 5,276 were in primary and 1,876 in high school who dropped out of school over the course of the year 2012-2013 to work with gold panning in nine regions of the country. Limited resources for the systematic enforcement of child labour laws impede government efforts to protect children and the lack of funding has undermined the implementation of child labour policies. Moreover, social programs related to the worst forms of child labour do not match the scale of the problem¹⁶.

Research focus: The rationale for this study was originally put forward during a consultative meeting of the 2016-2018 CSEF proposal by members of the regional committees of the coalition from the Boucle du Mouhoun, Hauts-Bassins and South-West regions. These regional coalition representatives made the case of high school drop-out levels in order for students to benefit from income-generating opportunities sought in artisanal mining sites in their regions, and the coalition committed to better document the issue to inform its advocacy work, under the theme “*fight against child labour at artisanal mining sites*”.

Research process: Fully funded by CSEF, the study was carried out between March and June 2017. A survey to study the occurrence of child labour and children out of school on mining sites was carried out at 45 primary schools, 11 secondary schools and 10 mining sites in four provinces in the South-West, Boucle du Mouhoun and Hauts Bassins regions¹⁷. Interviews were also conducted with the District Directors of Basic Education Circumscriptions (CCEB), mayors, representatives of gold mining companies, and parents of children from schools and the mining sites concerned.

A first workshop took place in March 2017 to train members of advocacy groups from the Boucle du Mouhoun, Hauts Bassins and South-West regions. Tools were developed for data collection and analysis (questionnaires, reporting templates and interview guide) which were validated by participants. These tools were used by regional data collection teams, each made up of six interviewers, who collected the data in two subsequent field visits at schools and mining sites. The six investigators per team were appointed by the members of the communal advocacy groups, to whom the results were later reported in a second workshop after all findings had been validated. The second workshop also produced a coalition position paper on child labour in artisanal mining sites and their rights to inclusive quality education.

Using the research for advocacy: Key findings of the research corroborated the coalition’s regional committee members’ anecdotal observations of alarming numbers of school drop-out caused by the lure of gold mines. For example, at Niokola School in the South-West Region, 34 percent of students dropped out of school to go to work on the mining sites. In addition, one of the mining companies, Korgho¹⁸, welcomed the CN-EPT advocacy initiative drawing attention to the phenomenon. The research was considered by Korgho to be valuable to support their own efforts to address the

¹⁴ Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.

¹⁵ Source: https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Burkina%20Faso.pdf

¹⁶ United States Department of Labor’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2013 Findings of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, Report on Burkina Faso. Retrieved on 03 June 2018 from <https://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/2013TDA/burkinafaso.pdf>

¹⁷ Specifically, the provinces surveyed were Poni, Houet, Tuy and Mouhoun.

¹⁸ The Korgho gold site is located in the province of Poni in the South-West region of the country.

problem, especially as it confirmed their internal analysis of the factors driving girls and boys out of school and into the mines.

The results of the survey were shared by the coalition during sensitization activities, such as theater forums and local radio discussion programs, involving parents and ‘mother educators’, teachers, students, gold miners and grassroots community members in Gaoua, Bobo-Dioulasso and Dédougou. In addition, the coalition organized face-to-face dialogical exchanges with local authorities (governors, high commissioners, regional and provincial directors of national education and literacy, mayors of communes, presidents of regional councils, traditional and religious leaders) of the three regions of the Boucle du Mouhoun, Hauts Bassins and South-West, as well as with national authorities (Ministry of Education and the National Assembly). During these hearings, the coalition presented specific recommendations to encourage the return of children from artisanal mining sites and for their retention in school. The position paper developed during the earlier mentioned workshop was used as a tool for dialogue with education decision-makers and parliamentarians.

Response and emerging influence: At the local level, the coalition’s advocacy efforts have proven effective; the coalition regional members monitored and documented that a large proportion of children who had dropped out of classes to work in artisanal mining sites re-joined their schools at the start of the school year 2017-2018¹⁹. The coalition is continuing to lobby the national level to more effectively enforce implementation of the legal frameworks and national policies and plans relevant to the fight against child labour, including "*The National Program against Child Labour at Artisanal Gold Mining Sites and Quarries in Burkina Faso*".

Lessons learned: The coalition identified that:

- The validity of collected data and the credibility of the research processes, supported by **a comprehensive communication plan** is a prerequisite for effectively influencing policy decision-makers. To achieve this, it is critical to ensure that the **capacity of researchers, including their ownership of the research processes is well developed** during the research design, planning and preparation phases.
- Investigating the **root causes of the problem** helped to identify and communicate **workable solutions**.

Researching local knowledge and attitudes to comply with compulsory schooling in Côte D’Ivoire

Established in 2010, the Réseau Ivoirien pour la Promotion de l’Education Pour Tous (RIP-EPT) coalition²⁰ comprises a diverse membership of 19 civil society organizations operational across 11 of the 31 regions in the country, and the coalition has been CSEF-supported since the end of 2013. In 2015, the State of Côte d’Ivoire declared that, from the start of the 2015-2016 school year, schooling was to be made compulsory for all children and young people from 6 to 16 years old. This was promulgated through the adoption of a regulatory and legal framework, Law Number 2015-635 of September 17th, 2015, which modified Law Number 95-639 of September 7th, 1995.

Two years after this declaration, in the last quarter of 2017, RIP-EPT set out to investigate barriers and enablers to the implementation of the compulsory schooling Act across the eleven regional areas of operation of the coalition. This research was extensive in geographic and stakeholder scope and fully funded by CSEF. Over 9,000 people were engaged in the research, including the eleven regional committees of the coalition, educational authorities (principals, regional advisors, school directors,

¹⁹ In the Hauts Bassins region, the percentage of school dropouts to artisanal mining sites in Koumbia commune dropped from 45% in 2016 to 39% in 2017, and to 11% in 2018. In Karangasso Viguè commune, the number of dropouts dropped from 176 in 2016 to 75 in 2017 and 4 in 2018.

²⁰ English translation: The Ivorian Network for the Promotion of Education for All.

teachers), regional political authorities (Regional Council Chairs, mayors and district representatives), parents, students, and additional CSOs active in education in the same eleven regions.²¹

This civil-society led research identified that the most commonly cited barriers to students enrolling and/or completing the full ten-year compulsory education cycle are i) lack of financial means at the household level (for text books, uniforms, transport, school fees – including ‘hidden’ fees); ii) parental and student perceptions of inadequate infrastructure in schools (overcrowded classrooms, lack of textbooks and learning facilities, including toilets), and; iii) a lack of awareness and understanding about compulsory schooling amongst particularly the poorest quintiles of the communities. Other obstacles which were a high frequency concern were socio-cultural beliefs, including prevalent practices related to the Islamic religion (Koranic school, forced and early marriage); the phenomenon of girls being directed towards employment as ‘maid girls’, and teenage pregnancies. The research also identified that, while relevant legislative frameworks are in place, government commitment, investment and will for its implementation is limited and slow.

As a result of learning from the research findings, the coalition has developed an advocacy strategy to promote sensitization of - and support to - parents on understanding the Act and its relevance. The coalition has also developed strategies to lobby relevant authorities to put in place action plans and programs to create enabling conditions for parents to comply with compulsory schooling.

Civil society calling the shots on regulating private education in Ghana

The Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) was established in 1999 with the mission of promoting and facilitating processes that ensure equity in access to free quality basic education for all Ghanaian children. With 36 full members, the reach of the coalition’s network extends to almost 200 civil society organizations, professional groups, educational/research institutions and other practitioners interested in promoting quality basic education for all. The coalition has received periodic CSEF grants since 2009.

Contextual background: Ghana has achieved remarkable progress with regard to access to education, particularly at the basic level, with the net enrolment rate (NER) at the primary level increasing from 78 percent in 2011 to 90 percent by 2016. At the junior high school level, the gross enrolment rate (GER) increased from 80 percent to 88 percent in the same period. Indicators also point to an increase in access to education at all levels in deprived districts, and gender parity also improved considerably at all levels between 2011 and 2016. This could be attributed to some policy measures, strategies and programs which were introduced to improve access to education including the school feeding program, capitation grant, free school uniforms, scholarships for girls in deprived districts and other similar interventions.

