

The Commonwealth Education Fund in India

Final Evaluation Document

June 2008

Commissioned by CEF India

Prepared by:
Sheshagiri K.M
Consultant

Contents

Foreword 3

1. Commonwealth Education Fund in India and its Evaluation 4

This chapter begins with a brief note on the CEF, and describes the CEF in India in terms of its structure, resource allocation, goals, criteria and indicators. The evaluation process is then described and its limitations are outlined.

2. CEF in India – an overview; some reflections 8

The work of CEF in India is described in some detail, starting with an overview of CEF Partners and then moving on to a chronology of key developments. Alongside, some initial reflections are made about the general course that CEF took in India. These and other reflections are again discussed later in various places throughout the document.

3. Summary of CEF India Mid Term Reflections and Reviews 16

Prior to this evaluation, there were at least two important review and reflection exercises (in 2004). This chapter summarizes the observations arising out of these exercises; this will help in contextualizing the current evaluation.

4. CEF Interventions at the Country Level 17

There were two distinct strands of the CEF initiative in India. National level initiatives, their intent and outcomes are discussed in this chapter. What issues were highlighted? Which organizations were supported? What happened as a result?

5. CEF Interventions in the states 22

A large chunk of CEF initiatives were based at the state level. CEF began as a pan Indian initiative but later focused most of its efforts in AP, Orissa and UP. We discuss experiences, issues, concerns...

6. What could have been...35

This chapter places the CEF experience in perspective. A number of observations are then reflected upon, which touch upon achievements, experiences, limitations and possibilities...

7. Doing it all over again...40

Annexures

A. Interactions during the course of the evaluation 41

B. Evaluation TOR 42

1. Foreword and acknowledgements

Independent India has just completed six decades as a nation. Much has happened during these sixty odd years, defining, redefining and questioning us as a nation. How have we done as a nation? Perhaps there is no better way than to ask how we have treated our children – have we been able to provide every child a meaningful education that develops his or her potential to the fullest, for instance?

In this regard, we promised (through Article 45 of the constitution) nearly sixty years ago, that we would universalize elementary education by 1960. This constitutional goalpost has constantly shifted thereafter. In 2008, we are still far away from this goal, though it must be admitted that there have been important strides towards realizing it.

The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) was set up in 2001 to contribute in an important way to this national agenda. The key idea was to make ‘education a top political priority’ in all the commonwealth countries. This, it was believed, was crucial if these countries were to leave no child out in the task of educating all children. In this sense, the CEF was not limited to ‘implementing an education program’ in a given geographical area subject to duration and quantum of (often external) funding, as is the case with many civil society initiatives which fade out once funding stops. On the other hand, CEF was expected to impact policy, by bringing policy makers, political parties, practitioners, teachers, parents, NGOs etc together to bring about civil action on burning educational issues.

In India, the CEF began in 2002 as a three year initiative. Later, it was extended by two more years. In 2008, we have the opportunity to tell its story – what are the experiences? What was achieved? What could have been...? This evaluation attempts to throw light on these questions. Of course, answers do not come easily – in many cases, we are left with more questions, and more leads to follow.

I must thank the CEF in India for providing me the opportunity to look critically at their work in the past five years. In particular, thanks are due especially to Chris Marsden and Debdudd Panda, who were an integral part of this quick study. I would also like to thank the CEF Partners in Delhi, UP, Orissa and AP who spent time with us and helped us understand their experiences and their ground realities. If this report can contribute to ongoing dialogue on ways to reach out to all children, it will have served its purpose.

Sheshagiri K.M

June 2008

Chapter 1 -- Commonwealth Education Fund in India and its Evaluation

1. Brief note on the Commonwealth Education Fund

The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) was first announced at a meeting on child poverty in February 2001 by the then British Chancellor of Exchequer, Gordon Brown. The aim of CEF was to promote universal primary education within the 17 Commonwealth countries. The overarching goal for CEF was:

‘All Commonwealth children to have access to, and to complete, good quality primary education by 2015...’

Towards this end, the CEF was ‘...grounded in the conviction that education needs to be made a top priority...’ in the Commonwealth countries and that ‘everyone (parents, teachers, non-governmental organizations, faith based organizations, businesses, the media and ordinary citizens...) has a role to play¹’. Achieving gender equity was considered crucial as part of this effort, and was meant to be achieved by 2005. Following the above announcement, an amount of 10 million GBP was pledged by the British Government.

From the beginning, the CEF was envisaged as an ‘innovative partnership between three leading aid organizations’ based in the UK – Action Aid (AA), Oxfam and Save the Children Fund (SCF) along with the UK Government and the private sector. Each of these organizations was expected to play the ‘lead’ role in the commonwealth countries to push forward the agenda of the CEF in that country.

2. CEF in India

2.1 Allocation of resources and structure

India was initially² allotted 17% of the CEF resources (that is, 1.7 mi GBP out of the total 10 mi GBP pledged globally, the highest for all the Commonwealth countries) for a period of three years beginning 2002. To manage the program, it was agreed that a three tier structure would be set up for the CEF in India, consisting of the Management Committee (MC), Secretariat and an Advisory Group (AG). While the secretariat (based at Delhi, within the premises of the Action Aid Office) was expected to operationalise CEF in India, the MC was expected to set the overall direction and give final approval on partnerships. The AG was meant to inform CEF on policy directions, and help prioritize issues and opportunities for work.

In all, CEF supported³ 33 initiatives throughout its tenure in India– through Action Aid, 11 initiatives were funded in 6 states (Tamilnadu, Delhi, Orissa, Nagaland, AP and Bihar), through Oxfam, 5 Partners in UP, and through SCF, 5 initiatives in 4 states (J&K, AP, West Bengal, Delhi, Orissa), while the CEF secretariat supported 11 initiatives in a small way in 5 states (Bihar, Delhi, AP, TN and Karnataka).

¹ See, *Commonwealth Education Fund – investing in the next generation* (published by the CEF International Secretariat, UK)

² This was later revised to 1.2 mi GBP in 2004/05, following a review of the functioning of the India program by the CEF International Secretariat, UK. Under spending was cited as the main reason for this budget reduction.

³ This information has been shared by the CEF secretariat. It must be noted that the term ‘initiative’ does not always mean one organization. In some cases, it can also mean a network of organizations as in the case of the West Bengal Education Network (WBEN), the Action Aid Network in Orissa, and SCF’s Partner Network in AP, or the People’s Campaign for Common Schooling System (PCCSS) that now has a presence in 12 states.

2.2. CEF criteria, goals and indicators

In order to help Commonwealth countries focus their interventions under the CEF better, the following criteria (or ways of working, or enablers, if you will...) were articulated internationally. These three criteria were meant to be the bedrock for all CEF programming:

- Strengthening civil society participation in the design and implementation of national and local education plans and frameworks -- this should happen principally through support for broad based national alliances and coalitions...priority for initiatives that accelerate progress towards gender equity
- Enabling local communities to monitor government spending on education, both at national and local levels
- Supporting innovative ways for civil society to ensure that all children, especially girls and the most vulnerable and disadvantaged...are able to access quality education...

The above criteria are meant to be the ‘enablers’ to achieve CEF goals. A closer look at the criteria tells us that they are both broad and specific. Criterion 1 above is a very broad statement of ‘strengthening civil society participation...’ – in the absence of a shared understanding/consensus, this can be interpreted in multiple ways. At the same time, Criterion 2 is so specific that it can be classified as an activity. It is not clear as to why a specific issue such as government spending on education is separately focused upon, when there can be many other such specific concerns in making education happen.

