

Collective Commitments: The role of civil society in the Education for All movement 2000-2015



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Abbreviations

ACEA	Arab Campaign for Education for All
ANCEFA	Africa Network Campaign on Education For All
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
CCNGO/EFA	Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
CLADE	Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFA	Education for All
EFA FTI	EFA Fast Track Initiative
EFA HLG	High-Level Group on EFA
EFA WG	Working Group on EFA
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GAW	Global Action Week
GEM	Global Education for All Meeting
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IAP	International Advisory Panel
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LEG	Local Education Group
NEC	National Education Coalition
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RWS	Real World Strategies
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAMEO	South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization
UN-OWG	United National Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WEF	World Education Forum

Executive Summary

In 2000, the Dakar Framework for Action - Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments (UNESCO, 2000a) set out six Education for All (EFA) goals. It also articulated 12 strategies described as critical for the achievement of EFA, one of which was “to ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development.” (Ibid.) The Framework for Action spoke of new and expanded political and social scope for civil society, and insisted that participation should not be limited to endorsing decisions made by government. Through regular dialogue, civil society - learners, teachers, parents, communities, non-governmental organizations - should contribute to education policy and practice, from inception to evaluation.

Based on information provided by civil society organisations (CSOs) and key informants (through survey questionnaires and interviews), and a review of selected literature, this report draws some initial conclusions on how far such a vision of civil society engagement and participation in EFA has been realised.

The study informants suggest that civil society is considered a legitimate partner by governments and there is a positive trend towards increased participation across all regions. However, institutionalised, regular participation is not reported as the norm and survey responses suggest that participation in the development of education policy often remains at the level of “cosmetic consultation”. The extent and depth of participation varies enormously and in too many settings civil society remains marginalised from decision making processes.

The ability of civil society to participate has been supported through its recognition in the Dakar Framework for Action and through the opportunities created within the EFA architecture where notably UNESCO institutionalised civil society representation in all major structures and events. The support of the international community has helped legitimise civil society participation at national level, and donor funding has been important (although it comes with a risk of affecting or shifting local concerns). Participation has become easier where democratic spaces exist - the transparency and accountability of government organisations and of public officials is essential for civil society participation in policy processes. Safeguards must be put in place to ensure that participation is on equal terms and meaningful, and to address those factors that have limited engagement and participation to date.

Overall, while CSOs continue to represent a wide diversity of stakeholders, often focused on the most marginalised groups, there has been a change in the size and makeup of civil society in the context of EFA since 2000. One of the most dramatic and important changes has been the increased coordination and collaboration within EFA-focused civil society. The subsequent growth of civil society coalitions and networks has led to new and increased engagement. Through capacity building and training programmes and through knowledge sharing, civil society capacity has been strengthened, enhancing its recognition and ability to engage with governments. The engagement of civil society, in all its diversity, has been a central part of the story of EFA. It has been the decisive factor in transforming the EFA initiative and agenda into the **EFA movement** which, without civil society, would not exist.

The report concludes with recommendations for increasing and improving civil society participation in education post-2015. The recommendations to different EFA stakeholders listed in Section 7 are summarised as follows:

National governments should introduce or strengthen policies and legislation, and institutionalise mechanisms, to ensure civil society is involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of education plans; guarantee access to information related to education budgets, policies and processes; and work with civil society to strengthen, coordinate and improve data collection.

Regional inter-governmental organisations should institute official spaces for civil society participation in regional education policy and monitoring forums and bodies and promote collaboration and information sharing with regional civil society. They, as well as donors, should also develop mechanisms to encourage, and monitor, governments in relation to promoting citizen participation in educational policy, and monitor and take action against governments that take repressive action or criminalise civil society activism.

UNESCO (and other international bodies as relevant) should establish consultative processes and coordination mechanisms at national, regional, and global levels to further develop, implement and monitor education post-2015, with formalised space for civil society participation, as well as establish mechanisms for monitoring and regular reporting on the status of civil society participation. UNESCO should also continue and expand the CCNGO/EFA mechanism.

Civil society at all levels should network and build alliances with CSOs and CSO networks working on other development issues. **National CSOs** should strengthen communication and awareness raising on the right to education among the public; build capacities of communities to ensure good governance and effective policy engagement; and strengthen collaboration with other education CSOs. **Regional civil society networks** should document and defend national CSOs when they come under attack by governments, and; support civil society expansion in countries where civil society is not yet strong. **International NGOs and civil society networks and coalitions** should advocate for more CSO spaces in global education dialogues; advocate for increased financing and capacity building of national CSOs; provide data and information for regional and national networks, and; improve communication and consultation with regional and national networks in advance of key international processes.

Finally, **all stakeholders** should support capacity building for CSOs. Donors and national governments should also provide financial support for CSOs to ensure sustained civil society participation at different levels.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1. Everyone's right

Everyone has the right to education; it is universal and inalienable, enshrined in international human rights law for almost 70 years. Beyond the qualifications, skills, and opportunities it confers, education has distinct value in and of itself, and should support “the full development of the human personality”. (Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Widely recognised as a public good, education engenders positive change for individuals and their communities, driving national development. Without education, millions are condemned to a life of poverty: “education is absolutely central to any sustainable development agenda. It is not only an essential investment but an important basis for human enrichment through lifelong learning” (UN-OWG, 2013).

In April 2000¹, governments, the United Nations, international institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs) came together to review progress on Education for All (EFA) at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal. The resulting *Dakar Framework for Action - Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments* reaffirmed the vision of the World Declaration on Education for All adopted ten years earlier (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) and committed to the attainment of six EFA goals, supported by 12 strategies, in order to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000a). *The Framework for Action* was a comprehensive statement of intent, placing responsibility for education at the country level, while indicating the significance of ongoing international cooperation and support. It promised “no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources.” (Ibid, p.3)

Detailed analysis of achievements and challenges of EFA in this period has been documented in the 2015 Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2015). This study offers an insight into one important dimension in the development of EFA - that of collective action of civil society.

The engagement of civil society, in all its diversity, has been a central part of the story of EFA. It has transformed the EFA “initiative” and agenda into an EFA **movement** which, without civil society, would not exist. Witnessed in the actions of millions of people around the world who, in small groups, large networks, professional organisations and informal activist communities – across social, political and national boundaries – have sought to support and demand the right to education for everyone. Through a plethora of actions, civil society has attempted to shape education policy, ensure financing for education, enhance democratic governance of education systems, and to generate innovative solutions to complex challenges. Through both cooperation and critique, civil society has endeavoured to hold governments and donors to account: to demand equitable, inclusive and quality education.

While the obligation to uphold the right to education and attain the EFA goals rests with the state, civil society has been, and remains, a recognised and significant actor within the framework of EFA – a role formally established in 2000. In the 15 years since Dakar, civil society engagement in EFA has significantly increased, and is now recognised as part of the EFA landscape. However, despite its formal recognition in the *Dakar Framework for Action* (see section 2 below), civil society participation in EFA processes has not been automatic. A review carried out in 2007 found that civil society participation was “characterized by underrepresentation in international structures [. . .] and even regional forums.” (Watkins, 2007, p. 7)

¹ See http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/wef_2000/

This study suggests that there has been positive progression since 2000; yet the degree and extent of civil society engagement and participation in EFA processes can be quite varied – influenced by a number of determinants (see section 6).

Most significantly, the nature of EFA civil society itself has changed, and this has been an important factor affecting the nature and capacity of civil society participation and contribution towards EFA. To quantify the exact contribution of civil society in the achievements of EFA to date is beyond the scope of this study; however, in assessing progress towards EFA, its vital role must be acknowledged and analysed.

1.2 Scope of this study

This study offers descriptive and analytical insights on civil society engagement in EFA since the Dakar World Education Forum (WEF) in 2000. Based on the information provided by key informants – through a survey questionnaire and interviews – it documents the degree to which spaces for civil society engagement have opened up, and how civil society is (or is not) recognised as a partner in the formulation, planning, implementation and monitoring of EFA goals. Finally, it sets out recommendations for the role of civil society in the implementation of the 2015-2030 education agenda.

The findings of this study are based on information from 74 survey responses², 14 key informant interviews and a review of selected literature between mid-March to mid-April 2015. The responses reflect a wide geographical and linguistic spread (covering all regions of the world), as well as organisations of different types and size.

N.B. All quotes in this document, unless otherwise referenced, are taken from survey responses or interviews. All tables are based solely on the 74 survey responses.

1.3 Methodological limitations

While the study is ambitious in its aims, there are a number of methodological challenges in making verifiable claims about civil society engagement and participation in EFA since 2000. These relate to: (a) the size and representativeness of the informant sample (see Appendix 1: Methodology); (b) the lack of means of verification for the information provided and the subsequent reliance on informants' subjective views; (c) the lack of systematic evaluative literature on civil society contribution to EFA; and (d) the constraints of time and space when drafting this paper.³

² The survey questionnaire was designed by UNESCO and the CCNGO/EFA Coordination Group.

³ Further research based on a representative sample beyond the scope of this study is needed to provide a more in-depth picture of civil society engagement in EFA.

Section 2: Formalising civil society engagement and participation

2.1 The Dakar Framework for Action

In addition to the six EFA goals, the *Dakar Framework for Action* also articulated twelve strategies that were considered critical for the achievement of EFA by the deadline of 2015.⁴ Among these was “the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development”. (UNESCO, 2000a, p.19)

Dakar Framework for Action: Strategy 3:

Ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development

53. Learners, teachers, parents, communities, non-governmental organizations and other bodies representing civil society must be granted new and expanded political and social scope, at all levels of society, in order to engage governments in dialogue, decision-making and innovation around the goals of basic education. Civil society has much experience and a crucial role to play in identifying barriers to EFA goals, and developing policies and strategies to remove them.