At the same time however, private primary schools proliferated by 45.7 percent between 2009 and 2014 (Education Sector Performance Report, 2014). While it was observed in 2015 that private schools constituted 29 percent of basic education schools in the country, this figure rose to 30 percent by 2017 (Ghana Ministry of Education, Education Sector Analysis, 2018). Under the provisions in the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the need to strengthen the national policy on the regulation of operations of private schools at the pre-tertiary level has become critical to ensure minimum standards for education delivery are achieved and maintained. This was acknowledged by the Minister for Education at the National Education Sector Annual Review meeting in 2016, where a directive was given for revision of the existing draft Education Regulations 2000 for Private Schools.

Research focus: GNECC contributed to the process by undertaking a critical review of the legal and policy frameworks governing private participation in education, in order to make recommendations from the perspective of civil society to the government for improving quality standards and accountability of private education providers, informed by international best practices. The aim was to inform and shape updating and finalizing the draft framework for regulating education provision

21 The study took place in the following regions: Abengourou, Aboisso, Bondoukou, Bouaké, Daloa, Gagnoa, Korhogo, Man, Odienné, San Pedro, and Yamoussoukro.

under both public and private management, with specific efforts to: i) Assess whether the regulations comply with international conventions and benchmarks; ii) Assess the status of implementation of the legal framework on private participation in education; and iii) Make recommendations on what policies and actions are needed to improve standards in the education sector.

Research process: This fully CSEF-funded study was externally commissioned, with quality oversight carried out by GNECC in partnership with the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT), the Tax Justice Network (TJN), Right to Play, and the Teachers and Educational Workers Union. This mixed-methods design study (involving in-depth interviews with a range of relevant stakeholders as well as secondary data analysis) was conducted and completed over a five-month period from August – December 2017. A first draft of the report was reviewed by the GNECC Secretariat before a second draft was shared for review by participants of a subsequent validation workshop, which was conducted with coalition members and wider civil society stakeholders who are not members of the GNECC coalition (such as Teachers and Educational Workers Union, Tax Justice Network and the Human Rights Advocacy Centre). The validation meeting provided an opportunity for final and collectively agreed critical inputs by civil society members and other partners in the campaign against privatization, before the report was finalized in December 2017.

Amongst its findings and recommendations, the study concluded that; a Bill needs to be drafted and approved and civil society must be meaningfully engaged in the drafting as there is no record of adequate stakeholder consultations taking place prior to the draft Bill being produced. It was also advised that a legally independent entity needs to be urgently mandated by the Ministry of Education, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders participate in the development of a regulation Bill, as a guiding legislative tool for the establishment, management and supervision of all public and private schools at the pre-tertiary level.

Using the research for advocacy: The findings of the research are being used to inform civil society inputs during consultation on the revised private schools regulations and on campaigns against privatization. The report is also being used to engage the Ministry of Education and GES which is revising the existing regulation on private schools. The Sector Working Group (LEG) and Development Partners Group were informed about the research and updated on progress. As a result, the Ministry of Education committed to organize stakeholder consultations on the new regulation. In view of inadequate information on the operations of private schools, this research report will be a useful reference material during the stakeholder consultations which are yet to happen. GNECC's advocacy on private participation is recognized by the Ministry of Education to the extent of being identified as a collaborative agency to support the Ministry to standardize accreditation of private schools to facilitate monitoring of their operations.

Response and emerging influence: The monitoring of operations of private schools has been moved from the Private Education Unit (which was under-resourced) of the Ghana Education Service to the National Inspectorate Board (relatively better-resourced). This action by government represents a stronger commitment to monitor the activities of private education providers and make them more accountable.

Lessons learned:

- The main challenge faced was gathering adequate information on the extent of compliance to regulations by private schools since the regulation, which has been in draft form for over ten years, has not really been enforced. Most of the **available data was also not comprehensive**. This meant that **more time** than was initially intended had to be given to conduct the research, **affecting the delivery of other advocacy activities** that were dependant on the completion of the report.
- Frequent follow-ups with stakeholders and partners before the report was completed was critical to sustaining support for the project. Informing stakeholders about the activity was important in maintaining attention of government officials on improving effectiveness of regulations on private schools. **Sustained engagement with policy makers and stakeholders** is important for the achievement of desired results.

Moment of truth - influencing an increase in funding for Special Needs Education in Malawi

The Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) in Malawi was formed in July 2000. It is a 97 member-strong coalition which has been CSEF grant-supported since 2009. The assessment of the financing of SNE (Special Needs Education) and challenges affecting the subsector was carried out and completed during the period October 2016 – February 2017.

Contextual background: Malawi is a low-income country and one of the poorest in the world (HDI 2016). Nonetheless, the country has seen improvements in gross enrolment rates (GER) for primary education across both genders²². In addition, according to the 2015 Education Sector Report, the enrolment rate for special needs (SN) students has increased slightly (2% in 2013 to 2.4% in 2015). About 8.8 percent (421,318) of total enrolments were orphans in 2015.

Malawi has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRT) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). These two conventions mutually reinforce each other in promoting the changes needed to ensure that children with disabilities are equally guaranteed their human rights, including their human right to education. However, there is a dearth of reliable information on the prevalence and types of impairment in children and the learning needs for this population in Malawi. The 2008 Malawi Housing and Population Census estimated the overall prevalence of disability to be 2.4 percent among children and 3.8 percent in the general population. However, the reliability of this survey was limited²³ and data are urgently needed to plan appropriate and accessible education provision (and other services) and for evidence-based advocacy for children with disabilities.

Research focus: While the Special Needs Education Policy was developed in 2007, there have been limited deliberate efforts to make the learning environment inclusive as well as to increase enrolment for SN learners. For the 2016/17 financial year, the education budget was allocated 17.4 percent of the national budget while the SNE sub-sector was allocated 2.55 percent. In this context, CSEC has placed a focus on contributing to increasing access to basic education for special needs learners by influencing an increase of 0.6 percent of the national education budget allocated to SNE by the end of 2018. One of CSEC's strategies to this end was to conduct a study aimed at exploring the financing modalities for SNE in line with meeting the provisions of the 2007 SNE Policy.

Research process: The study was externally commissioned by CSEC with full funding from CSEF and involved the participation of CSEC coalition member organizations including Visual Hearing Impairment Membership Association, Teachers Union of Malawi, and Malawi Union of the Blind in providing and validating data generated and findings. The research was both qualitative and quantitative, comprising an extensive review of literature, including national education budgets from the 2014/15 fiscal year to date. This was complemented by key informant interviews, group discussions and site visits. A quantitative research tool was developed and used to assess the state of SNE elements at the school level and the implementation of Special Needs Education initiatives in the system. The study was carried out in the four districts of Mchinji, Kasungu, Chiradzulu and Nkhatabay and was limited to the primary and secondary levels. Kasungu and Chiradzulu were selected because they have specialized SNE institutions, while Mchinji and Nkhatabay are districts where CSEC is carrying out some interventions on SNE.

Using the research for advocacy: Key findings and conclusions of the research were:

- i) Lack of trained teachers in SNE, lack of assistive devices and appropriate teaching and learning material, inadequate assessment and screening for identification of learning difficulties, poor attitudes towards persons with a disability, including from communities, teachers and other learners.
- ii) Financial modalities - most of the funding for SNE comes from government through district assemblies. This funding falls far short of the needs of quality SNE. Of the 2016/17 financial year SNE

²² Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2015.

²³ Tataryn, Myroslava et al. "Childhood Disability in Malawi: A Population Based Assessment Using the Key Informant Method." *BMC Pediatrics* 17 (2017): 198. *PMC*. Web. 16 May 2018.

budget, 0.06 percent was allocated to SNE institutions like the Montfort College and resource centres established in some primary and secondary schools, and 0.38 percent was allocated to all primary schools for the purchase of teaching and learning materials. Although some SNE projects and institutions are supported by civil society development partners, it was difficult to quantify this as no accurate records are maintained by the beneficiary institutions.

iii) An option to address shortage of specialist teachers in the short and long term is to convert a Teacher Training College (TTC) into a specialist college and also re-introduce the discontinued Open Distance Learning Program at Montfort, as the program proved to be cost effective and time efficient.

iv) Provision of Resource Centres across the country will take time but can be achieved through a long-term plan with annual allocations for this purpose and working with Development Partners who are providing school infrastructure to include these centres in the support package.

v) Civil society organizations should play a bigger role in advocacy and campaigns to change attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

Using the research report as the basis, the coalition developed a position paper to engage the Ministry of Education and members of parliament and other stakeholders on the need to increase funding to the subsector in response to the challenges identified.