CEF India Goals

In all, to begin with (in 2002/03), CEF in India had identified five goals which resulted from the formal and informal consultations between the three key agencies involved as well as other agencies/persons external to the program:

- Focus on most vulnerable children and their access to mainstream education (example children with disabilities, migrant children, children without adult care and protection, working children, children of stigmatized parents like sex workers etc)
- Enhance the positive, humanistic and pluralistic content of the school education curriculum
- Enhance community participation, control and management of school education especially of vulnerable social groups within rural communities – ‘a good society is a caring society’; thus, promoting community responsibility, care and protection towards children in difficult circumstances is crucial for overall well being
- Support procedural national policy analysis with a view to make the policies and programs more accountable and suitable to the needs of out of school children
- Ensure effective translation of the 93rd constitutional amendment into State Level Acts and promote collaborative action across society to hold governments accountable in delivering the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

However, two years later, by end 2004 and early 2005 and following the mid term reflection and review process, there was a far more succinct articulation⁴ of the CEF India goal – that of ‘strengthening school systems in India such that all children have access to quality schooling.’ The criteria remained the same. It is not clear why the above five goals were

⁴ See, *Narrative Report for the period Jan-March 2005*; also see the *Strategic Plan 2005-07* document

replaced by a single goal. Perhaps the need to be more focused was driving the reflection at that time. Also, it was stated that the school was to be seen as the ‘unit for operation’. This was done presumably to put the spotlight back on the quality of the schooling experience, as it was felt that quality issues had not got the attention they deserved in earlier articulations of criteria, goals etc. Thus, in addition to the emphasis on access/enrollment, the focus was shifted to what happens inside the school. However, the term ‘quality schooling’ was left open to interpretation – CEF did not articulate what its shared understanding (if there was any...) was.

Outcome indicators

CEF in India visualized the following three indicators to measure outcomes:

- Capacity of key civil society organizations is strengthened, especially those which represent the education interest of poor children
- National and local education plans and frameworks (including education components of the 11th five year plan) are influenced by civil society participation
- Innovative approaches to educating the most marginalized children are developed in a way that influences wider policy and practice

These indicators do not have a one to one correspondence with the above five articulated goals or the single goal that replaced them later. In such a case, the reference point for a study of the program becomes blurred.

Brief note on the three key agencies involved

For the first time, three leading international development agencies with long years of development experience in India came together⁵ under a common program. It is interesting to note their respective positions⁶ and stated intentions on children’s education, which have been reproduced below (see box). Please note that these positions may have been modified, given that 5-6 years have passed since then. For our discussion, we will refer to these statements.

Table 1 – positions on education – AA, SCF and Oxfam

Action Aid India CSP 2000-03	Oxfam India Trust	Save the Children UK CSP 02-04
<u>Excerpts from the CSP</u> “Despite governmental efforts...radical re-prioritization of expenditure is essential to meet demand...a large number of children (SCs, with disabilities, girl children, children of commercial sex workers, other stigmatized groups, convicts, unorganized and migrant laborers, landless poor) continue to be excluded from the education system...these would form the core of AAI’s work in this sector...look at structural causes, set up models, advocate with state...”	<u>Global Policy</u> “Follow up of Dakar (2000) recommendations...” <u>Strategic Change Objective</u> “All children living in poverty will achieve their right to a good quality basic education and poor adults will have access to sufficient educational opportunities to overcome their poverty.”	<u>Strategic Goal</u> “To improve the relevance and quality of mainstream government pre/primary education, especially for the most marginalized, starting from the perspective of children and through the involvement of NGOs in developing innovation and best practices.” <i>(But wish list!)</i> <u>Change Objectives</u> “To increase enrollment, retention...through child focused, gender sensitive and friendly environments... To increase involvement of children and communities in education policy...”

⁵ While organizations and networks external to Action Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children were also involved in CEF, the articulations of these three agencies is mentioned here for reference as they happened to utilize more than 80% of the CEF budget allocation – in that sense, the CEF program by and large happened to be a program for these three agencies, though it was intended as a national initiative. We will discuss this later

⁶ Source: See, *CEF India Proposal (September 2002)*

Without engaging in an in-depth discussion, we may note the following:

- Action Aid is clear in its articulation about *who* it should target as part of its education strategy – the focus seems to be mostly on issues related to access, though there is a mention about in school processes as well.
- Oxfam also highlights its concern about children and poverty, and the need to provide ‘good quality basic education’ to help them come out of it.
- Save the Children is distinctly different in the sense that it brings on board the dimension of children’s perspectives – the belief is that children should have a say in the design and development of the educational process, educational policy, etc.

Of the three agencies, Action Aid and Save the Children have had experience of working in education in India. Though Oxfam’s global level articulation talks about education, its focus in India has been on the issues of gender, livelihood, disaster etc. Education therefore is new territory for Oxfam. Does that explain why Oxfam’s share of the CEF budget was only 11%, far lower when compared to the amounts allocated to Action Aid and Save the Children? This question will come up for some discussion later.

3. The end term evaluation: overall purpose and objectives

The overall purpose⁷ of the external evaluation is ‘...to determine the relevance of the CEF project and fulfillment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.’ Besides this, the evaluation seeks an ‘objective analysis of how successful the responsible stakeholders were in managing the fund to achieve the purpose of CEF in India.’ Finally, the evaluation is expected to ‘draw some conclusions about the efficacy of investing development assistance in education advocacy and how it could be done differently in the future.’

While the above broadly reflects the aim of the evaluation, the following objectives⁸ further spell out its scope:

1. Evaluate India’s progress during the time span of CEF (2003 to 2007) towards CEF goals and outcomes
2. By evaluating the impact of activities that CEF India has undertaken under the different ‘criteria’ of CEF establish any possible attribution to CEF’s work supporting India’s progress towards CEF goals
3. Assess the effectiveness of the collaboration between the three agencies, the India and International Secretariats in achieving the goals of the project
4. Make recommendations for any future education advocacy funds in India

3.1 Approach to the evaluation

Study of available literature (both at the CEF Secretariat in Delhi and at the state level), visits to various intervention sites, and meetings with key persons involved (through interviews and group discussions) were the key methods employed to undertake the evaluation. The evaluator visited AP, Orissa and UP and interacted with staff of CEF Secretariat, SCF, Action Aid and Oxfam and their Partners besides meeting with children, parents, teachers, Panchayat representatives and in some cases, government officials. Annexure 1 gives these details as well as schedule followed. The evaluation is not strictly statistically valid but still provides an

⁷ See, TOR for the external evaluation (Annexure 2)

⁸ Again, see the evaluation TOR

overall picture of the CEF in India given that the interactions were with key persons associated with the program and also given that their insights apply to the whole program as such. What is interesting about the evaluation is that it provided an opportunity to visit sites where interventions had ended a year ago when CEF funding ended. This provided insights regarding continuity of processes that had been set in motion, something crucial in work on model building and education advocacy.

Though the evaluation is not statistically representative, a number of examples were encountered during interaction with parents, community representatives, and staff of NGO Partners of CEF. We have taken care not to generalize based on these examples. However, these examples have been used to explore a particular question, issue or concern of importance. Most of the box items in the text constitute these examples.

3.2 Some reflections on evaluation objectives

The second objective of the evaluation states that the *impact* of CEF under the different criteria must be evaluated. Assessment of impact is outside the purview of this evaluation, given the limitations of time allotted for the evaluation – in all, only nine days were available to undertake field visits. This was not enough for an immersion into the program which required a detailed study/assessment of impact. It must also be stated that the schedule followed for visits to different states/locations did not allow much scope for interactions with government officials (except in AP) in order to ascertain their perceptions regarding civil society involvement in their respective states. Having said this, the evaluation hopes to point out the broad directions that the CEF has taken on in India, and the likely impact that such an approach entails. The pros and cons of the approach followed will also be discussed.

Impact also occurs at different levels and locations within the education system. One level is that of articulation of appropriate/relevant/useful education policy. The other lies in the actual implementation of policy. The third is actually the outcome of the implementation of desired policy. Each of these deserves separate study. For instance, lobbying may result in a rethinking of education policy, say with respect to admission of children in school, or teacher transfer etc. This is only one level of impact. It is only when this policy finds form expression on the ground in terms of practice over a period of time can it be said that civil action has actually made a difference. Another point that must be mentioned is that often, impact is also confused with output. Thus, delivering a number of activities, be they workshops, trainings, publications etc do not constitute impact.