54. Such participation, especially at the local level through partnerships between schools and communities, should not only be limited to endorsing decisions of, or financing programmes designed by, the state. Rather, at all levels of decision-making, governments must put in place regular mechanisms for dialogue that will enable citizens and civil society organizations to contribute to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of basic education. This is essential in order to foster the development of accountable, comprehensive and flexible educational management frameworks. In order to facilitate this process, capacity will often have to be developed in the civil society organizations. (UNESCO, 2000a, p.18)⁵

The necessity of civil society engagement and participation was not only identified in this one specific strategy (see box above), but also reflected across the others. The *Framework* called for the transparent and democratic participation of all sectors of society in the development of EFA plans at national level, noting that the achievement of “the Education for All goals is too complex a challenge for governments to undertake alone; therefore civil society involvement is important and indispensable”. (UNESCO 2000b, p. 7)

The inclusion of civil society engagement and participation as a key strategy in the *Dakar Framework for Action* did not arise solely from the democratic principles of governments, but from an acknowledgement of the increasingly visible actions of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and CSOs in the decade between the Jomtien Conference⁶ and the Dakar Forum. The contribution of civil society to EFA between 1990 and 2000 was described as follows:

In quantitative terms, they have left their mark in extending education to all, both to accessible groups and to those that were difficult to reach or excluded. In qualitative terms they have also left a mark, in adapting educational provision to the context of

⁴ These strategies are outlined in the *expanded commentary section of the Dakar Framework of Action*, drafted post-forum (UNESCO, 2000a)

⁵ The Dakar EFA framework was finalised after the forum, building on the initial adopted text. Four people were chosen to finish the task, one from each major constituency, including one civil society representative.

⁶ The World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990) included a call for partnerships between governments and CS.

the learners, integrating it with many fields of development, and involving everyone in educational action on the basis of partnership. (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 18)

In addition, the more organised approach by civil society in the run up to Dakar,⁷ and action at the Dakar forum itself,⁸ led to increased space and recognition. As a result, civil society participated in the drafting committee of the final declaration as well as the so-called ‘futures group’, which had the role of devising the EFA architecture.

2.2 The Global EFA Architecture

Underpinning the EFA movement is a belief that, through the creation of a global framework and structured coordination and monitoring mechanisms, the realisation of the right to education can be achieved in all countries. The strategies outlined in the Dakar Framework for Action were central to this conception. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) was given the mandate of coordinating the post-Dakar EFA process.⁹ New structures and mechanisms known as the ‘EFA architecture’ were established to coordinate efforts towards its achievement.¹⁰

This coordinating architecture included the High-Level Group (HLG), the Working Group (WG), and the International Advisory Panel (IAP) on EFA. From 2001 UNESCO convened regular meetings of these entities to review EFA progress based on the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), another pillar of the EFA architecture. Civil society was formally recognised within these spaces where its participation was institutionalised. National, regional and global EFA meetings and coordination mechanisms to review progress towards EFA and to maintain political commitment were, and continue to be, a core part of the EFA architecture.

In 2011, UNESCO reviewed and undertook broad-based consultations in order to “revitalize the EFA movement by increasing support to EFA and to enable UNESCO to fulfil its mandate as the global EFA coordinator” (UNESCO, 2011). As a result, a new global EFA coordination mechanism was proposed and endorsed by its Executive Board (ibid). The changes included: enhanced collaboration between regional and global EFA coordination mechanisms and the introduction of annual regional reports to be prepared by UNESCO regional Bureaux; reformatting the global EFA meetings into one annual Global Education for All Meeting (GEM); strategic guidance for EFA through the new EFA Steering Committee where all EFA stakeholders are represented; and strengthening the knowledge base, with the GMR remaining the key monitoring tool (see Ibid. paragraphs 4-15).

⁷ In 1999, ahead of the forum, a small group of CSOs came together to form the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to influence the outcome of the Dakar Forum.

⁸ Informants to this study who were in Dakar explained that initially no civil society participants were included in the main forum, however, civil society demanded to be let in. Their demands were met and all NGO Forum participants were accepted to participate in the main Dakar Forum as official delegates and two were accepted to address the Forum on behalf of civil society.

⁹ UNESCO is one of five convening agencies for EFA, along with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the World Bank.

¹⁰ References to the EFA architecture are made at different points throughout this paper, however, the scope of the study and limitation on length do not allow for detailed discussion. An in-depth review of ‘global EFA architectures’ is available in a report commissioned by the GMR by Faul and Packer (2015).

UNESCO's Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA (CCNGO/EFA)¹¹ is identified as a critical structure within the EFA architecture for ensuring civil society participation. The CCNGO/EFA is UNESCO's permanent mechanism for dialogue, reflection and partnership with NGOs in the framework of the EFA movement. Until 2011, civil society participation in the WG, HLG and IAP was invited through the CCNGO/EFA, as is civil society participation in the current GEMs and regional EFA meetings. The two civil society seats in the EFA Steering Committee are filled by elected representatives of the CCNGO/EFA. Since 2000, the CCNGO/EFA membership has tripled and now stands at just under 300 organisations. Membership in the CCNGO/EFA facilitates faster access to information on emerging EFA policy developments and debates, through policy platforms, UNESCO portals, and newsletters.

Although not a UNESCO established mechanism of EFA coordination, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is an important support mechanism for EFA. Formerly called EFA Fast Track Initiative¹², the GPE provides financial support to low-income countries to speed up their progress toward the achievement of the EFA goals. In the recent years, GPE has made provision for civil society within its board structure. At national level, Local Education Groups (LEG) develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the education sector plans financed by the GPE, and should also include civil society participation.

The formal inclusion of civil society within the EFA architecture established by UNESCO has created significant spaces for engagement and participation highlighted in this study and also documented in national and regional EFA reviews.¹³

¹¹ Established in 1984 as the CCNGO on Literacy, the CCNGO evolved over the years to cover the full EFA agenda. For more information, see <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002186/218627E.pdf>

¹² In 2012, the Global Partnership of Education was formed, replacing the EFA-Fast Track Initiative (FTI) that had been established in 2002.

¹³ The reviews are available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/resources/formulaires-unesdoc/>

Section 3: The changing face of civil society in the EFA context

3.1 A diverse and growing force

The world has changed in the last 15 years. The increase in market-driven globalisation; gains and setbacks in democratic processes; 9/11 and the “war on terror”; the Arab Spring; old and new conflicts; the global economic crisis; (and much more) have had multiple impacts across societies, including on education.¹⁴ Since 2000, the growth of internet and mobile-phone technology has connected people within countries and across continents in a way that was still largely unforeseen in 2000. EFA civil society has also changed. Such transformation is often taken for granted; however, the shift has been “stark”.

While civil society within the context of EFA is a familiar term, who or what civil society actually is, or represents, is sometimes less clear, and for some it remains a contested concept (Verger and Novelli, 2012, p. 3). Shortly after Dakar, a special session on the participation of civil society in EFA hosted by UNESCO noted the characteristic of ‘non-governmental and non-profit’ as distinguishing it from other actors (UNESCO, 2001).

The distinction between ‘for-profit’ and ‘not-for-profit’ was stressed by a number of study informants, especially given the increasing engagement of the private sector in the delivery and assessment of education.¹⁵ The increasing influence of private-sector forces in the realm of education policy making has also been noted (Ball, 2012; Olmedo, 2013). In this report, civil society is used to refer to not-for-profit, organised groups or associations that “are separate from the state, enjoy some autonomy in relations from the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests, values or identities”. (Mundy et al., 2008, p. 2)

The form and structure of organisations falling within the realm of EFA civil society is quite varied and includes large international development organisations, smaller local organisations, unions, networks and loose activist groupings. These organisations work with or on behalf of a wide variety of stakeholders (as demonstrated in Figure 1), often reflecting a concern for the inclusion of marginalised groups.

¹⁴ One example is the overall number of displaced populations due to conflict and other humanitarian disasters, now estimated at 51.2 million worldwide – half of whom are estimated to be children. Their education can be disrupted for months and years.

¹⁵ Interview informants were asked a specific question concerning the private sector. There was no direct question in the survey; however, the issue of private-sector involvement in education was highlighted as an area of concern in some surveys and a number of interviews.

Figure 1: Main population groups targeted or represented by survey respondent organisations, ranked in order of importance (1 being most important)

Target groups of civil society activity ¹⁶	Ranking of Importance by type of CSO					Ranking across all NGOs
	INGOs	Regional NGOs	National Coalitions	National NGOs	Local NGOs ¹⁷	
Youth	1	2	2	1	1	1
Children	3	5	1	3	1	2
Teachers	2	3	4	4	1	3
Girls	6	5	3	2	1	4
Adults	7	1	5	5	13	5
Women	5	4	7	6	13	6
Children with disabilities	8	11	6	8	1	7
Parents	4	10	8	7	1	8
Ethnic minorities	9	8	9	9	13	9
Adults with disabilities	12	9	10	10	13	10
Refugees/internally displaced people	10	12	12	11	1	11
People living with HIV/Aids	11	13	11	12	13	12
LGBTI people	13	7	13	13	13	13