Response and emerging influence: The research findings contributed to influencing an increase in budgetary allocation to the education sector by 1.3 percent from 17.4 percent in 2016/17 to 18.7 percent in the 2017/18 financial year. Furthermore, the report was used to guide the development of the Strategy on Inclusive Education as the recommendations made in the study were central to shaping the strategy. The key recommendation was on converting a TTC into a SNE teacher training institute which was discussed at length, with discussions still continuing at ministry level. The report was also used in other existing platforms (Local Education Group, Sector Working Group, Thematic Working Group and other policy dialogue forums) to share key findings from the study. Media engagements on the report were used to reach the broader society.

Lessons learned: Sourcing accurate/reliable financial information from Special Needs cost centres is a challenge which has governance and accountability implications.

Money talks, and research provides the information power to generate public demand for increased domestic financing of education in Sierra Leone

Established in 1999, by end 2017 the coalition Education for All – Sierra Leone (EFA-SL) has developed into a 56-member strong national coalition of civil society organizations, professional groupings, education research institutions and other actors in Sierra Leone’s lobby for the implementation of quality and inclusive education for all. The coalition has been CSEF-grant supported since 2009.

Contextual background: Broken by a decade-long devastating civil war (1991-2002) and then heavily burdened by the effects of the 2013-2014 Ebola outbreak, the education system in Sierra Leone has been on a slow road to recovery. The first nine years of education are free and compulsory for six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary school, but this law is faced with multi-faceted challenges to enforce due to the shortage of facilities as a consequence of the war. Sierra Leone continues to struggle with the difficult tasks of rebuilding schools, training teachers, and educating children who have never stepped into a classroom.

Prior to the Ebola crisis, a startling 50 percent of school-aged children were out of school (21% of primary school age, 6-11 years; and 29% of secondary school age, 12-17 years)²⁴. Factors influencing children being out of school include high levels of poverty (Sierra Leone ranks 181 of 188 on the Human Development Index), forcing children to remain or drop out of school to supplement family income, especially in families where children lost parents during the civil war. Additionally, while compulsory schooling is mandated to be free, costs associated with school materials, uniforms, and other indirect costs such as contributions to school feeding programs keep children out of school. With a lack of

²⁴ Education Policy and Data Center (2014). Retrieved from https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Sierra%20Leone.pdf

trained teachers (40 percent of primary school teachers are untrained), a dire shortage of textbooks, overcrowded classrooms and poor school infrastructure and learning environments, many families do not value the costs when weighed against the poor quality of their child's education. Physical and sexual exploitation and abuse, child trafficking, early and forced marriage, disability, homelessness, involvement as a child soldier, and teenage pregnancy are further factors keeping children out of school, as well as visibly pregnant girls being banned from mainstream schools and from taking public exams²⁵. Compounding these existing challenges, the Ebola virus outbreak closed schools for 10 months and many learners never returned again²⁶. For girls, the closure of schools for 10 months resulted in increased vulnerability for sexual assault as well as the need to "sell sex" as a survival mechanism, and Sierra Leone saw a sharp spike in the already very high rates of teenage pregnancy²⁷.

With education being allocated only 11 percent of the national budget – and the education sector seeing an average of just 3 percent of GDP between 2000 and 2016²⁸, the investment in education and pace of recovery is not sufficient for the many children missing out on education.

Research focus: EFA-SL's starting position for the research was the understanding that education is not a short-term, once-off, quick win, particularly against the contextual challenges which Sierra Leone's education system faces. It is a long-term investment that requires predictable financing, and this is a major challenge in Sierra Leone where government overwhelmingly makes short and medium-term investment decisions, driven by Medium Term Expenditure Plans (supported by the IMF) and the political demands of electoral cycles. The coalition upholds that such enormous education challenges faced by the country need systemic solutions and sustainable financing – features that are closely identified with taxation. The coalition therefore set out to investigate the potential of taxation to generate sustainable revenue to improve public spending on education in Sierra Leone.

Research process: EFA-SL commissioned this fully CSEF-funded study in partnership with coalition member organizations and partners having relevant existing thematic knowledge and capacities (Fet Di Po -Sierra Leone, Knowledge for Community Empowerment Organization (KoCEPO), Tinap for Education, World Child Organization), who collaborated on planning the study, provided enumerators for data gathering and supported data processing and analysis, as well as review and input to the research report. Additional coalition partners supported with research quality scrutiny (ActionAid Sierra Leone, UNICEF, Budget Advocacy Network, and Western Area Budget Advocacy Network). The study, which commenced in November 2017 and was concluded in February 2018, used a mixed methods design. Secondary data sourced from the Government of Sierra Leone, such as the Education Sector Plan, Census report and Budget Estimates was interrogated to establish connections between taxation and investment in education. Qualitative information on specific issues relating to challenges in national tax administration was gathered through in-depth interviews including with the Head of the Tax Policy Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and senior officers in the Monitoring, Research, and Planning and Domestic Taxes Departments of the National Revenue Authority. Included in the analysis is estimated revenue forgone as a result of harmful tax practice and weak global and domestic policy regulatory frameworks.

Using the research for advocacy: As the research was technically complex, and there was no direct community participation in the research processes, the coalition translated the findings into accessible formats to engage with its full membership and the public, such as through radio debates and phone-in television programs, and through training for coalition CSO and network members on education financing and taxation, who subsequently took the discussions to their constituencies. In addition,

²⁵ The prohibition was declared official government policy in April 2015, shortly before schools re-opened following the Ebola crisis. By May 2018, the ban remained in force, and Sierra Leone is facing litigation through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) court. For information see for example: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sierra-leone/regional-court-judge-sierra-leone-schools-ban-pregnant-girls>

²⁶ Boisvert, K., *Case Study Report: Save the Children Sierra Leone* (2017). Education in Crisis and Conflict Network. 1. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_eccn/1

²⁷ Denney, L., Gordon, R., Kamara, A., and Lebby, P. *Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict: Change the context, not the girls: Improving efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone*, Report 11, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, ODI, London. Retrieved from: https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/RR11_Change-the-context-not-the-girls_Improving-efforts-to-reduce-teenage-pregnancy-in-Sierra-Leone.pdf

²⁸ Source: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Sierra-Leone/Education_spending/

recognising that taxation and the complex linked power dynamics is a sensitive debate in Sierra Leone, the coalition engaged face-to-face with different stakeholders including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance National Revenue Authority, and Local Councils Heads of Schools, some of whom were invited as moderators and panellists on radio on specific topics related to taxation and education. This strategy helped to create an enabling environment for broader public debate and awareness raising about sources of revenue and the gaps in financing education in the country. At the same time, the coalition capitalized on the opportunity of the then prevailing presidential campaigning by presenting the study findings and making the case for revenue generation for education through taxation to the opposition party at the time - Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP).

Response and emerging influence: The public debates, especially those hosted on radio, drew the attention of authorities particularly as media attention and public engagement grew. The SLPP were later elected to power in April 2018, and the coalition has tracked evidence that revenue generation is the SLPP's key 'mantra' for realising the now ruling party's campaign promise for free primary, junior and senior secondary education. The first Executive Order by the incoming President upon assuming power proclaimed a Single Treasury Account (STA) system to facilitate and consolidate improved national revenue generation (Executive Order No 1: 9 April 2018). Moreover, in his Presidential Address in Parliament on 10 May 2018, President Julius Maada Bio committed to increase and sustain a 20 percent national budget allocation to education.

Lessons learned: The coalition identified that:

- The research was not only **timely**, presenting up-to-date information in the run up to national elections, but it was also **grounded in reality**, and provided practical, feasible and cost-effective solutions to an enormous national challenge.
- **Intense advocacy efforts**, especially through community structures and the use of mass media (radio and TV) at peak periods attracted not only the attention of policy makers and political parties, but also increased citizens' demands and participation in political and education debates.
- For the study to be **credible and owned by stakeholders**, the coalition had to ensure extensive inclusion of members in the research planning, implementation and critique of the research processes.