Finally, it may be noted that there can also be different kinds of impact (or impact in different settings), which are all related to each other, such as the impact on how and what children learn, impact on children's socio-economic status, impact with respect to people's participation in education and so on. The point being made here is that it takes time first of all to bring about the impact we seek to see (given a variety of factors that we will not go into here), and consequently, it needs adequate time to understand and study it as well.

Chapter 2 -- CEF in India – an overview; initial country level reflections

Elementary Education in India during the time of CEF: a sketchy overview

We have earlier noted that CEF activity in India commenced in 2002. This roughly corresponds to five and a half decades of independent India. Where are we on the commitments we made in Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy vis-à-vis providing free and compulsory education to all children up to fourteen years of age? One thing is obvious – that this constitutional goalpost has shifted from one decade to the next, and, as this document is written, we are given to believe that it will finally be achieved by 2010, thanks to the efforts of the SSA. The task thus still looms large.

There is no doubt that there have been significant developments since Independence. In short, our educational system has expanded in terms of number of schools, more children in schools (though retention is still a challenge), more teachers (though with ‘para’ teachers, the concept of teachers, it is argued has been very much diluted), additional school infrastructure, increase in financial outlays (as in the commitment of the UPA government to increase spending on education to 6% of GDP; the levying of an ‘education cess’), and so on⁹. At the same time, the phenomenon of children dropping out (or being pushed out, as it is sometimes described) is still worrying¹⁰. This apart, reports like the ASER (for e.g. in 2005) point out that as much as 50% children at any point in time may not actually be attending school! These kinds of statistics show that the schooling system is still not ready to absorb and retain children from a variety of backgrounds. With regard to children out of school¹¹, the ASER report of 2006 points out that 13 million children still do not have access to any form of schooling. With drop out rates still being significant, and with children’s attendance an area of worry, these numbers could effectively be much higher.

Numerous education commissions, starting with the Mudaliar Commission (1952/53), the Kothari Commission (1964), the National Policy on Education (1968 and 1986), and the Curriculum Frameworks (since the 70’s) have at different points articulated achievements, experiences, concerns and challenges facing the education of children in India. Further, there have been a number of large scale governmental efforts to move further on the path of universal education. In the last decade and a half, the externally funded DPEP and SSA have been the flagship programs of the Indian government. These and other initiatives resulted in the creation of more institutional structures like the DIETs, BRCs and CRCs which were meant to play an important role in improving school and teacher quality. These large scale initiatives have also contributed importantly to the quantitative expansion of formal education. In the last decade, more private initiatives in education have also emerged.

⁹ Just to provide an idea of these changes, we have some numbers: The number of primary schools in the country has increased almost four-fold, from 175,999 (1950-51) to 573,085 (2002-03) and enrolment in the primary cycle has gone up six times, from 19.2 million in 1950 to 122.4 million in 2003. At the upper primary stage, the increase in enrolment is by a factor of 13 for all children and 32 for girls. The gross enrolment ratio at the primary stages often exceeds 100 per cent though the net enrolment ratio is about 10-20 per cent lower (*Selected Educational Statistics 1999-2000 and 2004, GOI*). Thus, in terms of access, the problem seems to have been significantly addressed.

¹⁰ With close to 40 per cent children entering the primary level dropping out, and the number of children enrolled in upper primary coming down sharply even further at the secondary level. With disadvantaged groups, the drop out rates could be much higher (as it is in the case of tribal girls, where the rate is as high as 71%, with SC girls faring no better. Similar is the case with minority groups like the Muslim community). (*Selected Education Statistics, 2002-03, MHRD, GoI*)

¹¹ Also see, *Mapping India’s Children – UNICEF in Action* (2004). According to UNICEF, an average of 5.2% of children in the age group 5-14 years work for others, and more than 15% of children in this age group are working for others or doing household chores for more than four hours a day or doing family work.

We must end this necessarily sketchy description with a mention of key developments that had occurred at the time that CEF started in India. The SSA had just begun, taking over from the DPEP. With this, large scale governmental interventions moved into the realm of elementary education. Another development (in which civil society played an important role) was the recognition by the Indian state that education was a fundamental right. The 86th constitutional amendment in 2002 was a step in this direction. It had its roots in the now famous *Unnikrishman vs the State of Andhra Pradesh* case (1993), in which the Supreme Court recognized primary education as an important aspect of one's personal life and liberty and read it as part of Article 21, as a fundamental right. Prior to this, education was only considered to be a moral obligation of the state, something that an individual could not demand as his or her personal right. However, as we shall see later, the 86th amendment has its own share of concerns.

The developments outlined above are impressive, no doubt, but are they really making a difference at the level of the child and teacher in terms of how and what children learn? We know through various studies (for instance, by NCERT over the years, and more recently, the ASER reports since 2005) that even the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic (the '3R's) are suspect for children who have managed to come to class V¹². Classroom observations tell us that knowledge is often viewed in schools today as a body of facts to be transmitted by adults. The role of the child is seen as that of a passive, obedient receiver of this knowledge, and facts that are transmitted by the teacher. By and large, there is mindless drill, as opposed to purposive learning, thinking and feeling. 'Covering' the curriculum and getting children to perform well in the exams seems to be the order of the day, instead of enabling the teacher and child to construct/define their own curriculum and learn from their experiences. The tension between the need to find quick fix solutions and deliver 'standard outcomes' on the one hand and engage in reflection processes to develop conceptual understanding and application, on the other, often arises.

It is in this context that CEF was launched in India. In some ways, if we juxtapose the CEF objectives, goals and indicators on one side and the achievements in elementary education at the national level on the other, we can see that there was still plenty to be done, as our rather limited description above points out.

Organizations involved in CEF

How did CEF go about the task of making education 'a number one political priority'? We explore this question in a limited way to begin with, in this chapter and follow this with more detailed discussions of national and state level interventions. In some ways, this chapter pays out the terrain of this study. We will begin by looking at the Partnerships of CEF in India, as its work was done mostly through NGO Partners and networks.

Consider the table 2 on the following page, for a snapshot of CEF India supported initiatives from 2002-2007.

The bulk of the CEF initiatives have been routed through the three core agencies, mostly through Save the Children and Action Aid. In contrast to the other two agencies, Oxfam's interventions are only in UP.

¹² See the first ASER report of 2005. Some findings from the report may be mentioned here: 35% of children in 7-14 age group cannot read simple paragraphs, 48% in the 7-10 age group cannot read simple paragraphs, and 68% cannot read a story text; 54% children in the 7-14 age group cannot do a two digit subtraction; 40% in this age group cannot handle a division...! The country level ASER exercise, incidentally, was supported initially by CEF. This helped in its launching phase.