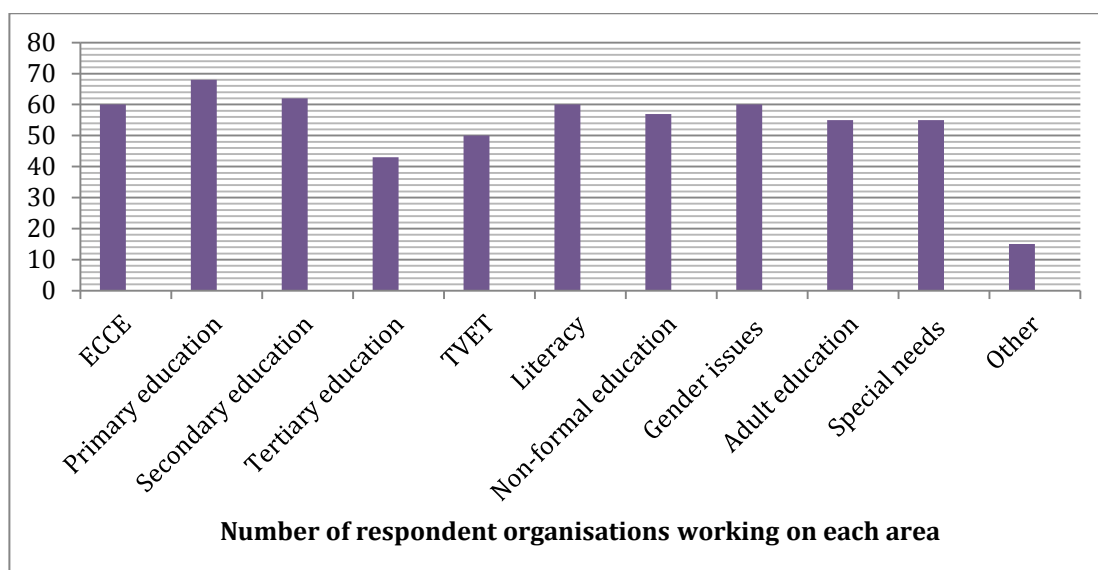
The diversity of EFA civil society is enriching and reflects democratic participation. Nevertheless, as Verger and Novelli note: “Given this diversity, the establishment of civil society coalitions usually implies the articulation of very different types of constituencies, interests and rationales in a single space, and this is not an easy task at all.” (2012, p. 3) This point was corroborated by interview and survey responses for this report, with the different interests of teachers’ unions and NGOs being noted as a particular challenge that, in some instances, distracted from the primary business of EFA.

¹⁶ These groups are not mutually exclusive.

¹⁷ The local NGO that responded to this question did not rank the target groups. Therefore ‘1’ indicates groups it represents or targets, and ‘13’ those it does not.

The survey also revealed that civil society covers all areas of education, with many organisations focusing on all areas, from early childhood through to adult education (Figure 2), this reflecting the comprehensive EFA agenda.

Figure 2: Areas of education targeted by survey respondent organisations



In terms of the type of work undertaken by CSOs, the survey reflects a move away from service delivery to advocacy, as demonstrated in Figure 3. Advocacy was ranked highest when all responses were taken into account, followed by capacity building. Breaking down the ranking, there are clear differences depending on the type of organisation: local and national CSOs concentrate more on project implementation, and regional networks on capacity building.

Figure 3: Priority areas of civil society activity

Dimensions of Civil Society Activity	Ranking by type of CSO					Ranking across all NGOs
	INGOs	Regional NGOs	National Coalitions	National NGOs	Local NGOs	
Advocacy	1	2	1	3	5	1
Capacity building of civil society actors	4	1	3	2	3	2
Public awareness raising	4	4	2	4	6	3
Research	2	2	3	6	8	4
Project implementation	3	6	7	1	1	5
Participation in public policy development	6	7	5	7	4	6
Monitoring & holding government/donors/other stakeholders accountable	8	5	6	8	9	7
Service provision (such as implementing basic education programmes)	7	8	8	5	2	8

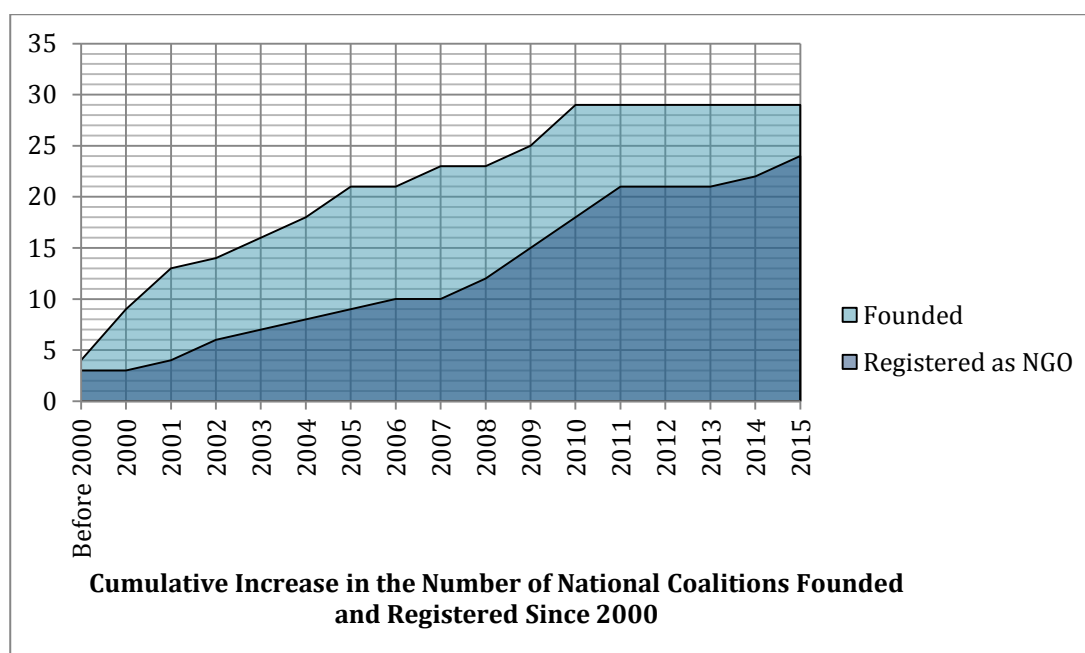
Since 2000 there has been a change in EFA civil society, with new and different types of organisations, including more research and think-tanks, engaged in the EFA movement, with interests broader than in previous years. It was suggested that “a typology of CSOs post-2015” should be created.

3.2 Collective Organisation

One of the most dramatic changes within EFA-focused civil society since 2000 has been the increase in its collaboration and coordination. At the time of the Dakar Forum in 2000, EFA civil society was both smaller and less diverse than now. Large northern-based INGOs were among the most prominent, along with teachers unions, and large networks such as the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) and the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE). There were significantly fewer national NGOs and coalitions than exist today.

The growth of national coalitions is a noticeable and important change since Dakar.¹⁸ The regional networks in Africa, the Arab region, Asia, and Latin America all reported a growth in national coalitions in their regions. A number of the national coalitions that responded to the survey had been formed since 2000, with the most rapid growth occurring up until 2010 (Figure 4). The NGO Forum held in Dakar in 2000, just prior to the World Forum seems to have been a turning point in the balance between “Northern” and “Southern” NGO representation (UNESCO, 2000c).

Figure 4: Number of new national coalitions reported within survey group



N.B. The information in figure 4 represents only those organisations that responded to the survey, but is understood to reflect a wider trend. The top line shows new national coalitions founded, and the bottom line is a sub-section of the top that registered as a legal/fiscal entity.

¹⁸ Civil society education coalitions are an alliance of different CSOs and actors that come together for combined action. They can operate at different levels from local to global. Within the EFA movement, coalitions tend to be formalised entities, sometimes with established secretariats and permanent staff.

The accelerated development of coalitions and networks has changed the face of EFA civil society and has led to new and increased forms of engagement at national and regional levels (see following sections). Coordination at all levels has played a fundamentally important role, especially with the formation of new regional coordinating networks. It is not only the ‘power in numbers’ or increased public-facing action that has added value by making governments focus more attention on these coordinated bodies, but also that CSOs have been able to support and learn from one another, within and across national boundaries. This learning process has been supported by platforms such as the CCNGO/EFA as well as, more recently, through donor funded projects such as the Real World Strategies and the Civil Society Education Fund.

(i) National collaboration

The majority of survey and interview respondents reported that collaboration between national-level CSOs had increased substantially, with CSOs “seeking more synergies and partnerships than in the past”, and “finding common ground and increasing their advocacy efforts for education”. Increased collaboration was noted across a range of activities, such as design and implementation of advocacy plans, coordination of educational projects, and the exchange of practices and ideas on education issues. Others reported joint consultation processes on draft policy discussions, collaboration in design of research questionnaires, and logistic discussions.

At the national level, awareness raising among the general public and education community – through social media, radio, forums, and seminars on education – is also an important part of coordination. Larger international organisations reported providing technical assistance to smaller organisations or networks, supporting communication, ICT, and research, or hosting national education coalitions within their offices. The use of technology has had a momentous impact, including on civil society activism, and is identified as a critical facilitator of the increased coordination (see section 6).

Less positively, for some it was felt that there was competition among NGOs for funding from, and recognition by, the government “for representation duties in boards, committees and other important roles.” In some instances, competition between local and international NGOs was mentioned. Furthermore, increased collaboration did not necessarily mean that there was always one unified voice, or that national CSOs were all members of one coordinating body. Partisanship and lack of autonomy from government was raised as a concern in some instances.

Overwhelmingly, however, increased collaboration is seen as a positive change in the ability of civil society to contribute towards EFA.

(ii) Regional networking

The vast majority of the national-level survey respondents indicated that their membership of regional networks is a positive asset. These regional networks include the Africa Network Campaign on EFA (ANCEFA), the Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA), ASPBAE, and the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) – offering national CSOs engagement in EFA issues beyond their borders. All the EFA-focused regional networks were seen as facilitating civil society engagement with regional governmental bodies and forums, and within the formal EFA architecture. It was felt that membership of these networks played an important role in adding weight behind national demands. National coalitions also reported that regional networks

help in securing funding, knowledge sharing and capacity building. They have also played a pivotal role in the formation of new national coalitions. Nevertheless, praise for regional networks was not unanimous, and occasional tensions arise. These regional networks have acted as interlocutors between the national and global level, especially through the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), where each has a seat on the board. Since 2003, they are also represented in the CCNGO/EFA Coordination Group where they carry the voice of the local and national organisations and coalitions from their respective regions.

While strongly focused on supporting national level CS, the regional networks are also actors in their own right, generating research and analysis, leading regional-level advocacy, and contributing to global processes.