Leveraging partnerships to effectively engage policymakers in Indonesia

The coalition NEW Indonesia was formally established in 2010, the same year in which the coalition first gained CSEF grant-support²⁹. As a coalition of 40 member-organizations, NEW Indonesia focuses its efforts on influencing the national education budget allocations policy, as well as lobbying the Constitutional Court to ensure 12-year compulsory education. NEW Indonesia also promotes the availability of schools close to marginalized communities living in remote areas, adequate infrastructure and equitable access to non-formal education.

Contextual background: In 2016, Indonesia allocated 20 percent of the total national budget for education. However, the 20 percent figure is less than 3 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In addition, more than 75 percent of the 20 percent is for salaries and recurring costs, with the remaining (and limited) 25 percent of the 20 percent allocated to improving the quality of education through teacher training, construction of school infrastructure, and help to schools such as through subsidies for school operations (called Bantuan Operasional Siswa - BOS) and scholarships for students. In addition, the National Constitution Act of 1945 defines that the State has an obligation to ensure access to education for every citizen but does not specify the level of education guaranteed. However, Act No. 20 of 2003 in reference to the National Education System guarantees citizens a *nine-year* compulsory or equivalent non-formal education.

The nine-year cycle is shaped by the budget allocation, with existing education policies and the budget focusing more on formal education in primary and lower secondary school levels. Additionally,

²⁹ Although not a GPE partner country, Indonesia is eligible for CSEF support according to the list of approved countries in the 2016-2018 CSEF proposal.

the Constitutional Court can only authorize - but not mandate - government (central and local) to implement 12-year compulsory education, as the Court accommodates the fiscal capacity of the government. NEW Indonesia members have sought to generate sufficient evidence to lobby the Constitutional Court to promulgate 12-year compulsory education in the Law on the National Education System, so that structural changes are made, and local and central government are legally required to implement the 12-year learning cycle in alignment with the commitments of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

Research focus: To inform this advocacy agenda, the coalition carried out a review of 20 district education budget allocations³⁰, with the objective of scrutinizing the share and size of the budget for specific education needs, such as allocations for school infrastructure, teacher training, development and salaries, and non-formal education and comparing allocations in both public and private schools. The research, which was carried out over six months from May to October 2016 and fully funded by CSEF, was complemented by a review of the national policy and legislative frameworks relevant to compulsory education.

Research process: The coalition adopted a partnership-centric and horizontal approach to the research, involving coalition member civil society organizations (CSOs) and academia, as well as representation from government, especially the Ministry of Education (MoE) and regional bodies for planning and development (called Badan Perencana Pembangunan Daerah - BAPPEDA). The CSOs and academic institutions collaborated on the research design and data analysis processes, while the MoE and BAPPEDA contributed to the data gathering processes – particularly through providing access to budget data. After the data was analysed, the coalition facilitated focus group discussions (FGDs) with education stakeholders (local and central MoE, schools and teachers and other NGOs working in the sector) to verify the information and confirm the findings.

Using the research for advocacy: The research findings informed the development of a policy brief which was shared with Parliamentary education commissions, the National Executive Council of Government, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs, all coalition members at national, provincial, district and grassroots levels, other education NGO advocates and media through a series of face-to-face interventions and public forums. Public-awareness activities included a press conference after the coalition engaged face-to-face with a mass media editor to secure interest, and further communication of the key findings and their implications through a radio talk show, online print and social media.

Response and emerging influence: Engagement with two Parliamentary commissions (Commission 10 on Education and Commission 8 on Islamic Education), as well as with parliamentarians at the local and district levels proved particularly fruitful: The research findings reportedly caused alarm amongst Parliamentarians – who claimed they were not previously aware of the extent of the multiple challenges, especially around regulatory support at the local level and budget allocations to support national commitments to 12 years of compulsory education. Subsequently, during Parliamentary hearings in 2017 in which the Ministers of Education were present, Parliament members asked critical questions which confirmed NEW Indonesia's analysis that the national level does not have the power to mandate local government to implement the national compulsory education for 12 years policy. As a result, NEW Indonesia has gained traction in legitimizing its advocacy targeting provincial and district level governments.

Moreover, NEW Indonesia's research and advocacy contributed to influencing a policy gain that can enable more students to complete their 12-year education: The Ministry of Education and Culture signed Regulation 17 of 2017 which enforces at least a 20 percent quota for school enrolment of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and some regencies (political sub-divisions of a province in Indonesia) have already started to implement this quota (Jakarta, Banten, Central Java, and South

³⁰ The 20 Districts were: Aceh Besar, Kota Pekalongan, Kota Banda Aceh, Gunung Kidul, Serdang Bedagai, Bojonegoro, Bengkalis, Kota Malang, Kota Palembang, Mempawah, Bandung, Maros, Sukabumi, Jembrana, Kota Sukabumi, Lombok Timur, Cilacap, Kupang, Kebumen, Kota Pare-Pare.

Sulawesi). South Sulawesi has gone further to ensure the implementation of 12 years of compulsory education through the promulgation of Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2017.

Lessons learned: The coalition observed the following as important determinants for success:

- The process of **partnership, coupled with building on existing relationships with the political elite** helped to improve the research acceptance. The coalition gained access to policymakers over time; firstly, through formal administrative protocols and then built rapport face-to-face with targeted decision-makers.
- Evidence-based advocacy needs to **demonstrate the impact of a government policy** not only on a specific education priority (such as access and inclusion), but also on the development of the country more broadly.
- Research findings need to be **presented and communicated in multiple formats**, tailored to each audience, with information needs of policymakers (content and format) being taken into account.

What about the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers after 50-years (1966-2016) of implementation in the Philippines?

The Civil Society Network for Education Reforms (E-Net) was established in the Philippines in 2000 and the coalition had 88 civil society members by end 2017. E-Net is one of the ‘youngest’ recipients of CSEF grant support, which began in March 2016. This extensive summative review commenced in July 2016 and was finalised in October 2017.

Contextual background: Almost ten percent of the estimated 39 million Filipinos aged 6 to 24 years are out-of-school children and youth (OSCY)³¹. Education financing is a critical factor with government expenditure on education only averaging 2.5 percent of GDP in the past decade, well below the East Asian regional average of 3.6 percent of GDP and South Asia’s average of 3.8 percent³². In this context, the E-Net coalition has placed a strategic focus on advocating for increased domestic financing of education in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to significantly contribute to attracting and retaining qualified teachers, children and youth (back) into the public education system.

Research focus: Over the past decade, the Philippines has increasingly faced a crisis of qualified teacher recruitment and retention because of high teacher-pupil ratios (1:45 in the 2016/2017 academic year at the elementary level), meagre salaries, unsatisfactory working conditions, and little teacher support and professional growth³³. The coalition therefore conducted a review of the extent to which the provisions of the special law for teachers – RA 4670 – known nationally as the ‘Magna Carta for Public School Teachers’, continue to be implemented since it was legislated half a century ago on June 18, 1966.

The rationale for this evaluative exercise was two-fold: first to have a better understanding of the status of teaching conditions against the provisions of the Magna Carta; and secondly, to use the opportunity of the review to ensure teaching staff have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities as determined by the Magna Carta.

³¹ National 2016 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS). In this report, OSCY refers to family members 6 to 14 years old who are not attending formal school; and family members 15 to 24 years old who are currently out of school, not gainfully employed, and have not finished college or a post-secondary course.

³² UNESCO Institute for Statistics and World Bank online Databank.

³³ See for example Education International’s article on salary challenges of teachers in the country: <https://ej-ie.org/en/detail/15229/the-philippines-education-union-mobilises-against-low-pay>, or a local news article on the same subject dating back to 2010: <http://bulatlat.com/main/2010/10/09/filipino-educators-demand-for-just-compensation-humane-working-conditions-on-world-teachers-day/>, or a Manila Times 2014 article on overcrowded classrooms: <http://www.manilatimes.net/too-many-students-too-few-classrooms/101219/> reported as an ongoing problem still in 2017: <https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/cebu-news/2017/05/15/1700464/classrooms-shortage-still-problem>, as well as a local news article on why Filipino teachers are attracted to teach overseas: <https://www.rappler.com/business/economy-watch/27642-pinoy-teachers-earn-less-than-us-counterparts>.