Table 2 – Organizations/networks supported by CEF 2002-2007 (Source: CEF Secretariat, Delhi)

Name of organization	Agency	Brief description	Duration
1. East and West Education Society, Bihar	CEF	Civil society intervention in the implementation of SSA at the state and district levels	3 years (2005-2007)
2. MV Foundation (MVF), AP	CEF	Analyzing principles of community mobilization	1 yr-2006 to 2007
3. CACL, Mysore	CEF	Conference -- girl child labor, rural literacy, health	In 2003
4. Madras School of Social Work, Chennai	CEF	Two day conference on 'Educational Status of Children – issues in the New Millennium'	1 event in 2003
5. GAW	CEF	Global Action Week (annual event on education); supported the Association for Voluntary Action	4 years (2003-06)
6. PCCSS	CEF	Peoples Campaign for Common School System	1 year-2007
7. Global march against child labor/GCE	CEF	Organizing national level children's parliament for discussing education problems as seen by children	1 event in 2004
8. Bahai Office	CEF	One conference on 'The Right to Education'	In 2003
9. CR4WSF (Yuva)	CEF	Working Group on Child Rights for WSF 2004	2004, 2005
10. Samarthan	CEF	Wada Na Thodo Abhiyan of Action Aid	1 yr – 2005
11. State Facilitating Center, Chennai (TN)	AA	Advocacy on Inclusive Education within government education system	4 years (2004-07)
12. Orissa Shiksha Abhiyan	AA	Campaign on issues on the ground with respect to elementary education; working with multiple stakeholders like Teacher's Unions, MLAs, NGOs, bureaucracy...	3 years (2005-07)
13. Govt. of Nagaland	AA	Communitization of Education – local ownership of education and local action	2 years (2003-04)
14. Rajiv Gandhi Bal Sakha Yojna, Chhatisgarh	AA	Psychosocial integration of children from difficult circumstances	2 years (2003-04)
15. Balatejassu, AP	AA	Rehabilitating children without adult care and protection	2 years (2003-04)
16. Delhi initiative for Street Children, Delhi	AA	Rehabilitating street children in Delhi	2 years (2004-05)
17. FACE – Forum Against Children's Exploitation, Orissa	AA	Campaign for Educational Rights of Children, which was the initial phase of the Orissa Shiksha Abhiyan which later expanded to several districts	2 years (2004-05)
18. Education for Democracy, Bihar	AA	Design and implement interventions through different schools for inculcation of democratic values	2 years (2004-05)
19. Gender Unit, Delhi	AA	Scoping Study – A study of violence against girls with respect to education, undertaken by the gender unit	1 event (study)
20. Gender Unit, Delhi	AA	Campaign to stop violence against girls	1 year
21. Education Advocacy Program, UP	Oxfam	Highlighting issues; working with schools and local communities; identifying 'change makers' and building their capacities – 5 NGO Partners	4 years (2004-08)
22. West Bengal Education Network (WBEN)	SCF	Civil Society Participation to ensure equity and quality in primary/elementary education in West Bengal	2 years (2005-06)
23. Education-a joyful and continuous journey, AP and Orissa	SCF	Network of organizations supported by SCF (<i>more details...? What is the difference between this and no. 26 below? Was 26 for the Min standards report...?</i>)	5 years (2002-07)
24. Kargil Development Project (KDP)	SCF	Next Generation Education Reforms in Kargil	1 year (in 2005)
25. Namgyal Trust, Leh	SCF	Mainstreaming disabled children in Leh	2 years (2004-05)
26. Network of Organizations	SCF	Education of Children – a social transformation process	1 year (in 2005)

In terms of range of interventions, Action Aid's themes cover children out of school -- inclusive education, street children, children without adult care and protection, education of girls, etc (in line with its CSP). SCF mostly focused on a child centered approach, and developed a 'minimum standards approach' to schooling while Oxfam and its Partners attempted to work with local communities to mobilize them on education. The CEF

secretariat supported a number of initiatives, many of which were one time events that eventually did not add up to much at the national level. The secretariat was also unable to bring together quite disparate coalitions/networks at the national level to do any meaningful work. This was reflected upon during the mid term review and it led to the decision that the focus would shift to the three states where CEF Partners like Action Aid, Save the Children and Oxfam had strong presence. In effect, this reduced what was once planned as a pan Indian initiative, to a program that mostly supported the Partners of the three core agencies. Though the initiative was not able to do much nationally, the state level interventions enabled better focus on issues specific to the state. We will look at these experiences in chapter 5.

What is striking is the *duration* of the initiatives supported. Only six initiatives (numbered 1, 5, 11, 12, 21 and 23) were supported for three or more years. Among these, initiative no. 5 (Global Action Week – GAW) was event based every year in April, and cannot be therefore counted as a continuous process resulting in any tangible change. All other initiatives were supported for one or two years. Discontinuity was a key feature then, of CEF interventions, affecting impact. Budget reductions during the course of the program also did not help. This observation will be discussed in some detail later.

CEF’s work in India will be better understood with the help a brief chronology of its development. From discussions with a number of people who worked with the CEF, three phases can be discerned broadly (see table below). The CEF was initially visualized as a three-year intervention, between 2002 and 2005.

Table 3 – CEF Chronology in India (snapshots) -- 2002 to 2007

Phase	Brief narrative of key events and developments
Phase 1 – August 2002 to March 2003 – ‘the beginning’	CEF India Secretariat was set up in Delhi in August 2002. Action aid was selected as the ‘lead’ agency. Links established with civil society groups and government in some states and at national levels. Plans made to develop CEF as a pan Indian initiative; proposal for 3 years submitted for approval. CEF secretariat staffed. Three tier structure agreed upon (Secretariat, Management Committee – MC and Advisory Group -- AG) and membership of MC and AG discussed
Phase 2 – April 2003 to December 2004 (i.e. up to Mid Term Review -- MTR) – ‘expansion and review’	Post proposal approval (in Jan-Feb 2003), CEF expands through many partnerships initiated in as many as 10 states (TN, Delhi, Orissa, Nagaland, AP, Bihar, UP, WB, and J&K). Organizations supported are AA, SCF and Oxfam Partners and also from outside. MC sees many changes in its membership; AG is set up and meets twice in 2003 (May and August) but fails to take off subsequently as an active support group to CEF. Unequal spending by AA, SCF and Oxfam, with SCF spending the highest in this period (and in the overall tenure of CEF as well). Phase 2 sees both a Mid term reflection (internal, March-April 2004) leading to the Mid Term Review (external) in December 2004. The Global Review Framework (GRF) enables organizations to do a self assessment as well. Lack of preparation, focus and a scattered ‘hotch-potch’ approach are identified as concerns in this phase.
Phase 3 – Post Mid Term Review phase – January 2005 to June 2007 – ‘re-focusing’	The ‘scattered’ approach in 10 states comes to an end; focus states are now UP (Oxfam), AP (SCF) and Orissa (AA), with some ongoing Partnerships initiated separately by the secretariat. The CEF then primarily becomes a fund for AA, SCF and Oxfam and their Partners. There is a budget reduction from 1.7 mi GBP to 1.2 mi GBP (in June 2006) due to gross under spending till that point. This results in abrupt withdrawal of support to organizations in some cases (like CBGA, Pratham) or drastic reduction in budgets in others (like Action aid in Orissa). In all, by the time this phase ends, Action Aid has supported 11 initiatives in 6 states, Oxfam has supported 5 Partner organizations in UP, SCF has supported 5 initiatives in 5 states and the CEF secretariat has supported 11 initiatives in a small way in 5 states. Strategic plans for the period 2005-07 are finalized.
Phase 4 – Jan 2007 to June 2008 – ‘consolidation’	Partnerships with MVF and PCCSS; increasingly autonomous secretariat which begins to facilitate work of Partners (in addition to coordination role earlier...)

2.2 Some initial country level observations

Tables 2 and 3 above are not meant to tell the whole story. They only provide starting points for some reflections that are all connected with each other – these will then be explored throughout the remainder of this document along with other observations that will keep cropping up as we proceed further.

A. Too ambitious a program in too short a time? It is clear that the CEF wanted to position itself as a pan Indian initiative at the national as well as state levels. To move in this direction, CEF sought to associate with organizations, networks and initiatives in many different states. In phase 1, therefore, the attempt was to enter as many states as possible. But for any change to occur, especially in policy, a long term perspective is essential. This was missing, given that the CEF was positioned as a three year initiative in the beginning itself. The pressure of spending large amounts of money across a large geography resulted in CEF reaching out to support many organizations and initiatives that were not supported long enough to make a difference. A three-year duration also meant that there was little time for preparation in terms of building consensus, undertaking a systematic mapping of issues and concerns and seeking out organizations and organization networks working on education. It also meant that there was little time for ‘model’ building as envisaged in the CEF criteria, goals etc. In actual practice, as a result of under spending, two more years were added to the CEF program even as budgets were reduced from 1.7 mi GBP to 1.2 mi GBP.