Although multiple education networks exist (some of which are thematically specialised and also make an important contribution), the emergence and strengthening of regional EFA-focused civil society networks has meant a significant change in the structures and coordination of civil society since Dakar. They have stimulated increased interaction and policy dialogue with regional bodies, and within the regional EFA architecture; they mark an important development in the changing face of EFA, and the ways in which EFA-focused civil society has worked since 2000.

(iii) Global coalitions

The Global Campaign for Education

Perhaps nowhere is the evolution in the scale and structured organisation of EFA civil society witnessed more visibly than in the growth of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). It was founded by four organisations¹⁹ in 1999, just months before the Dakar forum, with the aim of strengthening the collective voice of civil society at Dakar and beyond. GCE now counts over 120 members, including national coalitions and international and regional organisations in almost 100 countries²⁰, and many informants noted the huge and positive impact of GCE.

GCE is often one of the few representatives of civil society at the international level, including at the GEM, on the EFA Steering Committee, and in the advisory board of the GMR. This is a mark of GCE's success and demonstrates its capacity to give visibility to civil society within the formal architecture of EFA. GCE has contributed positively to supporting national-level participation and capacity building (see section 4) and each year coordinates the mobilisation of millions of education stakeholders, including students and teachers, in its Global Action Week (GAW).²¹

GCE is a diverse coalition, and this diversity is represented on its board. The coalition's constitutional and operating methods are attentive to being inclusive and representative. The size and scale of the organisation inevitably throws up challenges; for example, as previously mentioned, tensions between NGOs and trade unions have at times been challenging at national and international level. Some survey respondents raised questions regarding the representativeness of GCE. They mentioned the need for a regular turnover in its Board and that

¹⁹ ActionAid, Oxfam, Education International and the Global March Against Child Labour.

²⁰ See GCE website – <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/members>.

²¹ GAW is a week of annual activities involving schools, organizations, coalitions, etc. around a specific theme. It was noted by GCE that scaling up involvement and representation of student and youth-led organizations within its membership, and within EFA as a whole, is of paramount importance. This was addressed in its constitution at GCE's World Assembly in February 2015.

GCE – which represents a particular voice – should not be equated with civil society as a whole, where many different perspectives are present.

There are other important and influential global networks. These often target particular levels of education – the International Council for Adult Education, and networks on Early Childhood Education, for example. Others represent particular groups, such as Education International, a global federation of unions representing education personnel or specialise in a particular aspect of education, such as the World Council of Comparative Education Societies. There are yet other networks and coalitions that bring together civil society and UN agencies to address particular obstacles to EFA, such as the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), or the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. These, along with other international, regional, and national networks, play an important part in progress to EFA.

GCE is unique in its broad focus and scale, and it is evident that having a global coalition such as GCE has changed beyond recognition the landscape of civil society's engagement in EFA since 2000. It has helped create and occupy spaces for civil society where there previously were few, strengthening the influence civil society in policy formation at multiple levels.²² Although there is more to be done (see section 5 on participation), and greater impact to be had, the coalition's global membership has had a strong impact on the terms on which civil society is seen and engages in EFA.

The complexity and diversity of EFA coalitions/networks is a strength; however, at times, wrangling over the priority of differing agendas has been challenging and, coupled with some perceived instances of ineffective management, can impact on the way coalitions function. Despite some internal challenges, civil society has grown and become more prepared; enabling stronger analysis by civil society of the political contexts within countries and across continents. The new structures, increased coordination, and experienced voice of civil society have led to changes in participation – both quantitative and qualitative – in the EFA movement over the last 15 years (see section 5).

²² See: Culey, Martin and Lewer, 2007; Mundy and Haggerty 2010; Moriarty 2010, Verger 2012; Verger and Novelli (Eds) 2012, for in-depth analysis of GCE's work.

Section 4: Civil society capacity

4.1 Strengthened technical capacities

The importance of strengthening the technical capacity of civil society for EFA is noted in *The Dakar Framework for Action*, and well documented in the years following Dakar.²³ The scale and support of subsequent capacity-building initiatives directed at or supported by civil society – some of which are outlined below – further evidence the significance of enhancing technical capacity. The informants of this study likewise identify capacity building as vital for the ability of civil society to contribute to EFA.

It was reported, for example, that increased capacity had enhanced “credibility” and strengthened “partnership opportunities”. It was also noted that, in order to “engage effectively in the policy and practice change dialogue, civil society needs capacity”. Survey and interview informants emphasised that enhanced expertise was a condition for increasing engagement with government. If civil society was considered to have equal knowledge and skills, they were more likely to be consulted.²⁴

Information provided for this study would appear to indicate that the technical capacities of EFA civil society have increased since 2000, although not necessarily uniformly: variations continue to exist between organisations and across regions. This increased capacity was credited as having “improved our internal leadership and management capacities for leading the coalition”, which led to the “professionalization and autonomy of actors, and the sustainability of actions”.

This strengthened capacity of civil society is the result of deliberate capacity-building programmes and increasingly coordinated knowledge-exchange and shared learning, initiated and supported both from within civil society and by external partners. The need for capacity building is ongoing and remains a significant focus for civil society activity at different levels.

(i) Building the capacity of communities

A key area of capacity development carried out by all levels of civil society is directed towards building awareness and skills amongst local communities. This work includes coordination amongst students, parents, and teachers in areas such as school governance, or in supporting school-management committee members to become more effective in their roles. Sharing success stories and achievements was helpful in making communities “aware of critical issues and more dedicated to achieving them”. As Green notes:

Feeling that one has a right to something is much more powerful than simply needing or wanting it. It implies that someone has a duty to respond. Rights are long-term guarantees, [. . .] that enable people, particularly the most vulnerable and excluded in society, to make demands on those in power. (2008, p.23)

²³ Some examples include: Ibrahim Bah-Lalya 2003; Chiwela 2004; Razon 2004.

²⁴ It is worth remembering that governments themselves do not always have technical capacity in all areas, and have received significant external support to strengthen their EFA technical capacity – from, for example, UNESCO CapEFA. See: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/capEFA> for more details.

In addition to forums and workshops, capacity is built through engagement in project activities and sharing tools. Another strategy is to encourage local members to participate in national level activities hosted by national or regional networks.

The challenges identified in working with communities included the difficulties of physical access to some of the rural communities, technological limitations, limits to participation in workshops, and in particular how to attract young people.

(ii) Building the capacity of national CSOs

Capacity building carried out within CSOs themselves (by coalitions, larger national organisations, or INGOs) focuses on a wide range of thematic issues, including the right to education, international humanitarian law, UN mechanisms, and different areas of education and its planning and management. The strengthening of knowledge and skills has also centred on the project management cycle, proposal writing, budget tracking, report writing, monitoring and evaluation, research, advocacy, community mobilisation, campaigning and working with the media. Training is also offered to the media to encourage journalists to report accurately on education issues. Capacity building sometimes took the form of “study tour[s] in-country and abroad to create opportunity for learning by seeing”. At other times, it took the form of participation in regional and international forums or conferences to develop understanding of “aid architecture, innovative ways of advocacy, and policy gain among others.” One challenge noted was that CSOs “require regular follow up”, and that any “lack [of] consistency and the whole thing can go back to zero.”

(iii) Building the capacity of coalitions

A third tier of capacity development is seen in the work of international or regional networks. Capacity development at this level is also facilitated through seminars, forums, exchanges of experiences, internships, journal publications, books, and newsletters. Some of the international networks that responded to the survey have very specialised mandates, and capacity building for their membership. For example, one network “developed and disseminated an alternative curriculum for leadership, grounded on a broader vision of adult education within the framework of human rights and active citizenship.”

The formation and increased capacity of national-level coalitions has been given important momentum by the work of regional networks such as ACEA, ANCEFA, ASPBAE and CLADE. These regional networks strengthen national coalition capacity across a range of issues, including budget tracking, research and evidence-based advocacy, coalition governance, financial management, international law, EFA mechanisms, and contextual analysis. The means of this training include (but are not limited to):

- policy forums and learning platforms at regional seminars;
- the provision of regional policy briefs, collective discussion, and analysis of key issues (the right to education, regional contexts);
- guidelines and manuals;
- mentoring and coaching on strategies in education advocacy;
- sharing of tools and lessons learned;
- publications;
- joint regional and international advocacy, supporting the coordination of GAW.

It is noted that through increased capacity, national coalitions have been better able to influence the debate on education policy, as well as increase their capacity to engage grassroots organisations and citizens.

(iv) International capacity-building programmes

The informants for this study also highlighted the work of large-scale, externally-supported (and -driven) capacity-building programmes. The *Commonwealth Education Fund* (CEF), for instance, is an education advocacy project funded by the UK government, and jointly managed by ActionAid, Oxfam GB, and Save the Children UK.²⁵ The *Real World Strategies (RWS) I and II* projects are other examples of such international capacity-building programmes, funded by the Government of the Netherlands through GCE.²⁶ Most recently, the *Civil Society Education Fund* (CSEF) is a large-scale project, thus far supporting national civil society coalitions in 54 countries globally, funded by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) through GCE and its affiliated regional networks.

An evaluation of the second phase of the CSEF project is currently underway; however, an evaluation of the first phase reported that:

CSEF has contributed to building stronger and more credible NECs [National Education Coalitions] in most countries that are part of the project. Specifically, NECs have improved substantially in terms of capacity building and advocacy, and have been able to design their own context-based strategies (Verger et al 2012).

Financial constraints were identified by survey respondents as a major challenge in relation to supporting capacity development, and funds were frequently described as “extremely scarce”. In another context it was mentioned that there was “limited funding to cover the fees for organizing members [to] come to the city for training.”

4.2 Resources

The capacity of civil society is not only dependent on technical knowledge and skills, but also on both human and financial resources. Beyond resources needed for building capacity, funding for CSOs was highlighted as critical for their ability to carry out activities. Reduction in resources following the global economic crisis in 2007/8 has led to civil society organisations having to “reduce their scope of activity, sharpen focus, [and] explore collaborations.” As noted previously, it had in places created competition between them.