Research process: E-Net carried out the review in consultation with coalition member teachers' organizations and their members³⁴. Consultations and Focus Group Discussions (participated in by teachers from the National Capital Region (NCR) and Central Luzon (CL) and National Council members of participating organizations) were held from the period July-November 2016, following which the coalition analysed the data and completed the validation of the findings with the members (*mentioned in footnote 34*) by October 2017. All the review processes were fully funded by CSEF.

Using the research for advocacy: The review found that many of Magna Carta's thirty-six (36) legislative provisions intended to protect the professional rights and benefits of teachers have remained unimplemented, improperly or under-implemented fifty years on, and that the majority of this law's provisions have consistently been un- or underfunded throughout the years 1966-2016.

It further identified that all of Magna Carta's progressive provisions such as study leave with pay, have become the subject of arbitrary and confiscatory issuances, curtailing and/or abolishing gains previously won related to teachers' rights to academic freedom and legal protection guaranteed by the Magna Carta and other existing laws such as teachers' rights under the Education Act of 1982 (Batas Pambansa 232) and the Bill of Rights of the Philippine Constitution.

The processes involved in conducting the review contributed to mobilizing teachers to investigate how their rights have been violated and to voice their concerns through a number of position papers submitted to legislators and the Department of Education. In addition, in October 2017, E-Net prepared a policy paper based on the review findings which was submitted to government, urging the Department of Education as chief implementing agency of the Magna Carta (as mandated under Section 30 thereof) to review the implementation of the Magna Carta in consultation with teachers' unions and organizations. The policy paper also calls on the Department of Education to launch a nationwide information campaign on the provisions of the Magna Carta.

The involvement of teachers in this process further contributed to an increased demand from teachers' associations to ensure accountability for the implementation of SDG 4. It additionally contributed to a widely supported and reported campaign to hold the Philippine President accountable to his presidential canvassing promise of increasing teaching staff salaries.

Response and emerging influence: Positive results are already emerging: some provisions of the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, such as continuing professional development of teachers, payment of overtime and hardship allowances, and in some areas adherence to the mandatory 6 hours teaching time are being lawfully implemented. In October 2017, Education Secretary Leonor Briones issued a directive allowing regional offices to start computing and processing the special hardship allowance (SHA) of around 61,000 qualified public-school teachers nationwide³⁵. Government has also increased the allocation of the national education budget for new teaching positions. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has approved the creation of 75,242 teaching positions for school year 2018-2019³⁶.

Lessons learned: Through the above processes, the Coalition has learned that:

- **Engaging primary stakeholders** that the research most effects (in this case teachers) is a **protracted process** due to their demanding teaching schedules and priorities that have to be navigated, and consultations organised in alignment with the academic calendar.
- Unifying all teachers' organizations around a common goal is a complex, sensitive and politicized process against the backdrop of the historical-political context of the country. Carrying out a series of **capacity building activities** over time to build common understanding and consensus is a **crucial part of the process** of engaging citizens in social accountability approaches to education advocacy.

³⁴ Action and Solidarity for the Empowerment of Teachers (ASSERT); Public Services Labour Independent Confederation (PSLINK); Samahang Manggagawang Pilipino – National Alliance of Teachers and Office Workers (SMP-NATOW); Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC), and; Teachers & Employees Associations for Change and Education Reforms, Inc.(TEACHERS, Inc.). All are national teachers' organizations and unions.

³⁵ See for example; <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/10/20/1750984/61000-teachers-receive-special-hardship-allowance#X0xeUhsPVSwz9Is.99>

³⁶ For further information, see: <https://www.dbm.gov.ph/index.php/secretary-s-corner/press-releases/list-of-press-releases/787-dbm-approves-creation-of-75-242-new-teaching-positions>

Ensuring the *involvement* of main stakeholders *in all aspects of advocacy* – from research, planning to actual campaigning makes them more active and committed to participate in advocacy activities such as policy dialogues and lobby work. They are *able to own the advocacy* because they have been fully involved in the process, especially in identifying and lending their voices on *issues important to them*.

Implementation of inclusive education in Moldova – there's a long way to go

The APSCF coalition (Alliance of Active NGOs in the field of Child and Family Social Protection) in Moldova was registered in 2002 and has a total membership of 86 civil society organizations. APSCF has been CSEF grant-supported since January 2014. The focus of the research was on the implementation of inclusive education. The research was undertaken during 2016-2017 and was fully funded by CSEF.

Contextual background: The Republic of Moldova has inherited the soviet model of a segregated educational system which comprises mainstream schools, auxiliary schools and special schools without any mechanisms of adequate evaluation of learners' gains. The former educational system was focused on the 'medical model' of treating disability, according to which any child who was not able to comply with the mainstream school's eligibility criteria was considered a 'problem' and sent to an auxiliary school or special school. The ratification of the UN Convention on Children's Rights (1993) by the Republic led to the recognition of the value of children who need to be protected, educated and sustained. This provided changes and new possibilities for children living in Moldova.

In the last five years the education system of Moldova has passed through several restructuring processes, which included a) optimizing educational units, b) deinstitutionalization and c) development and implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy. Deinstitutionalization and inclusive education are interdependent processes and pursue the objective of ensuring the right of all children to education – as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. The deinstitutionalization process began in 2007 as a result of the approval of the National Strategy and Action Plan on reform of the residential child care system for the years 2007-2012 (Government Decision No. 784). In line with the deinstitutionalization process, the Government began the development and implementation of inclusive education policies at national level. In this context, the Program for Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova for 2011-2020 was approved. This stipulates that all children of the Republic have the right to enrol at the school closest to their home and to benefit from specialized educational services, if necessary, based on a complex assessment. Specialized educational services include: speech therapist, psychologist, teaching support, Resource Centre for inclusive education, etc. The process of inclusive education is supported by Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services (PAS), each of 8-10 specialists in the field who are responsible for assessing the educational needs of children and assisting in the inclusion process in school. At national level, the Republican Centre for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance (RCPA) was created to provide methodological support to PAS in the educational inclusion of all children.

The coalition's key advocacy work is directed on 1) the engagement of local civil society in public policy planning and monitoring and in mobilizing local communities for an enhanced inclusive education in Moldova; 2) enhancing the participatory, evidence based and human rights based policy reform and budgeting processes related to inclusive education in Moldova; and 3) enhancing the quality of teaching capacities and practices in schools and kindergartens in Moldova so that schools become more accessible for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Research focus: The purpose of the research was to assess the perceptions of different stakeholders on the progress of the implementation of inclusive education in order to identify positive practices, learned lessons and challenges for the development and implementation of policies based on inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova.

Research process: The study was commissioned by APSCF, and two external consultants were contracted to develop the whole study, including collection of data, writing reports, etc. The coalition partnered with the AO Keystone Human Services International Moldova Association whose main focus

is on people with a disability. The applied research methods included structured interviews, surveys, focus groups, and analysis of statistical data. The research was conducted in 20 schools, including 10 pilot schools, which were supported previously by NGOs in implementing inclusive education, and 10 schools similar to the pilot schools according to their characteristics (town, school type, number of children), but which did not benefit from NGO support. The schools were selected from all three geographical areas (North, Centre, South). 40 percent of schools were urban and 60 percent rural.

In total, 400 students (200 students with, and 200 students without SEN), 100 educators, 15 school directors and 15 pedagogical support service (SAP) executives were surveyed. 10 focus groups with 100 people were organized, (with teachers, students without SEN, parents of students with and without SEN, multidisciplinary teams, and support services in school). Statistical data on inclusive education provided by the RCPA (Republican Centre for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance) and the results of RCPA accessibility research were analysed.