C. Unequal budget distribution – a review of budget allocation and expenditure shows an unequal distribution of financial resources between various recipients (see table 4 below).

Table 4 – CEF (India) budget allocation

Agency	Allocation %
Action Aid	27.45%
Save the Children	47.27%
Oxfam	11.07%
CEF Secretariat ¹³	14.21%

Data supplied by CEF Secretariat (2008)

To begin with, it is clear that SCF has garnered nearly half the budget allocation, followed by Action Aid and Oxfam, which has got a little over a tenth of the budget allocation. As the three agencies set out to prepare plans and proposals, they had agreed to abide by a ‘basic principle’ that each organization would take 15% of the budget and leave the rest for support to other organizations, networks and initiatives across the country. In this way, CEF could span out and become an initiative with a national profile and reach. The fact that SCF was allocated the major chunk of the budget shows that the other two agencies were not prepared to absorb a high quantum of money. A perusal of correspondence between the three agencies, in early 2003, shows that Oxfam had raised the concern about unequal budget allocation. However, no subsequent action was taken to address this concern and the budget allocations stayed that way. In any case, following the mid term reflection and review in December 2004 (see chapter 3), the remaining money was split between the three focus states.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that budgets and plans depend upon the *nature* of the program as well, apart from its scale – a program in which there is a high service delivery component in large quantity can absorb a heavy budget. Other unit costs like salaries, overheads etc may also differ from agency to agency and this in turn can shape the

¹³ Secretariat costs include monitoring, administration and overheads (6.8%) apart from support to organizations and networks by the secretariat (7.4%). Note that these percentages are based on the reduced budget of 1.2 mi GBP.

budget/expenditure. A more fundamental question may then be raised about the place of direct service delivery (i.e. implementing a service) in a program that is meant for advocacy. Indeed, this was the concern that was first articulated by the CEF International Secretariat¹⁴ in response to the submission of the India proposal. CEF India's reply was that it is essential to 'build models' for demonstration at scale to influence government policy. While this argument cannot be denied (the strength of the argument being that it is essential first to show possibilities on the ground before one advocates for them to be scaled up elsewhere), the point made here is that model building¹⁵ requires sufficient time for this to happen, something that was not built into the CEF program design right from the beginning.

Out of the 14% allocation for the CEF India Secretariat, 6.8% was allocated for secretariat overheads, while 7.3% went in for support to organizations. Purely in budgetary terms, the question is: who did the CEF program belong to? Clearly, the answer is the three leading agencies involved, who took away 86% of the total CEF India budget. CEF thus started as a pan Indian initiative that was meant to go beyond the three UK based agencies but ended up becoming a program mainly for AA, SCF and Oxfam. An opportunity was thus lost to do education advocacy work at the national level. Indeed, this was the concern articulated by the CEF International Secretariat¹⁶.

D. Budget reduction – based on the review undertaken by the CEF International Secretariat in June 2006, the CEF India budgets were reduced by half a million GBP, from 1.7 mi GBP to 1.2 mi GBP. The reduction was an outcome of under spending at that stage, which itself was due to a lack of preparation. For instance, Oxfam's spending only began in 2004, while spending by Action Aid in 2003 was low as well (about a tenth of the spending of SCF that year). The net result of this reduction was that it affected ongoing initiatives (like Pratham and CBGA); further expansion of the program was also not possible. By then, the program had become 'more compact' and restricted in terms of its focus on the initiatives of the three agencies in UP, AP and Orissa, as already pointed out. Initiatives that had been supported elsewhere during phases 1 and 2 had to be ended abruptly in a programmatic sense, though they may have completed their financial cycles.

E. A wide and scattered approach and then a compact approach – this point has been made earlier. The reasons for this shift seem to be more administrative and managerial than programmatic. The other way of looking at it is to argue that a more compact program is likely to have better focus and greater likelihood of impact. Either way, with a small secretariat team (which also saw frequent changes in staffing), it made sense to focus on three states where each of the three agencies had presence, and where they were in a position to monitor their own work. While a compact approach had its advantages, it did not help in the profile building of CEF in India. It strengthened the tendency for each organization 'to go its own way', resulting in little integration, convergence, sharing and pooling of experiences, resources and learning at the state or national levels. The CEF then became a conduit for funding existing initiatives.

Even when the wider approach across 10 states was on, what was the focus and what was the perspective informing this effort? Was there any overarching advocacy strategy nationally, or at the state level, which was informed by supporting many organizations in phases 1 and 2? It is one thing to have criteria and outcome indicators regarding strengthening the participation of civil society in the design of education, and quite another to actually design national

¹⁴ These observations have been made from readings of the correspondence between CEF India and CEF UK in 2002.

¹⁵ Not only for out of school children with programs like the residential bridge courses, which were fairly well established by the time CEF started, but also for working with communities, teachers, children, etc

¹⁶ For this, see page 20 of the report titled *CEF India Mid-Term Review (2002 to 2004)*.

initiatives for the same. Supporting many organizations across different states may not therefore add up to much, unless convergence is built into the strategy. If this does not happen, it only results in a collection of approaches being supported in different parts of the country for a small duration, which does not translate into a coherent national effort.

These are some reflections then, to begin with. More will be added as we go along.

Chapter 3 – Mid Term Reflections

During the course of CEF in India, there were points (in 2004) at which reflections regarding the status of the program as well as future directions were undertaken. These reviews help us understand the questions and concerns that were articulated during the second year of CEF interventions. The observations from these reviews are summarized here.

CEF India Mid-Term Reflection and Review (MTR) -- 2002-04

The CEF India MTR was undertaken in Dec 2004¹⁷. It was informed by a ‘Mid-term Reflection’ that was conducted between March-June the same year. In fact, the mid term reflection was meant as an activity that would lead to the Mid-term Review later that year. The aim of the mid term reflection was ‘to discern the direction taken by CEF in India, the strategic intent, partnerships undertaken, processes involved, the structure, the positioning of CEF India, current and future directions.’ The mid term review was expected to ‘examine CEF India’s achievements, failures and missed opportunities, its strengths and weaknesses while working towards the realization of its three year strategic plans between 2002 and 2005’. What follows is a summary of the observations made through the reflection and review processes of 2004.

The reflection process made the following observations and recommendations:

- That CEF India till then had put more emphasis on criteria 1 and 3 – it had noted that ‘such micro level management cannot provide wider impact unless civil society organizations are linked together from micro to macro level and derive policy issues from field experiences. CEF would need to lay stress on this.’
- Delay in project approval (by MC) is an issue and this has affected timely fund disbursement (sometimes to the tune of several months) – if different regional offices can take more responsibilities, a lot of time can be saved in approval processing. State level MCs were proposed to lessen the burden on the national level MC in Delhi.
- There are no clear programmatic thrust areas in operational terms for different regions of India. The current strategy is based more on a ‘convenient method’ of supporting existing initiatives in an innovative way.
- The Delhi secretariat may need to be staffed with additional persons – given the vastness of the program, it was realized that the secretariat needed augmentation of human resources.

It is interesting to note that the reflection process had voiced concern about too many field level initiatives being supported without mechanisms being developed to establish micro-macro linkages to influence wider policy. There was also a strong hint that there was a need for CEF to move beyond existing initiatives and ‘cast a wider net’ to include other organizations. Interestingly, precisely the opposite happened – the net was not cast wide and instead, the program became restricted to the three states of AP, Orissa and UP; a bulk of the budget was allocated to these three agencies. The idea then was that each agency would cast the necessary net in its state. The mid-term review made this major observation:

- CEF may not find it easy to bring together national level networks like NAFRE, SACCS, CACL etc and set up a nodal network...these networks may not see eye to eye with each other...instead, it may be a better option to bring together these networks on a platform from time to time to address educational issues of concern. At the state level, networks would continue to be strengthened (like WBEN, FACE etc).