While funding was stressed as an obvious necessity, a number of informants cautioned that external funding could sometimes lead to coalition priorities reacting more to external interests than addressing the most pressing national issues. Such comments were general, but they do reinforce findings from an evaluation of the CEF:

²⁵ The project operated in 16 countries from 2002-2008 to strengthen national coalitions and contributed to policy change and was seen as having been very successful.

²⁶ An evaluation of RWS II concluded that the project has been a success, strengthening coalitions and leading to policy change and had delivered overall value for money.

Donors using coalitions as conduits for funds to member CSOs not only affects the agenda of coalitions, but it distorts the very nature of coalitions themselves. It affects coalition power dynamics, resulting in members looking to secretariats for funds, rather than secretariats looking to members for direction (and, possibly, funds). (Tomlinson and Macpherson, 2007, p.35)

It is important that funding to support and strengthen civil society action in the field of EFA is available, that it responds to needs identified on the ground, enhancing the ability of civil society to participate in the formulation of policy to support project implementation, and to hold governments to account.

Human resources were also identified as lacking. When respondents were asked whether “the number and expertise of staff/volunteers is sufficient for carrying out [their] organisation’s work”, twenty-six found their human resources to be adequate, while forty-eight reported some form of shortage (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Staffing and Expertise Among Survey Respondents

Is the number and expertise of staff/volunteers sufficient for carrying out your organization’s work?	Yes	No
	26	48
If not, why?	Insufficient number of staff	44
	Insufficient expertise of staff	14
	Insufficient number of volunteers	20
	Insufficient expertise of volunteers	22
	Other	6

CSOs reported receiving funds from diverse sources including membership fees, government grants (core costs and project based), bi-lateral and multilateral donors, UN agencies, foundations, INGOs, and the private sector. Sufficient human and financial resourcing is necessary for the effective activity of CSOs, and a balance between independence and seeking increased levels of external support should be maintained.

Increased capacity is critical for ensuring well-functioning organisations and coalitions that are recognised by government and therefore effectively engaging with EFA. Learning from one another, galvanising community-level understanding of EFA, as well as empowering civil society as effective actors in this context is fundamental to its success.

Section 5: Civil society participation in EFA: Cosmetic consultation or meaningful engagement?

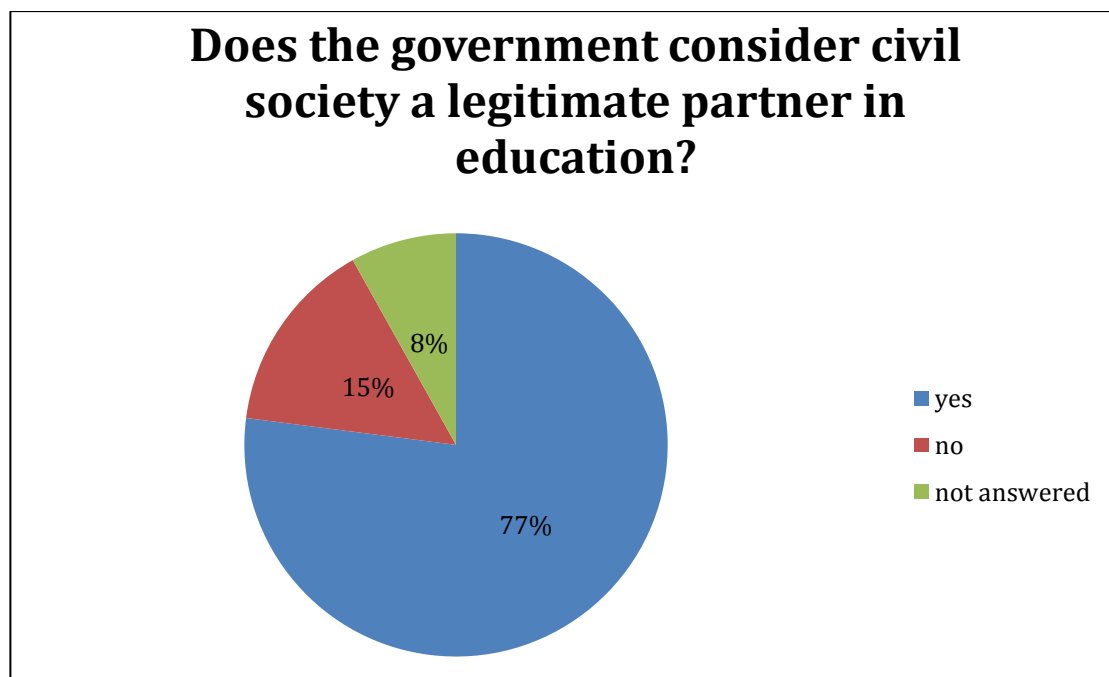
5.1 Overview of Civil Society Participation

According to human rights law, states have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education, and must take concrete and targeted steps to ensure the realisation of this right without discrimination.²⁷ Nevertheless, this should not preclude the participation of key education stakeholders – learners, teachers, parents, communities, NGOs, and other bodies representing civil society – in contributing to this process.

EFA architecture has been important in creating space for civil society at national level since 2000, with the *Dakar Framework for Action* clearly stating that civil society “should not only be limited to endorsing decisions of, or financing programmes designed by, the state” (UNESCO, 2000a, p.18). Fifteen years on, gaps between this intention and reality still exist in many countries.

When asked, “does the government in your country consider civil society a legitimate partner in education?”, survey respondents gave an overwhelmingly positive answer (see Figure 6).

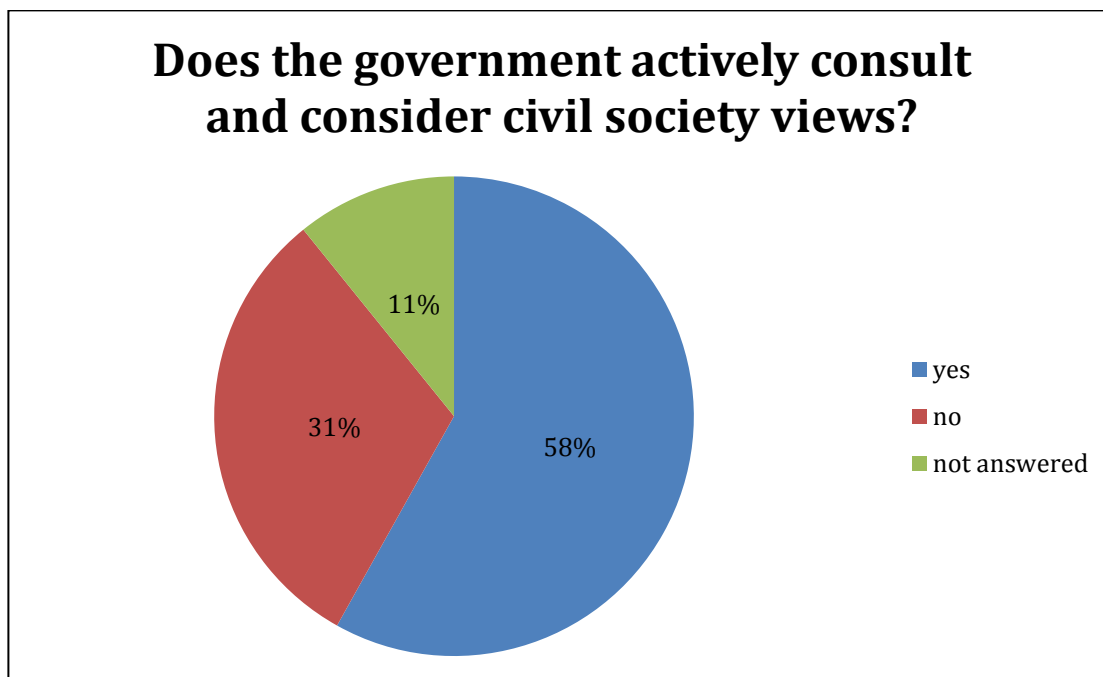
Figure 6: Does the government consider civil society a legitimate partner in education?



While this response suggests a largely positive picture, when asked if the government actively consult and consider civil society views (Figure 7), the number of affirmative answers falls from 77% to 58% - although the majority of respondents continue to answer positively.

²⁷ For further information see: Amnesty International, 2005.

Figure 7: Does the government actively consult and consider civil society views?



While civil society is undoubtedly more active and visible than in 2000, informants offer divergent perspectives on the depth of participation. Institutionalised, regular participation is not reported as the norm, although many governments do welcome civil society views. It was suggested that governments might have “a good understanding of cooperation and coordination with civil society but lack of understanding of what true partnership means.” The survey responses suggest in this vein that civil society is frequently limited to spectator status, where participation in actual policy making remains at the level of “cosmetic consultation” rather than occupying a position of true partnership in the development of education policy from the outset.

In some cases, ideological differences can get in the way of civil society-government dialogue, although ideology is not the only reason for this. Participation is influenced by a number of factors (see section 6) and depends on the type of organisation; local and national CSOs have less opportunity for engagement than coalitions or chapters of international NGOs in their particular country. It was suggested that certain pre-requisites were necessary for civil society to be able to engage meaningfully, including access to information with adequate time to allow coming together, reflecting and preparing feedback. In some instances, it was felt that the lack of information and time was a deliberate tactic by governments preferring a “fragmented civil society voice”. Large-scale mobilisation, campaigning, and the support of the national media also make a difference to civil society participation in EFA.

The backing of regional and international organisations can influence governments to engage in dialogue with CS. Recognition by UNESCO is considered especially valuable: the CCNGO/EFA is considered to be a key mechanism for increasing the credibility of civil society and influencing national governments to acknowledge CSOs at the national level.