Using the research for advocacy: The research found there are still many difficulties and barriers in the implementation of inclusive education. The research has accordingly been used for developing advocacy materials, such as position statements addressed to stakeholders³⁷, info-graphics, and for media campaigns. At the end of 2017 and in early 2018, APSCF started to address the authorities more systematically, referring to the main recommendations of the baseline study. The research has been widely disseminated as follows:

- On a national level, during events such as a conference held with 150 teachers from all over Moldova; meetings with teachers from universities; press club developed by APSCF; Civic Fest which is the main event that brings together civil society organizations; and others.
- To representatives of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research; some exemplars were offered to the RCPA; PAS from 35 districts; parents of children with SEN and APSCF members.

Response and emerging influence: The baseline study was widely promoted on social media, online and offline media. At an international level, the study was submitted as an abstract to a publication during the DARE International Scientific Conference - Research, Learning, Teaching and Student Support, organized on 20-21 November 2017, in Tbilisi.

Lessons learned: Research and analytical pieces are very important for advocacy work, as they can be used to address stakeholders, relevant actors in the sector, as well as **gain involvement of citizens in the evidence-based arguments/facts**. Behind an effective advocacy campaign are strong messages based on the facts from gathered data and the results of research.

Peace and conflict disparities – different needs, different costs – the reality of achieving quality education for all in Sudan

The Sudanese Coalition for Education for All (SCEFA) was established in 2003, and officially registered in 2005. It currently has a membership of 67 organizations and has been CSEF grant-supported since December 2011.

Contextual background and research focus: Although there has been a substantial increase in primary school enrolment after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005, there have been significant disparities in access, absorption, retention and completion rates in all stages of basic education between States. For example, Kassala State - where sustained conflict and instability and high levels of poverty prevail - has not benefitted from the developments made in the sector in other States such as in Nile River State – which is a peace area. This comparative study investigated the impact of education costs and actual expenditure in Kassala and the Nile States, specifically targeted because of their different conflict and peace situations. The study was externally commissioned by SCEFA and fully funded by CSEF. The research commenced in June 2016 and was completed in May 2017. Data were gathered from various government departments, such as the Directorate General of Budget of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and primary research was undertaken with

³⁷ See: http://www.aliantacf.md/sites/aliantacf/files/APSCF_promovarea-educatiei-incluzive_0.pdf

management of primary and secondary schools, representatives of school boards or parent councils, representatives from the universities and government officials. Focus group discussions were conducted with parents in each State.

Using the research for advocacy and emerging influence: The study findings were disseminated through SCEFA member program activities, mass media engagement, other partners including international organizations, universities, youth and women societies, the Federal Ministry of Public Education, and the Ministries of Education in the two States. The findings of the research were welcomed by Government to support better (equitable) planning for the development of education to ensure the rights of all children, for improving the quality of education and general school environment, and for strengthening the role of parents in school management. The Government has suggested that the same study be implemented in different states of Sudan. The two Ministries for Education in Kassala and River Nile where the study was conducted have been influenced to increase the budget for education by 2 percent.

Lessons learned: The **fact-based information** provided by the outcome of the study has given **greater credibility** to the SCEFA's contributions in advocacy and public awareness programs. The coalition has recognised the importance of researching facts to support campaign and advocacy work for free education, particularly during the Deputies council forums/meetings, and for strengthening relationships with other education stakeholders, communities and government.

Documenting historical indigenous, civil society accounts and lessons for the Right to Education in Bolivia

The Campaña Boliviana por el Derecho a la Educación (CBDE)³⁸ was established in 2000 and has grown to become a network of 96 education rights activists, agents and stakeholders (including academia, CSOs representing diverse marginalized groups, parents' and students' associations, and international NGOs). The coalition has been CSEF-supported since 2009.

CBDE focusses its advocacy work on promoting and lobbying for the human right to education, generating comprehensive education proposals, monitoring and demanding social accountability for compliance with educational regulations, influencing public policies through institutional synergies, and social mobilization in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. The coalition has built recognition for its academic partnerships and rigour, particularly in the context of CBDE's search for an 'authentically emancipatory education'.

Research focus and processes: Contributing to this mission, CBDE commissioned Marcelo Maldonado, a political science graduate of the Universidad Mayor de San Simón, to research and document historical archives and memory of social struggles and conquests for the human right to quality, inclusive and emancipatory education. The research was carried out over the ten months June 2017 to April 2018 with full CSEF-funding support, and under the auspices of a CBDE research monitoring committee. The research set out to uncover and learn from some previously undocumented civil society *memoirs of libertarian pedagogy* espoused during the 1940s in the Altiplano³⁹. However, once the investigation began, the relevance of learning from history how civil society has long been a strong protagonist of its own educational management emerged.

The author reconstructs the experience of school self-management carried out by groups of indigenous people linked to the anarchist unions of La Paz, unions that militantly propagated libertarian ideas in the rural Altiplano area of Bolivia. In the 1940s, the Departmental Agrarian Federation (FAD), linked to the Local Workers Federation, promoted the organization, construction and management of 51 schools. These were schools that served as spaces for education and

³⁸ English translation: Bolivian Campaign for the Right to Education.

³⁹ The 'Altiplano' (Spanish for "high plain"), also known as the 'Andean Plateau' or 'Bolivian Plateau', in west-central South America, is the area where the Andes are the widest. It is the most extensive area of high plateau on earth outside Tibet. The bulk of the Altiplano lies in Bolivia, but its northern parts lie in Peru, and its southern parts lie in Chile and Argentina. The plateau hosts several cities of these four nations, including El Alto, La Paz, Oruro, and Puno.

unionization from which the indigenous people strengthened their long process of liberation from the system of farms and their colonial heritages. The research, which was published in a book on libertarian pedagogy⁴⁰, thus documents a civil society-led educational project that successfully conquered the right to education, along with a long memory of resistance of the indigenous sectors of Bolivia.

The reconstruction that is carried out by the author in this book is not only a valuable 'rescue of a forgotten experience', but also a tribute to the unfinished project of a school education free of the liberal and authoritarian defects of the past. The libertarian pedagogical experiences found in the La Paz Altiplano were possible, not only because of the ability to structure alliances with the indigenous movement, but also because there was no State in the region and the farming elites were not interested in promoting indigenous education. However, the memoirs found in this book are not limited to an exercise in historical reconstruction, they also assist in deciphering how educational projects are currently being developed in the margins of formal education and schooling and how the long memory of social struggles for the right to education has influenced and continues to influence educational self-management initiatives. For the CBDE, these historical milestones have provided an opportunity for the coalition to learn - from civil society experiences of the past - how to continue to build a new paradigm of education as a transformative mechanism for ensuring human rights in the Bolivian Plurinational State.

Using the research for advocacy and emerging influence: The publication was publicly presented in the city of Sucre in July 2017. It was received as an important contribution to future research and the initiative was recognized as recovering the historical memory of indigenous struggles for the right to education in historical processes of repression and violence. The research and publication has also been presented in different academic and education spaces, as well as widely shared on CBDE's website, social media platforms and promoted through other external online sources.

Lessons learned: A significant challenge faced by the coalition involved maintaining the positive relationship that the CBDE has garnered with the media, in order to maintain media coverage of CBDE activities. This was identified as a challenge due to the tendency for mass media to prioritise political issues, with social (including educational) issues not being visible in the media agenda. However, a **communication strategy** developed by CBDE, which consists of **having a team of allies of distinct media** that dialogue with the coalition made it possible to place the issues raised in the publication on the public agenda. This, in turn, helped to elevate CBDE as a credible source of information for the media and the general public.

Keeping parallel tabs on the formulation of the Education Sector Plan in Honduras

Foro Dakar-Honduras (FDH) is a national education coalition which includes 24-member civil society organizations, and acts as a space for reflection, analysis, and development of proposals to monitor the progress of public education policy, while promoting the human right to education. The forum has been CSEF grant-supported since July 2013.

Contextual background: Since 2006 FDH has been positioning itself as a proactive organization delivering written documents to be considered by the government of Honduras to strengthen the National Public Education System through: 1) a written proposal on the New Law of Public Education, 2) a written proposal on the public education policy. Both proposal documents were delivered to the National Convergence Forum (FONAC), a platform at that time determined by the government of Honduras to channel the proposals of civil society.