¹⁷ Binoy Acharya of UNNATI Foundation was the external reviewer/facilitator of this process. See also the report titled *CEF India Mid-Term Review (2002 to 2004)*.

Chapter 4 -- CEF Interventions at the Country Level and their influence

Some comments in the background

It has been mentioned that CEF India had attempted to position itself as a national level advocacy initiative. The idea of supporting different initiatives in many states was informed by this purpose. However, such widespread support and development of partnerships must also be informed by a strategic purpose – what should it achieve, or lead to, as a whole? And, what needs to be achieved regionally or locally? These are key questions. As we have discussed briefly earlier, merely supporting a number of ventures with varied themes or focus areas and approaches that range from the issue of inclusion in education, monitoring the education budget, to strengthening the process of communitization (as in the North East) will not amount to much nationally, unless the strategy allows for the following – one, adequate time to make a difference; two, consolidation of learning, its documentation and its transfer and three, a strategy to use these experiences to influence wider policy (that is, establishing micro-macro linkages).

More importantly perhaps, a difficulty arises when one gets into too many partnerships with diverse organizations, networks and movements over a variety of issues all over the country – this results in dilution of effort, instead of enabling focus. What issue or issues must be highlighted and worked upon? What preparation will this require? If work/issues are not prioritized, organizational energy and resources are diffused into managing too much in too short a time and with limited human resources. The temptation therefore, to address a wide variety of concerns in a short time, needs to be checked. On the other hand, focusing on a fewer number of issues may help. This requires in-depth understanding of how different factors influence a child's education. While it is outside the scope of this document to suggest focus areas of work, one can make a random listing of topics here that will require much work in the future – policy on English language teaching; policy on 'automatic promotion; policies on teacher preparation and selection; issues related to decentralization in education; migrating children; the challenge of quality, and so on. All these areas need informed debate. Once the zeroing in of the issue takes place, investing all organizational resources in addressing the issue through model building, civil action etc may actually make a difference over a sustained period of effort.

On the issue of adequate time built in, it has already been pointed out that this was not factored into the design of CEF, which was only thought of as a three year venture. On the issue of focus we can only say that it was lacking. There is nothing to suggest (from the various discussions and perusal of literature) that, apart from the three criteria and goals (see chapter 1) there was any specific thinking with respect to the Indian situations. As a result, there was at best a scattered approach which did not add up into a coherent national effort. It seems that CEF was better positioned to make a difference at the state and sub state levels given that many promising initiatives were supported. This will be taken up in some detail in the following chapter.

What difference did CEF ultimately make nationally?

At the national level, what difference did CEF ultimately make? This is a key question for the evaluation. For this, we must first discuss what was done nationally and with what intent and expectations of outcome.

As soon as the Secretariat and the MC were set up in August 2002, CEF went about the task of establishing linkages with concerned NGOs, networks, social movements, government (state and central), corporations and individuals etc in the first phase. A perusal of the narrative reporting shows this to be the case. What was the advocacy scenario like at that time, especially at the national level? We may note that there was much civil action around the issue of making Elementary Education as a Fundamental Right. The 86th amendment to the constitution that seeks to make free and compulsory education a Fundamental right for children in the age group of 6-14 years, had been passed in parliament in November 2001 (almost a year before CEF started in India), and was enshrined in the constitution as Article 21. Further, a Draft Education Bill was prepared to take forward this amendment to make it a law.

The draft education bill was not without its share of problems¹⁸. Thus, there was much scope for more education advocacy nationally. In addition, a number related of educational issues/concerns needed attention, such as (this list is not exhaustive) – the issue of English language teaching; para teachers; teacher development; definition and understanding of quality etc. The point made is that passing the draft education bill was only the first step – there were many more concerns requiring urgent attention, and hence, advocacy. However, following the passing of the draft bill in 2001, national level advocacy efforts generally reduced. The mobilization of civil action that one saw around the passing of the draft bill was not visible thereafter.

The table below provides an overview of attempts made nationally by CEF to push the education agenda at the national level.

Table 5 – National level attempts/initiatives by the CEF Secretariat

Name of the Organization, initiative or network of organizations or proposals	Broad Objectives for providing support and/or reaching out by CEF	What happened as a result
Social Development and Community Affairs Council, CII	To explore theme of girl child education and media advocacy; to influence industry w.r.t education	After a few meetings in 2002, did not move forward
International Enterprise, Singapore – the primary agency encouraging the spread of Singapore’s external economic wing	Sharing CEF vision, mission, objectives; exploring working together	After one or two meetings in 2002, did not move forward
National working Group on Education Policy (NWGEP)	Proposal sought from BGVS through Vinod Raina, also an Advisory Group member for CEF; also CABE (Central Advisory Board on Education) member	Many discussions in MC since 2002; proposal submitted in 2003 for setting up a Policy Institute which CEF was reluctant to support as it was seen to be outside CEF mandate
Establishing a National Resource Center on Peace and Harmony as part of the larger initiative for ‘Education and Democracy’	For collection of information, documentation, sharing and dissemination of materials on Education and Peace, Justice...	Did not move forward...
CR4WSF – Group on Child Rights for the World Social Forum 2004, Mumbai	To build up the CR profile as an integral part of WSF IV, V, etc	The group was restricted to the WSF; not much happened beyond WSF 2004
Global Action Week	To observe GAW every year; to	CEF support was event based and

¹⁸ The following criticisms were then leveled: **1.** The Bill neglects pre-primary education **2.** It dilutes quality by stating in Article 21 A that ‘the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children...in such a manner as the state by law, may determine...’ **3.** The Bill lacks a clear definition of Free and Compulsory’. **4.** Financial commitments are clear **5.** The bill seeks to *penalize* parents if they do not send their children to school – this is not acceptable.

(GAW) – WG4GAW – working group for Global Action Week --	highlight a specific theme of education every year; to collaborate with other networks, organizations, coalitions...	restricted to the week of GAW every April starting 2003; there was a lack of follow up beyond GAW in terms of working in a sustained manner on educational issues. Every year the GAW theme changed, which did not help...
Citizen's Joint initiative on Party manifestos	To place children and their concerns on top on the political agendas of parties	CEF was involved in consultations and contributed to the drafting of manifestos
Center for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA, Delhi)	Civil Society monitoring of the Education Budget (supported through Action Aid)	CEF supported CBGA (through Action Aid) for two years (second year with reduced budget); modules developed on budget tracking; CEF Partners trained through 3 state and 8 district level workshops; research conducted in 10 UP districts on ground situation, but lack of follow up of research because budget was reduced and finally funding stopped; not clear how CEF partners used this training on budget tracking. Too early to say anything about the impact of CBGA's work so far.
Wada Na Thodo Abhiyan (WNTA)	Supporting Education Advocacy Group led by Samarthan, an Action Aid Partner – highlighting promises made by government and reminding them about it (supported through AA)	CEF supported WNTA for a year after which support was stopped for reasons not clear. Difficult to ascertain impact due to this one year support.
National Alliance for the Fundamental right to education (NAFRE)	Draft education Bill recognizing elementary education as a fundamental right for 6-14 year old children	NAFRE proposal was submitted to CEF; was not approved by MC, though reasons for this are not clear
National Coalition on Education (NCE)	Mainstreaming Children Out of School, especially those under difficult circumstances with focus on girl child; Children's Parliaments/forums	Proposal; submitted but not approved; concerns expressed by CEF MC about credibility of NCE
Pratham	Enable civil society monitoring of children's learning and basic facilities in schools – supported through SCF	Supported Pratham (through SCF) for a 3 year period during which the annual ASER exercise was developed; ASER, which is a national exercise in all Indian states, has enhanced the spotlight on basic competences learnt by children at school. ASER itself got wide publicity and is now an annual event. But support for ASER was not part of the original CEF objectives and criteria in a direct way – the focus was more on out of school children...
People's Campaign for Common Schooling System (PCCSS)	To advocate for a Common Schooling System based on the lines of the Kothari Commission (1964)	PCCSS is a splinter group that was formed as a result of divisions within NAFRE, soon after the education bill was passed; CEF's support to PCCSS was only for one year, at the very end (in 2007); it is difficult to ascertain what really came out of this brief association. However, PCCSS prepared a document on Common Schooling and organized of a national workshop on the idea of the Common

		Schooling System. It also initiated its network in about 12 states.
ICICI Bank – Social Initiatives Group	Matching grant of Rs.3.5 crores provided to CEF	Money was <i>returned</i> to ICICI and the grant did not come through. Reasons not clear, except that one of the arguments is that additional money was not required, given low spending by CEF at that point. Also technical issues for fund transfer with ICICI were not sorted out.
CEF Secretariat	Provide inputs for documents like the National Charter for Children; National Commission for Children; Common Minimum Program Document of the UPA government	Documents with inputs and suggestions were shared with the government and with the UPA party.
Gender Unit, Action Aid	Support for a ‘scoping’ study on violence against girls in education	Study undertaken. How it informed CEF activity is not clear.