Despite noting limitations for meaningful engagement in some contexts, informants claimed to have effected change in some areas. It is beyond the scope of this study to be able to verify the scale of this impact, and as noted elsewhere the “assessment of [. . .] the ‘substantive impact’ of a

NEC's intervention brings to the fore the main difficulties for differentiating between "attribution and contribution". (Verger et al., 2012, p.82)

5.2: Regional breakdown of national participation

The following section provides a snapshot, emerging from surveys and interviews, of trends of civil society participation in EFA processes at national level, grouped by region. It should be noted that the information presented is only partial – relying heavily on informants – and does not claim to be a rigorous analysis of all participation in these contexts. No breakdown for Europe or North America is given due to lack of respondents from the region. While some international networks or INGOs with head offices in this region did take part in the survey, their work was largely focused outside of that region. The second Synthesis report of the *Europe and North America Education for All 2015 Review*, and earlier reviews, provide some examples of civil society participation in this region. (UNESCO, 2015a)

(i) Participation and Impact in Africa

According to the survey, there has been a noticeable change in the ability of civil society across the region to engage in EFA processes. There are increased opportunities in some countries, whereas in others, governments retain a tight control on policy development.

According to ANCEFA, at least 26 national education coalitions in Africa are involved in education-sector policy planning, monitoring, and reviews. CSOs in Africa report participation at various national forums, including technical working groups, policy development meetings (especially through the *Joint Sector Reviews*²⁸), Budget Consultation Forums and structures such as the Local Education Groups (LEGs). ANCEFA and the national-level organizations (mainly coalitions) also engage decision makers of sub-regional blocks, such as the Africa Regional Economic Communities,²⁹ and the African Union Commission – with particular focus on the Conference of Education Ministers of the African Union.

The opening up of more democratic governance was seen as an important factor for civil society participation in EFA. Legislative and policy frameworks, increased financing, and strengthened capacity of civil society were considered to have supported these changes. National and regional EFA architecture, such as national EFA forums, have supported increased spaces. Donor support was seen as important, although in some cases it was felt that the international community had not done enough to support and/or encourage adherence to the spirit of the *Dakar Framework for Action*. The CCNGO/EFA and the UNESCO Regional Office in Africa (UNESCO BREDA based in Dakar) were noted for their support. The existence of formal agreements, such as Memorandums of Understanding between CSOs and government, did not appear to have a bearing on whether the coalition reported improved spaces. In one instance, even though no formal agreement existed, the coalition reported itself to have "become the preferred partner" of the government.

Respondents reported having impact on policy: on the development of a schools-based management committee policy following a campaign for example, or on an increased allocation of resources for teacher training institutes as a result of advocacy. Among other examples were

²⁸ Mechanism for monitoring the GPE funded Education Sector Plans.

²⁹ For example, SADC, ECOWAS, and EAC

governments' decisions to eliminate school fees, and elsewhere to improve conditions in secondary schools so that more girls attended.³⁰

Funding, and a limit on the numbers who can participate in formal national and regional EFA meetings were mentioned as challenges to expanding participation. A lack of background information or documents not shared in advance to allow for wider consultations before policy meetings was similarly reported as limiting participation.

Regional coordination among civil society itself was reported as having helped create more opportunities for engagement in EFA processes at national and regional level. Views were not always in harmony: in one country one survey said spaces were opening up by the day, while another said spaces had been closing down. There were correspondingly contrasting views concerning the usefulness of the regional network.

(ii) Participation and impact in the Arab region

In recent years, civil society in the region has been able to find and create more spaces for participation in EFA processes, and organisations from a number of different countries report positive changes since 2000. The degree to which spaces have opened (as is the case in other regions) varies between countries, and in some contexts it was felt that very little, if anything, had changed.

Internal coordination has played an important role in mobilising engagement across different countries, including from regional networks such as the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education, or the Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship. The formation of the Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA) in 2008 increased momentum for civil society activism on EFA in the region. In 2009 it led to mass mobilisation around the GAW, strengthening influence in policy dialogue as governments find it harder to ignore grassroots pressure. Innovative campaigning strategies drawing on local cultures were reported as highly effective in some cases.

Participation in formal EFA structures such as national education forums was mentioned, as was participation in LEGs. Participation in international meetings organised by UNESCO, including the GEM, was highlighted as creating new opportunities, and UNESCO and UNICEF were credited with helping facilitate relationships with governments. UNESCO's CCNGO/EFA Secretariat was also said to be supportive, whereas some field offices were considered less helpful. Nevertheless, national and regional discussion on the post-2015 agenda was highlighted as an inclusive and valuable process.

Civil society claims to have influenced government policy and practice in a number of areas, including the development of teacher capacity through workshops, and training guides for psychosocial specialists to help combat school violence and dropout. Other reports included success in advocating for increased spending on education, or influencing government attitudes towards girls' education and inclusive education for persons with disabilities.

In some contexts it was claimed that the government only addresses civil society when it suits them and in extreme cases, that "governments do not recognize the existence of civil society let alone consult with it." The lack of funds or capacity was reported as constraining the ability of civil society to fully participate in the manner set out in the *Dakar Framework for Action*.

³⁰ As noted earlier it is not possible to verify attribution vs. contribution to these changes.

More than in other regions, respondents referred to the political context, mentioning e.g. that the 'Arab Spring' has generated mixed outcomes – opening doors in some places and severely constraining space for civil society in others. Other circumstances which were mentioned included conflict and the resulting huge rise in displaced people as well as the rise of the militant group who refer to themselves as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/the Levant (ISIS/L).

Overall, it is possible to conclude that there has been some opening of spaces for participation in EFA, but this has not gone far enough: "a larger space for the civil society is needed."

(iii) Participation and impact in Asia and the Pacific

The picture described for Asia was overwhelmingly positive. ASPBAE report "a leap in civil society's advocacy with governments for EFA", with a growth in national coalitions from two in 2000 to fourteen today. There is also increasing space for these coalitions to participate at both national and regional level. ASPBAE reports national civil society taking part in the EFA regional architecture, in particular in spaces offered by UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education. There have been some opportunities in engaging the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), but communication with civil society is not regular.

Some national coalitions and organisations commented that "government recognizes and welcomes full participation of CSOs", and that "regulations have been and continue to be put in place for the enlargement and institutionalisation of civil society participation in policy processes from start to finish".

Some of the increase in participation was seen as a result of government pragmatism, where civil society is seen as being able to fill in gaps, not only in the area of service provision, but also in policy development: "the situation has changed in the sense that the government has realised the need to engage CSOs to support not only the implementation phase of its national policies but also to develop policies for national government."

There are exceptions to this generally positive trend, with reports that in some cases space has been shrinking due to internal tensions. Some survey responses reported examples of partisanship, in which government is only interested in dealing with those organizations that do not question or challenge them. It was also alleged that, in some instances, government officials set up NGOs in order to "siphon off" funds.

Despite these negative examples, coalitions overall have significantly more space, and report having an impact in a number of areas. These include: national education budget allocations, opposition to school fees, ensuring better governance, supporting improvement in girls' education and adult literacy, as well as improving early childhood education and community learning centres. ASPBAE reports that, with coalition members, it has undertaken continuous research, monitoring and policy studies related to key education issues. The outcomes of the studies have been used by national coalitions in developing and updating education policy agenda in their respective countries. This type of evidence-based advocacy made a difference: "With proof [from research], government listens, while at the same time, the coalition profile becomes credible."

The coalitions noted a range of factors that helped secure space and impact, including pressure from the parliament, public awareness on education, and media coverage. Institutionalised policy dialogue and the legitimacy bestowed by donors were seen as important. Constraints arose from

the lack of motivation of government officials to listen to civil society voices, from funding issues, expensive local transport costs, or lack of communication.

Armed conflicts and political tensions in some countries are constricting spaces for civil society to actively lobby on education. Other humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters were also a major issue for the region.

(iv) Participation and impact in Latin America and the Caribbean

Overall feedback from the region suggested that there are relatively good levels of participation in national education dialogue, as well good collaboration with regional bodies, including UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education. New legislation has facilitated the ability of civil society to increase its impact in holding government accountable, and spaces for participation are better established. The increase of coalitions and networks was cited by all Latin American respondents as very important, and as having had a marked impact in strengthening the collective voice of civil society.

Participation is generally moving in a good direction, but only as a result of pressure from civil society calling for dialogue and spaces; governments usually do not actively consult. Institutionalized spaces of participation are not always put into practice, or do not have the necessary autonomy.

Formal EFA structures and mechanisms were highlighted as increasing civil society participation, including events held by UNESCO and UNICEF. The UNESCO Regional Bureau and CLADE have a formal memorandum of cooperation, and CLADE has been consistently invited to participate in the regional events on EFA. In the last regional ministerial EFA meeting in Lima in October 2014, thirteen CLADE representatives participated, taking part in official media conferences and the final declaration drafting group. CSOs also participated in drafting groups of other regional meetings. The seventh meeting of the CCNGO/EFA held in Santiago de Chile in 2014 further engaged CSOs from the region in the EFA movement. More than simple participation, civil society generates new forums, such as *El Observatorio Regional de Educación Inclusiva (OREI)*, a new regional inclusive education initiative, created in conjunction with the UN to combat discrimination in education.³¹

Looking across the region, there are a diversity of experiences, and information from the survey suggests that there is still much to be done to cultivate a more democratic culture. There are also examples of regressive laws in some countries, such as those criminalising demonstrations, that raise great concern as they are limiting democratic participation. It was felt that some governments try to delegitimise and rebut criticism from civil society, and it was claimed that even more repressive tactics have been known.

The general consensus is that through inter-organisational and cross-border civil society communication and cooperation, lessons learned can be shared, challenges overcome, and problems turned into tools for the future.

In Dakar in 2000, less than a handful of civil society representatives from the region were present; it is anticipated that CSOs from all countries affiliated to the regional EFA network CLADE will attend the World Education Forum 2015, in addition to other regional networks.