In 2012, the National Congress approved the bill after a long process of awareness-raising with public society. The Law is now known as the 'Fundamental Law of Education.' Despite this law, public education in Honduras continues to face serious difficulties, including a reduction in budget (6.28 percent of GDP in 2010, declining to 4.9 percent in 2017)⁴¹. There has been a reduction in the hiring

⁴⁰ The full publication (in Spanish), titled "Sketches of libertarian pedagogy in the Altiplano" is accessible on the CBDE website here: <http://campanaderechoeducacion.org.bo/images/publicaciones/Esbozos%20de%20pedagoga.pdf>.

⁴¹ http://www.bch.hn/download/honduras_en_cifras/hencifras2015_2017.pdf

of teachers - since 2010 there have been no new teaching positions created. In addition, there is no information available about teacher training for the pre-basic and basic levels of education, and no official mention of educational priorities within the Government Plan (2030 Agenda). The low quality of education is manifested when only 70 percent⁴² of students passed the admission exam of the National Public University of Honduras (UNAH), leading to exclusion and opening the door to private education at the primary and secondary levels, where students are perceived to be provided a better education to equip them to access tertiary education than those students attending public schools. This has also promoted the growth of private tertiary education, where there is no admission exam.

Research focus: The objective of the research was to document the progress of the country in fulfilling commitments assumed when signing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, using as the parameter the SDG4 and its 10 targets, and emphasizing progress in preparation of the 2018-2030 Strategic plan of the education sector. It was also intended that the research would contribute to strengthening civil society's advocacy capacity by providing reliable information in relation to Honduras' progress on SDG4. As such, the focus of the research was to prepare a shadow report that analysed the work carried out by the State of Honduras in 2015-16 from the perspective of the 10 targets of SDG4, taking account of the 12 themes⁴³ established as an input for the prior analysis to the formulation of the strategic Education Sector Plan 2015-2030. These 12 themes were established by the Local Education Group (LEG) and technical personnel of the government institutions responsible for the Law. The research was carried out between the months of September and December 2016 and was fully funded by CSEF.

Research process: Primary research was undertaken by experts contracted by FDH, with supervision by a team composed of three research expert members of FDH. The research methodology included: i) the review of secondary sources such as statistical data generated by official sources, e.g. the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the Office of Education Statistics of the Secretary of Education, and different institutions of the education sector that have sources of statistical information, and ii) primary sources such as through interviewing people involved in decision-making and managerial roles by administering a brief qualitative questionnaire which allowed interviewees space to express opinions on the current situation, future perspectives, and some recommendations.

In the first phase, FDH determined targeted actors, taking as criteria: i) knowledge of the country's education sector, ii) being in decision-making positions within the education system from pre-basic to tertiary. This strategy was used to reach a group of 20 officials who have key knowledge of the national education sector to inform about the advances and limitations in the elaboration of the Strategic Education Sector Plan and the achievement of goals in the last year.

FDH analysed and built awareness around the report, which presents the progress realized until now within the framework of the 10 SDG4 targets, and the 12 themes identified as being priority by the different actors working in the development of a 2018-2030 Sector Plan.

The research report, "*Shadow Report 2016: Advances in the Achievement of Public Education Policy and Commitments Assumed by the State of Honduras in Relation to the SDG4 and its 10 Targets Towards 2030*"⁴⁴ was prepared in tandem with the government's reports, utilising official data of the government which was available. Therefore, the report is a relevant advocacy tool insofar as it allows civil society to supplement what has been stated by the government and demonstrates the shortcomings and non-compliances of the latter.

Using the research for advocacy: A key finding of the research was that; when carrying out the analysis of the different topics organized for the formulation of the Education Sector Plan 2018-2030, when cross-referenced with the goals of SDG4, it can be identified that the targets 8, 9 and 10 of SDG4 are not reflected. Key recommendations of the report therefore are that all the goals established in the

⁴² <https://presencia.unah.edu.hn/noticias/aumenta-el-porcentaje-de-estudiantes-admitidos-en-la-unah>

⁴³ The topics considered were: 1. Context of Development of the Education Sector. 2. Enrollment, internal efficiency, and children without schooling. 3. Costs and financing of the system. 4. Quality and capacity of the system 5. External Efficiency. 6. Equity and Democracy. 7. Pre-basic education. 8. Basic and secondary education. 9. Higher education. 10. Non-formal education. 11. Technical and Vocational Education and Training and, 12. Development context of disability.

⁴⁴ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByPBQssyWfZQSkdtcWJpbzgwzbzQ/view>

SDG4 are included in the Education Sector Plan, and that parameters being used internationally to measure the index of the right to education are also implemented. The research report also concluded that the State of Honduras must seek and provide relevant resources for the education sector as a guarantor to the right to education. The guarantee of a free, public, quality and inclusive education means the formulation and adoption of policies that establish mechanisms to meet the commitment made by governments to comply with SDG4, assigning a budget range between 4 and 6 percent of the gross domestic product.

The presentation of the 2016 Shadow Report increased public awareness of the above issues which were presented in a public forum held in February 2017. An edited summary document was delivered to each participant. Invitations for people to attend the forum were made through different channels, such as electronic, written and radio media. The forum promoted informed dialogue among the different actors of Honduran society that work for the right to education. A key response from the participants was that the research results and report be shared to a wider public.

Response and emerging influence: A significant influence of the shadow report findings is that the LEG undertook to formulate the Education Sector Plan 2018-2030 in compliance with SDG4.

Lessons learned:

- **If investigations are well supported with reliable data, decision-makers are forced to consider them** and take the findings into account to some extent and also, the findings are an indispensable tool for society that can be used to safeguard the human right to education and compliance with SDG4.
- To **disseminate the findings by different means**, e.g. through print is important. In countries like Honduras this is still an important means of information sharing, as not all the population has access to internet networks (there are many rural and suburban areas where there is no electricity).

Lessons learned

Building on CSEF lessons: some tips from the existing body of knowledge and guidelines on good practices in effective research for advocacy

The case examples of practice from CSEF-supported national education coalitions shared in this learning exchange brief have identified a number of valuable lessons on conducting and using research to influence positive public and government responsiveness and uptake. Many of these align with, and affirm, the body of literature and guidelines on good practices on effective research for advocacy⁴⁵.

Building on the lessons shared, this section presents a summary of some key elements for consideration when coalitions plan and prepare for undertaking research to inform their education rights advocacy work. This is by no means exhaustive, and readers are subsequently provided with a list of relevant online resources to further their knowledge and understanding of how to carry out and use research effectively as a foundation for successful advocacy.

Reflecting on some key observations on research for advocacy⁴⁶

The case examples of practice presented in this paper demonstrate that:

- There are many different kinds of research, and that each requires a different kind of research process, and each yields a different kind of information. Each is appropriate in a variety of situations, but it is important to match research to the purpose(s) it seeks to serve – it needs to be ‘fit-for-purpose’.

⁴⁵ For instance, see the reference list provided for multiple synergies between the lessons learned as shared by coalitions, and those presented in the range of references listed.

⁴⁶ Synthesized from: *Participatory Advocacy: A Toolkit for VSO Staff, Volunteers and Partners*, VSO, November 2009; and *Community Toolbox* (online portal), Chapter 32 ‘Conducting Advocacy Research’, retrieved on 23 May 2018 from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-research>

- Advocacy research has a specific purpose: to influence the formal and informal policies established by policymakers and others in power. Thus, it is important to collect good information and present it in a compelling manner.

The ideal is that advocacy research clearly shows that the needs or problems we want to address are real and serious, and that the methods we recommend for addressing them have, in fact, been proven successful. When this ideal is not quite realized, however, we may find that we have to adjust our approach to be persuasive - we may reframe the issue (see Box 5), for instance, or personalize it by collecting testimony (see Box 6) or stories of individuals affected (such as in the case examples from Côte d'Ivoire and Moldova). Whatever our approach, **our goal is to make our research as compelling as possible**, whether we are trying to increase domestic financing of education, or to change the way the world deals with the disparities in education rights policy and practice.

Box 5: Reframing the issue

Framing is a way of structuring or presenting a problem or an issue. This is an important consideration in designing a research for advocacy process because it influences who should be included in the process, how the target audience view the issue, the scope of the research, and what range of potential 'solutions' are considered. Framing involves explaining and describing the context of the problem to gain the most support from our audience. Our audience is key to framing. The way a problem is posed, or framed, should reflect the attitudes and beliefs of our audience.