What happened as a result?

This is a key question, as criterion 1 talks specifically about strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations. The first observation, which we have already discussed, is the short duration of funding/support, inadequate to bring about any tangible change. Support for GAW, CR4WSF, WNTA, PCCSS was too short to lead to anything substantial. GAW, in fact, was mere event based support and the event itself has faded out after the first few years when it began in 2003. Many proposals in table 5 were dropped (some, after extensive discussions and lack of consensus in the MC, while others were dropped for reasons that are not documented).

The one example that stands out in terms of contribution is Pratham. As a result of its three year support to Pratham, the annual exercise of preparing the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) became a regular feature of the organization. CEF support thus came in at a crucial time. Nationally, the ASER exercise has increased the spotlight on the basics that children learn in school, in terms of competencies in arithmetic, reading and writing¹⁹. In fact, the Pratham example came most readily during discussions with a number of people as the CEF supported initiative that resulted in impact in the sense that it got the government at both state and national levels to focus on children’s acquisition of basic skills in school. Pratham’s ASER represents the first ever national level exercise (involving hundreds of NGOs) on this scale covering all states. While it may be argued that ASER ‘did not tell us more than what we knew about the levels of acquisition of the ‘3R’s’, it nevertheless brought back this focus at a time when it was needed.

The national release of ASER in 2005 was followed by a number of meetings at state and district levels across the country with government officials and citizens' groups to discuss the ASER 2005 findings and debate the next steps. On the whole ASER has resulted in contributing to the momentum in government, both at Central and State levels²⁰, in terms of

¹⁹ We will not get into a critique of ASER here. Among the common criticisms are its methodology, and its exclusive focus on the 3 R’s, which, it is argued, do not constitute a measurement of the educational process as such, for education cannot be quantified only in terms of test results.

²⁰ Several states - Tamilnadu, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh - are focusing on remedial education on a large scale; some have invited Pratham, which is coordinating the ASER, as collaborators in this effort. States like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are instituting state-wide quality improvement programs in primary school. Citizens' groups and non-governmental organizations have also taken a variety of different actions to improve children's educational status in their state or district. The bringing out of ASER every year can only complement these efforts.

moving in the direction of greater focus and emphasis on the quality of education. There are national and regional debates on how this is to be done, strategies to be used, and measurements that need to accompany the moves for quality improvement. ASER 2005 was an important input into this process of policy and practice. It showed that measurement of teaching-learning processes is important and needs to be taken seriously. Once this information comes out into the public domain, a variety of stakeholders/role players can be engaged to improve children's learning outcomes in schools.

Why was CEF not able to make an impact with coalition building and networking at the national level? Firstly, coalition building in the Indian context requires time, patience and facilitation of a high order, coupled with a vision. On all these counts, CEF was not prepared. Perhaps there was no real assessment of the challenges of coalition building. Secondly, the secretariat should have been positioned in a leadership role. Instead, it was bogged down by the administration and management of the program, with a lean staff structure, and with persons who were perhaps more suited to this task than that of building solidarity among various groups working on education. Thirdly, what was the road map? Civil action reached a low ebb quite soon after the passing of the education bill in November 2001, not because there were no issues around which organizations could have come together but because of the problems associated with the notion of networking itself. This, we will discuss in chapter 7.

On the whole, not much came out of CEF efforts nationally other than the ASER example.

Chapter 5 -- CEF Interventions at the state level and their influence

Background

CEF's state level interventions were primarily with NGO Partners of Action Aid (in Orissa and AP), Save the Children (in AP and Orissa) and Oxfam (in UP) besides partnerships initiated by the Secretariat, like MVF in AP (see table 2 in Chapter 2, page 8). In contrast to the work undertaken at the national level in terms of reaching out to coalitions, networks etc (mostly based on criteria 1, discussed in the previous chapter), work at the state level involved both criteria 1 and 3, i.e. there were attempts at both coalition building as well as model building on the ground. At one point, in the pre-MTR phase, CEF had presence in 10 states – these included Delhi, UP, J&K, Nagaland, UP, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, WB, AP and TN.

We can discuss the state level initiatives within two categories – one, those that were supported directly by the CEF secretariat and two those that CEF supported through one of the three agencies in each state. In the second category, our discussion will be by and large limited to the visits to selected sites in AP, Orissa and UP. In table 8, some reflections on other state initiatives are out together.

Throughout this chapter, the discussions are interspersed with examples from visits to actual sites of work undertaken by CEF Partners. Given that the number of community level interactions was limited these examples are certainly not exhaustive or even representative of the work undertaken by CEF Partners in different contexts (as we had noted in chapter 1). Nevertheless, they illustrate aspects of work that need closer attention when they are viewed from the point of view of advocacy.

Table 6 – CEF direct supported state level initiatives

Name of organization	Brief description	Duration of support
East and West Education Society, Bihar	Civil society intervention in the implementation of SSA at the state and district levels	3 years (2005 to 2007)
MV Foundation (MVF), AP	Analyzing principles of community mobilization	1 year (2006-07)
CACL, Mysore	National event on girl child labor, rural literacy and health programming	1 event in 2003
Madras School of Social Work, Chennai	Two day conference on 'Educational Status of Children – issues in the New Millennium'	1 event in 2003

As the above table shows, the bottom two associations were more for supporting one time events; nothing much can therefore be said about their follow up, as CEF was not involved in the same. With regard to MVF, CEF support/Partnership came in at the very end i.e. the last year of CEF. Still, the work initiated with MVF (with regular technical support from the CEF Secretariat) has enabled MVF to embark on an Organizational Development process to assess its own strengths, weaknesses and develop itself into a professional resource support organization that can provide technical support wherever it may be needed. This is seen as a crucial part of advocating for the MVF approach²¹ with government and non-governmental initiatives. At the same time, the MVF example is crucial for CEF to learn the principles of how education can be made a political priority in local communities that have for long been educationally deprived.

²¹ At the heart of the MVF approach are the five 'Non-negotiables' or the Charter of Basic Principles for Emancipation of Child Laborers – All children must attend full time formal day schools; Any child out of school is a child laborer; All labor is hazardous and harms the overall growth and development of the child; There must be a total abolition of child labor; Any law regulating child work is unacceptable; Any justification perpetuating the existence of child labor must be condemned.

It will be interesting to discuss the critique of the MVF approach or philosophy. Since this is out side the scope of this evaluation, only a comment²² will be made in passing that there are ‘life worlds’ where children’s work and children’s labor cannot be equated, and that school and work need not clash. Thus, by bringing in a distinction between work and labor and examining them, the debate is opened up considerably. This discussion then leads us on to a crucial question – what models, concepts, ideas and ideologies are we pushing/advocating for? There are ideological underpinnings in almost anything that is stated or done, either implicitly or explicitly and one must be aware of these. We will return to this discussion briefly in chapter 7.