³¹ <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/orei/>

5.3: International Spaces and Participation

As noted in section 2 (above), following the *Dakar Forum* a new global architecture for EFA was established, with UNESCO as the lead coordinating agency for EFA. Provision for civil society participation was set out in the architecture, including a guaranteed space in key forums and structures. This has led to a noticeable change in participation at the international level since 2000, with civil society present in all key international meetings. Since a reform process in 2011 (as mentioned in section 2), the GEM - which includes the formal participation of civil society - is perceived to be a more effective meeting space than the previous EFA-HLG which was seen as a talking shop with limited outcomes.

The Advisory Board of the GMR, which includes both international and regional NGOs, is another formal space for civil society participation. In addition, the importance of the GMR for informing civil society was highlighted: a key tool in encouraging dialogue and putting pressure on governments to be more transparent. The Board of the Global Partnership for Education has three seats for CSOs: one for international/Northern NGOs, one for developing country representatives, and another for representatives of the teaching profession. Civil society representatives also noted the opportunity to engage in the GPE replenishment conference, and welcomed participation on the GPE board; a marked distinction from the FTI, which was seen as less open and did not include any formal space for civil society. The majority of respondents cited Local Education Groups (LEGs) as an important space, although there were conflicting opinions.

According to informants of this study, civil society is now not only present in these spaces but opinions are listened to in the forums, with notable changes in the last four years. UNESCO was described as “an important ally for civil society”. Nevertheless it was felt more spaces could be available for civil society in some UNESCO led consultative processes and that “UNESCO could consider more CSO slots in regional and international forums.”

The CCNGO/EFA was said to provide valuable opportunities for members to access global education platforms and policy agendas like the EFA Steering Committee, the Global Education for All Meetings, as well as the global meetings of the CCNGO/EFA held every two years. The UNESCO Secretariat of the CCNGO/EFA received considerable praise from both survey and interview informants although it was felt by some that there were too few staff or resources for the work that was needed. The need for a clear action plan and improved communication mechanisms was recommended, which may require an increase in resources.

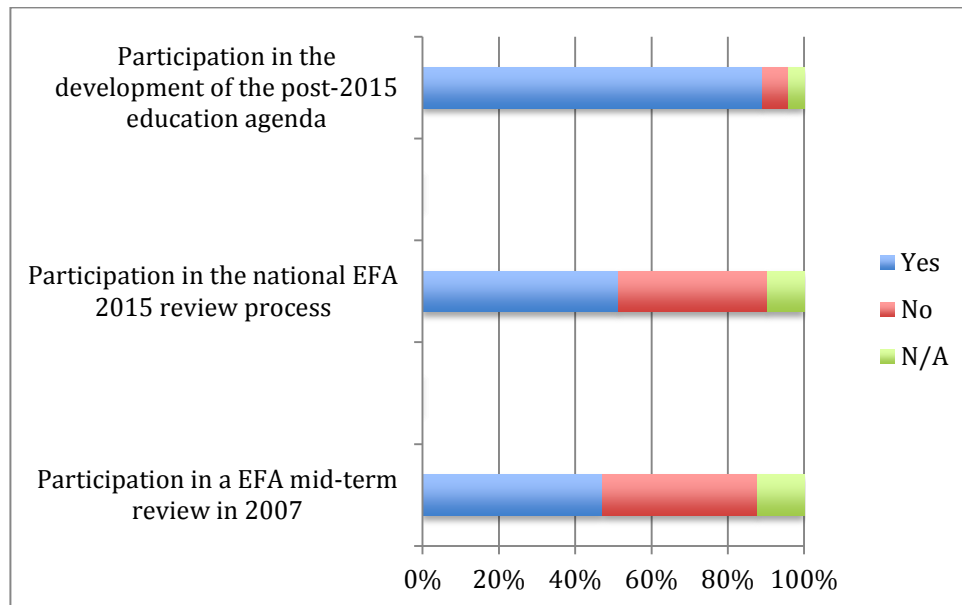
There were many reports of participation in inter-governmental, regional and global meetings. The list was extensive, with civil society from each region reporting their participation in regional and international spaces (although participation does not necessarily equate with impact). These include global meetings (Rio+20), thematic meetings (CONFITEA 6), regional ministerial meetings, technical expert meetings, and the CCNGO/EFA meeting held in Chile in 2014.

5.4 The 2015 World Education Forum and the Post-2015 agenda

Comparing civil society participation in the Dakar Forum in 2000 to the anticipated attendance in the 2015 World Education Forum in Incheon is indicative of the massive change in civil society participation in the last 15 years. The difference is huge: the 2015 NGO Forum is an official part of the WEF and all CSOs participating in the NGO Forum will be able to participate in the WEF. Civil society participation in the preparation of the WEF 2015 and its NGO Forum has been strong, and has influenced the agenda.

When asked if their organisation participated in the national, regional or international processes to develop the post-2015 education agenda, an overwhelming majority of survey respondents answered yes (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Participation in the development of EFA agendas



Consultative spaces for civil society were part of both the UNESCO-led process to develop the post-2015 education agenda that resulted in the Muscat Agreement and the SDG processes. These include UNESCO forums, the EFA Steering Committee, “the Major Groups in the Sustainable Development negotiations, and NGOs with consultative status in the ECOSOC.” Despite this, it was also mentioned that many decisions were “made behind closed doors by ad hoc groups.”

It was noted that international civil society spaces are largely dominated by international NGOs and big coalitions, leading to the question of how to coordinate with other NGOs to make sure the views of civil society in general were reflected.

Some interviewees and survey respondents signalled a view that civil society voices had had an impact on the proposal of the post-2015 education agenda, keeping issues of equity and quality at the fore. It is possible to detect an increased visibility and participation of civil society that is likely to continue in the future. Safeguards must be put in place to ensure that participation is full and meaningful, and to address those factors that have limited engagement and participation to date, some of which are outlined in the following section.

Section 6: Enabling Environments and ongoing obstacles to civil society participation

Meyer (2004) suggests that the context in which a social movement emerges influences its development and potential impact: The following section details common themes regarding the enabling environments and ongoing obstacles for civil society participation in EFA, that are evident from the information provided in the surveys and interviews.

(i) International Mandates (EFA, Dakar Framework for Action)

The inclusion of civil society engagement in the Dakar Framework for Action as a central strategy for the achievement of EFA by 2015 was greatly significant, conferring an external legitimacy on civil society as key actors in this process. While civil society had been active in the decades before Dakar, the unequivocal reference in the global policy framework means that governments are, at least in theory, no longer able to dismiss civil society within the context of EFA.

(ii) Political context

Time and again it is apparent that there is a direct correlation between democracy and civil society participation. Longer standing democracies have more established CSOs, whereas civil society will struggle to be heard in more authoritarian states. In some of the worst cases, civil society is targeted by the state, with leaders and activists being criminalised and even disappeared or assassinated.

Likewise, any form of political instability, uncertainty of leadership, conflict and regime change can have a detrimental impact on the potential for civil society participation. When a new government comes into power, it can sometimes lead to a closing off of spaces for participation (although transition from dictatorship to democracy does lead to increase in and even institutionalisation of civil society engagement).

(iii) Institutionalisation

The enshrining of CSO participation in law is often seen as a positive step in the protection of that participation. However, even in instances where there is legislation, some governments have still been closing off spaces of participation. Institutionalisation in this respect should involve a whole framework of legislation that can guarantee civil society participation going forward, regardless of changes in government. Although many countries have provided institutionalised spaces of participation, these have often not been fully implemented, making it more difficult for civil society to hold governments to account.

It can also mean that, “in some countries, civil society is represented by CSOs who are politically close to the ruling political parties.” Such partisan affiliation might mean that funding allocation is skewed in favour of those CSOs that share an agenda with the state. Certain CSOs may also be invited to meetings and be brought into the policy process while others are locked out. Open and inclusive policy dialogue and participation thus becomes difficult. Beyond partisanship, any endemic culture of corruption in public sector-government relations can negatively affect processes of consultation and implementation.

(iv) Transparency in communication and representation

Transparency and accountability of public officials and government organizations is essential for civil society participation in the policy process. On an international level, some respondents indicated that intergovernmental processes are not always transparent. Access to information is vital for civil society to garner a clear picture of the state of education in order to monitor the activities of governing bodies and the allocation of funds.

A major concern of many respondents was therefore the necessity for a decentralisation of the power structures at play in the various forms of civil society participation. Many advocated increasing support for, and recognition of, local grassroots activity, community-based organisation, and public engagement - particularly of previously marginalised voices.

International bodies (like UNESCO, and its annual Global Monitoring Reports) are indispensable in their ability to encourage governments to adhere to goals of EFA. However, many CSOs would like to see international action balanced by a more inclusive, “down-up” grassroots approach. It is therefore deemed essential that community actors are granted the ability to give feedback on government policies, civil society projects, and the realities of their day-to-day implementation.

Similarly, when coalitions and regional networks become institutions in their own right, they gain the benefits of increased legitimacy, visibility and resources (financial, information and expertise). However, they can also end up taking on a life of their own, and no longer truly represent the CSOs that make them up: a genuinely collective voice is lost.

(v) Economic Context

The majority of respondents were wary of the increasing trend towards corporatisation in education and a general movement towards neoliberal agendas. As a result of privatisation, the planning and implementation of education reforms are too often driven by motivations of profit, rather than the goals of EFA. As one INGO outlined: the “world has seen accelerated economic growth since 2000...It has concentrated power with a selected few, who haven’t been open to the idea of greater civil society participation in decision-making. This has affected participation negatively.”

The global economic crisis of 2007-8, and resulting programmes of austerity deployed by the governments of the Global North, has had a negative impact on the Official Development Assistance for education. In some cases, civil society is invited to participate in EFA processes because it is seen as a cost-effective alternative for governments in times of austerity. Civil society has often had to fill gaps left by government budget cuts when prioritisation of education has declined or when money is reallocated for security and stability issues. Competition between CSOs for increasingly limited funding has also posed a challenge.