Who is our audience? It might be anyone, including a single influential politician, a person or group affected by the problem, a community group, or the media. It may also change from day to day, as we talk to different people. Regardless as to who our audience is, when framing an issue, we should begin by asking specific questions around: What is the issue? Who is involved? What contributes to the problem? What contributes to the solution?

Once we have asked these questions, we can begin to answer them.

Box 6: Collecting testimony

Personal testimony can work well because it provides a personal, first-hand account of how laws and policies have a real, daily impact on human beings, including marginalized groups of people. Often, policymakers are removed from the effects of their decisions and cannot really know the harm or good they cause. Personal testimony gives those who are in power more "human" perspective on how effective, ineffective, beneficial or problematic a policy is, or could be for a community or specific group of people. Personal testimony can influence the passage, revision, or defeat of policies and regulations proposed by state legislatures, regional education departments, city councils or school boards because it shows law makers how grassroots citizens feel about the job elected officials are doing, and against which they are being held socially accountable.

Civil society is uniquely positioned for - and has an important role to play in - collecting, documenting and ensuring the voices of marginalized peoples are heard.

If research is to be useful to influence policymakers, it needs to be:

- **General** - Providing extensive background information, not just selective cases and anecdotes. General background information helps to place the issue in context, providing the 'bigger picture' against which the local problem can be examined - for example: by providing facts and figures, or researching the international and regional dimensions of a problem.
- **Accessible and Easily Understandable** - A body of good evidence, presented in a user-friendly format, and collated and analysed.
- **Targeted** - Findings are presented in multiple formats, tailored to each audience, with information needs of policy makers (content and format) being taken into account. Understanding our audience and what they will respond to should constitute part of our research, make clear the kind of research that is therefore appropriate (fit-for-purpose), and show us how best to present the conclusions of that research. Being able to speak forcefully and convincingly exactly targeting the policy makers and others we want to influence is a key to good advocacy research.

- **Relevant** - Appropriate to their area of work, priorities and interests. We need to consider both what we are trying to demonstrate and the background and assumptions of our target audience. These two considerations are equally important. We may have overwhelming evidence to support our conclusions, but if it is not evidence our target audience will accept, it will do you little good (See Box 7).
- **Measurable** – Incorporating facts, figures and statistics.
- **Timely** – Provided at the right time and using up-to-date information.
- **Practically Useful** – Grounded in reality, and providing practical, feasible and cost-effective solutions.
- **Objective** – Gathered from objective sources, without unsubstantiated value judgments or emotional arguments.
- **Accurate** - Providing a true and fair representation of the facts. We should not ‘sweep data under the carpet’ if it does not support our case! We need to anticipate and unearth the arguments against us and deal with them in our advocacy work and reports.
- **Credible** - Reliable, sourced appropriately, using accepted tools and methods (see Box 8)
- **Sustained** - If we are able to gain policy changes, continued research will allow us to show policy makers they made the right decision, or to push back efforts to reinstate ineffective or ill-advised policy. Research will also help us continue our advocacy as conditions or the needs of the constituency change.
- **Authoritative** - Carried out by an organization that policy makers perceive as credible and reliable.

Box 7 Some ways to increase the likelihood of evidence being accepted

- Try to gather and triangulate many different kinds of evidence.
- Find and use evidence that is simply indisputable.
- Know exactly what evidence is needed to convince the target audience - and go looking for it.
- If possible and where relevant, emphasize the credibility of the researchers (e.g., well-known experts, grounded in realities at the grassroots etc.)
- Point it out if many different studies have come up with the same conclusions.

Box 8: Source Referencing

Always make sure research is well source referenced, so readers can check data and information sources. In general, any reader should be able to clearly see the source of research (and look this up themselves, if they wish to). There are various formats for referencing research. One of the most widely used systems of referencing often used in social sciences is the APA system (created by the American Psychological Association system, but now used internationally). Additionally, the Harvard system is also a commonly used style of referencing, particularly for universities worldwide. It is also known as the ‘author-date’ referencing style, as each reference cited is characterised by the author's name and the publication date.

Some useful resource links and further reading

There is a vast body of existing knowledge and practical guidelines related to using research for effective advocacy. Some of these, which are accessible online by clicking on the provided hyperlink, are presented below for further shared learning⁴⁷:

1. [Community Tool Box](#) is an online library portal, and a service of the Centre for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas, USA. It offers practical tool kits and step-by-step guides of how to take action, teach and train in organizing for community development. It includes practical guides on assessing community needs and resources, engaging stakeholders, action planning, building leadership, improving cultural competency, planning an evaluation, and sustaining your efforts over time. *Chapter 31, section 10* is dedicated to guidelines on how to conduct research to influence policy.
2. [An Activist's Guide to Research and Advocacy](#) is a helpful, practical guide published in 2003 by the Centre for Civil Society, Durban University, South Africa.
3. [The Power of Evidence in Advocacy](#) is a resource pack for trainers on evidence-based policy advocacy in East Africa (and adaptable for other contexts), published in 2007 by the Economic and Social research Foundation (ESRF), a partner of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
4. [Using Media and Research for Advocacy: Low Cost Ways to Increase Success](#) – published in 2007 by Healthbridge (formerly PATH Canada), this guide is intended for people who wish to work with governments for positive change and who are interested in obtaining new ideas for expanding media coverage or conducting research that will support their advocacy goals.
5. [FAIR's Media Activism Kit](#) is a set of “how-to” guides for identifying, documenting and challenging inaccurate or unfair news coverage, along with information about how to promote independent media. It is produced by FAIR – an organization based in New York, USA which works to advocate for greater diversity in the press by scrutinizing media practices that marginalize public interest, minority and dissenting viewpoints.
6. [A Learning Guide: Evidence-Based Advocacy for Gender in Education](#) – produced by the East Asia & Pacific Regional UNGEI in 2010, this guide provides a detailed step-by-step roadmap for understanding the theoretical and practical underpinnings of evidence-based advocacy, and is intended to serve as a practical, “hands-on” tool for policymakers and professionals engaged in advocacy.
7. [Lessons from Civil Society Budget Analysis and Advocacy Initiatives](#) is an Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK article which provides a short overview of a research project which explored the impact and efficacy of applied budget work undertaken by independent civil society organisations. There is a link to [Working Paper 279](#) titled '*Budget Analysis and Policy Advocacy: The Role of Non-governmental Public Action*' (2006), which offers lessons on what works well in Section 5.
8. [Storytelling and evidence-based policy: lessons from the grey literature](#) – is a 2017 research paper by Brett Davidson published by Palgrave Communications. Although quite academic in places, it is a relevant read which outlines some of the ways in which an understanding of policymaker psychology, and factors such as group dynamics and political context are reflected in the grey literature, and the implications of this for understanding the role of storytelling in political advocacy.
9. [Education Advocacy: Three Lessons from the field](#) - This 2015 Brookings Institute resource links to a toolkit on building campaigns [here](#): While the full toolkit has to be purchased (online through Amazon), a range of useful tools and templates for building advocacy campaigns are freely accessible under the section “Tools & Templates”.

⁴⁷ A number of additional relevant resources are also source referenced in the footnotes of this paper.

10. [Advocacy toolkit – a guide to influencing decisions that improve children’s lives](#) - UNICEF, New York, 2010. This toolkit provides a set of practical tools to help UNICEF staff and partners in the development and management of their advocacy work. However, it can be adapted for use by other actors, such as national education coalitions. There is a helpful description and graphic of the Human Rights Based Approach to advocacy on pages 4-5.
11. [Oxfam’s Policy and Practice Resource Portal](#) provides links to a comprehensive series of practical guidelines and toolkits on the “how to” aspects of research.
12. [Knowledge to Policy: Making the Most of Development Research](#) – This free e-book (which is downloadable as a PDF in English, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese) was written to enhance the design of research projects in order to increase the policy influence of research.
13. [Making the Most of Development Research](#) is a resource provided by ODI, the Overseas Development Institute. The “report” link provides a detailed summary of a presentation on research and policy development.
14. [Three Ways Academic Research Can Influence Civil Service Policy](#) is an article that appeared in The Guardian newspaper. It discusses three different ways that research can influence the policy environment.