Donors and their funding conditions have a significant effect on civil society engagement, determining who participates and to what extent. The impact depends on the position and agenda of the donor: while certain respondents criticised the politically-motivated allocation of funding, others cited donors as being able to assert a positive influence by pressuring governments to include civil society, in their conditions for funding.

(vi) Technology

The vast majority of respondents to the survey cited the internet's indispensability for communication. The internet allows CSOs to share experiences and research, and galvanise action around common goals and initiatives. As an integral component of media plurality, the internet provides a vital mechanism for reaching the public for campaigning, raising awareness and mobilizing public opinion. This is particularly essential in countries where the traditional mass media (print and TV) is owned or heavily influenced by the state.

Whilst recognising the undeniable utility of the internet for civil society, many respondents were also quick to note that not everyone has access to this technology. Equally, internet "outages" can occur relatively frequently in certain regions – potentially crippling to those CSOs dependent on it.

Access to information from UNESCO and the EFA data in the GMR, amongst other useful resources, has been integral to participation, with some organisations calling for more transparency in the means by which such information is stored and shared. One suggestion proposed was for the institution of a CSO data portal, where data might be uploaded by governing bodies for easier access. In general, a move towards the digitalization of information and processes involved in civil society participation seems both inevitable and desirable. Digital technology has the potential to unlock vital information for analysis, as well as free up time and resources to be deployed more effectively elsewhere.

The above factors have been reported by informants as significant in civil society ability to coordinate and participate in EFA processes. The means to mitigate obstacles and enhance enabling factors need consideration going forward.

Section 7: Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

In the last 15 years, civil society engaged in EFA has grown beyond recognition to what it was in 2000; there are more organisations working to secure the right to education than ever before, capacity has increased and there have been dramatic changes in coordination.

These changes have led to increased visibility for civil society within the EFA movement and enhanced its ability to secure and occupy spaces for “engagement and participation [. . .] in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of strategies for educational development.” (UNESCO, 2000a, p.18) As this report has documented, there is a positive trend of increased participation across all regions. The ability of civil society to participate has been supported through its recognition in the Dakar Framework for Action and through the opportunities created within the EFA architecture. Participation has become easier where democratic spaces exist, nevertheless, there is no room for complacency as the extent and depth of participation varies enormously (even within the limited research sample of this report). In too many settings, civil society remains marginalised from decision making processes but this is often masked by the

adoption by powerful actors of the language and discourse of participation and inclusion confus[ing] boundaries of who has authority and who does not, who should be on the ‘inside’ and who is on the ‘outside’ of decision-making and policymaking arenas. (Gaventa, 2006, p.23)

Participation in EFA processes must move beyond the level of what has been described as “cosmetic consultation”. Enabling environments must be fostered and obstacles removed to ensure civil society engagement and participation (as outlined in Dakar) is strengthened going forward.

Although the methodological limitations of this study mean it cannot make firm claims to the impact of civil society in the achievements of EFA to date, it seems reasonable to conclude that civil society has made an important contribution in its drive for faster and more equitable progress towards EFA.³² Importantly, civil society has kept the message that education is a fundamental human right at the centre of the debate.

The surveys and interviews point to an enormous effort by civil society in the construction of the post-2015 education agenda and this is also seen in the ‘Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda’ (Sayed, 2013). The fact that UNESCO, as co-lead with UNICEF of the Thematic Consultation, tied the debate on education post-2015 since 2012 to the existing EFA processes, gave civil society a strong stand and voice through the CCNGO/EFA meetings and their representation in the EFA Steering Committee and in the regional and global EFA meetings. UNESCO, as supervising entity, also made sure that the post-2015 agenda development was integrated in the 2013-2014 CSEF plans. This momentum must not be lost: civil society must be viewed as a key partner in policy processes and accorded appropriate places in the decision-making forums to help “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.³³

³² As mentioned earlier in the report, even in more in depth evaluations it is difficult to assign attribution.

³³ This is the provisional post-2015 goal on education at the time of writing this report in April 2015.

7.2 Recommendations for increasing and improving civil society participation in education post-2015

The following recommendations are a short synthesis of the very large number of recommendations suggested by survey and interview informants.

For national governments:

- Repeal laws that prevent and criminalise civil society activism in education.
- Introduce or strengthen policies and legislation to ensure civil society is involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of education plans.
- Institutionalise regular mechanisms for dialogue with civil society on education at national, sub-national, and local level.
- Guarantee access to information related to education budget, policies and processes in all national languages.
- Strengthen the participation of community members in school management committees.
- Create child and youth friendly formats and forums for the development of education policy and governance.
- Work with civil society to strengthen, coordinate and improve data collection.
- Support awareness raising on the right to education for all stakeholders, including children, parents, and the media.
- Support capacity building for CSOs.
- Provide financial support to national coalitions of education so that they have appropriate financial and human resources.

For donors:

- Support funding for CSOs at national, regional, and global levels to ensure sustained civil society participation.
- Support capacity building programmes for civil society organizations.
- Provide technical support for the participation of civil society in education.
- Develop mechanisms to encourage and monitor governments in relation to promoting citizen participation in educational policy at the national level.
- Monitor and take action against recipients of education aid that take repressive action against, or criminalise, civil society activism.

For regional inter-governmental organisations:

- Institute official spaces for civil society participation in relation to the development of regional education policy and monitoring forums/bodies with adherence to agreed international policy frameworks and conventions on education.
- Promote collaboration and information sharing with regional civil society on education.
- Support capacity building programmes for civil society organisations to ensure effective coordination and monitoring of regional and national education policy and implementation.
- Develop mechanisms to encourage and monitor governments in relation to promoting citizen participation in educational policy at the national level.
- Monitor and take action against governments that take repressive action or criminalise civil society activism.

For UNESCO (and other international bodies as relevant):

- Establish consultative processes at the national, regional, and global levels to further develop, implement and monitor education post-2015 with formalised space for civil society participation.

- Ensure civil society participation in international policy forums relating to education, providing access to information related to education, and allowing longer lead times for consultation.
- Strengthen national, regional and global coordination mechanisms in relation to education.
- Continue and expand the CCNGO/EFA mechanism.
- Create training courses on technical skills related to education planning, monitoring and evaluations, budget tracking (and so on) for civil society.
- Facilitate national, regional, and international learning forums, where exchange of good practices and experiences of participation in education can take place.
- Support and work with civil society at national, regional and global level in tracking government performance. Include CSOs in the mechanisms to concretise the 'data revolution' to address the data gaps that hinder robust policies addressing equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination in education.
- Establish mechanisms for monitoring and regular reporting on the status of civil society participation .

For CSOs:

- Strengthen communication and awareness raising on the right to education among the public.
- Build capacities of communities to ensure governance and effective policy engagement.
- Strengthen collaboration with other education CSOs, and speak with one voice: build and compliment on each other's work.
- Strengthen capacities in evidence-based advocacy especially in the areas of research, monitoring, and policy analysis.
- Network with other CSO networks outside the education sector.

For regional civil society networks:

- Document and defend national CSOs when they come under attack by governments.
- Support civil society expansion in countries where civil society is not yet strong.
- Invest in capacity building programmes for national CSO networks, especially in use of ICT, social media, and new advocacy strategies.
- Facilitate cross-country learning experiences. Document and exchange successful experiences.
- Network and build alliances with other CSO formations working on other development issues.

For international NGOs and civil society networks and coalitions:

- Advocate for more CSO spaces in global education dialogues.
- Advocate for increased financing and capacity building of national CSOs.
- Provide data and information for regional and national networks.
- Facilitate global learning exchanges among CSOs.
- Improve communication and consultation with regional and national networks in advance of key international processes.
- Network/build alliances with other CSO formations working on other development issues.

Appendix A: Methodology

The empirical information used in the study relies on information provided from 74 survey questionnaires returned by local, national, regional and international CCNGO/EFA member organisations and interviews with 14 key informants. The views of other (non-CCNGO member) civil society organisations are reflected to some degree in the regional networks' input³⁴, but overall, the sample remains limited to members of the CCNGO/EFA and therefore cannot be claimed as representative of all CSOs working on education globally.

The interviewees were selected to ensure a geographic and constituency balance. Many have multiple perspectives, having experience from national, regional and international levels, and from both civil society and government/UN context. Most of the interviewees participated in the WEF 2000. The questionnaire was devised by UNESCO and the CCNGO/EFA Coordination Group, who also selected the interviewees.

Finally, while three of the interviewees were formerly Ministry of Education staff in their respective countries, no serving government representatives were approached and therefore this document does not reflect or include the views of current government or donor representatives.

While many of the returned questionnaires were fully completed and provided detailed answers, others were only partially completed and in some instances whole sections were incomplete. The questionnaire itself was in places framed in a manner that resulted in different interpretations and limited the ability to draw clear conclusions.

³⁴ As each regional network includes organisations that are not members of the CCNGO/EFA.

Appendix B: List of Interviewees

Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan, Secretary General, ASPBAE
David Archer, Head of Programme Development, ActionAid
Alberto Croce, Board Member, Campaña Argentina por el Derecho a la Educación
Camilla Croso, President, GCE; Regional Coordinator, CLADE
Sabine Detzel, EFA and Global Agenda Coordination Team, UNESCO
Aicha Bah Diallo, Chairperson, FAWE
Monique Fouilhoux, Chairperson, GCE
Refaat Sabbah, President, ACEA
Sheldon Shaeffer, Board member, Asia-Pacific Network for Early Childhood
Gorgui Sow, former Regional Coordinator, ANCEFA
Alan Tuckett, President, ICAE
Abhimanyu Singh, former Director of UNESCO Beijing
Jordan Naidoo, Senior Education Advisor, UNICEF
Mary Rose Warue Kariuki, Consultant, Kenya

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UNESCO, EFA Reviews: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/resources/formulaires-unescdoc/>