When MVF’s work on the ground is examined²³, some issues crop up (see box below).

The mirage of devolution

The Mahalingapuram Panchayat reflected critically on the issue of devolution of powers. The Sarpanch Narayana says ‘Generally, the government departments agree to whatever I propose for the development of the Panchayat. But nothing happens after that...’ Most of them observe that ‘the official is more powerful than anyone else...’ The example below illustrates the bind in which the Panchayat often finds itself on issues it has little control over.

The SMC whose chairman is the Sarpanch Narayana has in its accounts 50000/- allocated for the purchase of play materials. This amount came in through SSA funds – actually, 250000/- was allocated for school construction out of which 50000/- was meant for play materials. So far, the SMC has not spent the money meant for materials. For any expenditure, both the Sarpanch and the Headmaster of the school are signatories. The HM (whose retirement is close) refuses to sign for the spending of 50000/- as he feels that ‘This amount is big...if something happens, I won’t get my pension after retirement!’ No amount of convincing has worked. The HM further adds that ‘No other school in the vicinity has spent this amount. So why should we?’ The Sarpanch is helpless in such a situation.

The issue clearly reflects the constraints faced by the Panchayat, from the school level itself. The Panchayat feels that ‘...not much will change, and we do not have much hope that the government will give us more powers to manage our affairs...’ One of them recalls an interaction with Mani Shankar Aiyar, the union Panchayati Raj Minister who had visited AP some time back. Aiyar had then stated that Panchayats should ‘take their adhikar...’ instead of waiting for someone to give it to them. ‘If only things were that easy!’ opined the Panchayat members.

Again, there is no clear distinction between the roles of the SMC and the Panchayat sub committee (SC) for education. Further probing reveals that the SMC looks at issues related to school management and maintenance whereas the sub committee is supposed to look at quality improvement. One wonders if this distinction helps, as it is necessary to work with the school as a whole – issues of management, infrastructure etc, are also issues of quality. However, the Panchayat members feel that the SC ‘has made some difference...’ – teachers feel that the SC is powerful and that ‘they will need to cooperate...’ They have assured parents that their children’s performances ‘will improve.’ It is also not clear how the Panchayat looks at quality parameters beyond improved performances by children.

From the field visit notes: April 2008

The question that arises after this interaction with the PRI is: how is it that in a Panchayat where MVF has worked on community mobilization for 15 years, one gets to hear so many

²² For a detailed critique of such a position with respect to child labor, see, for instance, *Childhood, Work and Schooling: Some Reflections*. Vasanta, D in Contemporary Education Dialogue, Monsoon 2004

²³ This is entirely based on interactions with two Panchayats in the Shankarapalli Mandal of Ranga Reddy district. We cannot generalize on the basis of these two interactions but nevertheless ask questions that need deeper reflection...

voices of pessimism regarding the PRI's role, devolution of powers, authority, etc in developing the community? Surely, with MVF support and facilitation over the years, one would have expected to at least see more confident sounding Panchayat members, both past and present?

The Partnership with East and West Education Society (EWES) began in the first quarter of 2005. The idea behind EWES's work was to basically create a synergy between civil society and government agencies. In order to create this synergy, EWES initiate civil action for effective implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in three blocks of three districts of Bihar (Patna, Khagaria and Samastipur). 'Planning from below' was the spirit of this approach, as opposed to the usual top down planning undertaken at the district and state levels, ignoring local contexts and conditions.

After scrutinizing existing SSA plans as an example, EWES had also noted that current planning is often also based on false data. In its work on local level planning, the educational cluster is taken as a unit, as this is the first level where the wherewithal for local planning is available. EWES brought together teachers, Panchayat members, local NGOs and government officials to develop cluster level education plans. The value addition of this process is that it takes on board local conditions²⁴ which did not get their due in earlier planning.

The experiences of EWES have resulted in a Planning Manual and a training module for SSA planning teams. The government has adapted these manuals though it is too early to say if these ideas are being used elsewhere. There are some reports from other districts of these ideas informing planning processes. EWES has also been instrumental in bringing together a loose network of 100 NGOs from all over Bihar (called the Voluntary Forum for Education, VFE). More than 20 of these NGOs have taken the local level planning exercise seriously, and are attempting to use it in the areas where they work.

EWES's work at the moment seems more focused on ensuring that local conditions (with regard to school infrastructure, basic facilities, number of teachers, etc) are reflected in the planning process. The next step would be to influence or bring about local level content in curriculum making and classroom practice. Indeed, this is a focus area of the Bihar Curriculum Framework (BCF) of 2006, in which it is envisaged that schools would play a crucial role in developing their own curricula. Since CEF support was withdrawn after the first phase of work, EWES was not able to operationalize phase II, where it had envisaged working closely with the state government to push the notion of local planning within the larger educational system. A key challenge in this task would be to activate the Panchayats which presently are dysfunctional.

Barring the MVF and EWES initiatives, the CEF secretariat has not been involved in other direct partnerships at the state level. Most of the activity has been routed through one of the three agencies.

State level initiatives through three 'core' agencies

A number of initiatives were supported through Action Aid (in Orissa and AP), SCF (in AP and Orissa) and Oxfam (in UP). The table below provides an overview of the same. Discussions of these initiatives from the standpoint of CEF follow.

²⁴ For example, in a flood prone area, the plinth level of the school building has to be raised. The compound wall by itself may not be enough. These and many such observations come up during local planning.

Table 7 – State level advocacy initiatives supported through the three ‘core’ agencies

Name of organization or network supported	Core agency	Brief description	Duration of support
1. State Facilitating Center, Chennai (TN)	AA	Advocacy on Inclusive Education within government education system	4 years (2004-07)
2. Orissa Shiksha Abhiyan	AA	Highlighting, through a campaign, issues on the ground with respect to elementary education; working with multiple stakeholders like Teacher’s Unions, MLAs, NGOs, bureaucracy...	3 years (2005-07)
3. Govt. of Nagaland	AA	Communitization of Education – local ownership of education and local action	2 years (2003-04)
4. Rajiv Gandhi Bal Sakha Yojna, Chhatisgarh	AA	Psychosocial integration of children from difficult circumstances	2 years (2003-04)
5. Balatejassu, AP	AA	Rehabilitating children without adult care and protection	2 years (2003-04)
6. Delhi initiative for Street Children	AA	Rehabilitating street children in Delhi	2 years (2004-05)
7. FACE – Forum Against Children’s Exploitation, Orissa	AA	Campaign for Educational Rights of Children	2 years (2004-05)
8. Education for Democracy, Bihar	AA	Design, implement interventions through different schools for inculcation of democratic values	2 years (2004-05)
9. Gender Unit	AA	Scoping Study – A study of violence against girls with respect to education, undertaken by the gender unit	1 event (study)
10. Gender Unit	AA	Campaign to stop violence against girls	1 year
11. Education Advocacy Program, UP	Oxfam	Highlighting issues; working with schools and local communities; identifying ‘change makers’ and building their capacities	4 years (2004-08)
12. West Bengal Education Network (WBEN)	SCF	Civil Society Participation to ensure equity and quality in primary/elementary education in West Bengal	2 years (2005-06)
13. Education-a joyful and continuous journey, AP and Orissa	SCF	Network of organizations supported by SCF (more details...?)	5 years (2002-07)
13. Kargil Development Project (KDP)	SCF	Next Generation Education Reforms in Kargil	1 year (in 2005)
14. Namgyal Trust, Leh	SCF	Mainstreaming disabled children in Leh	2 yrs-2004-05
15. Network of Organizations	SCF	Education of Children – a social transformation process	1 yr (in 2005)

Oxfam’s initiatives under CEF

Oxfam’s focus area in India does not happen to be Education (though it is mentioned in its global statements). Gender, Livelihood and Disaster Risk reduction (DRR) are the foci of the organization in India. In North India, there has been some education activity happening, particularly in UP, prior to CEF. In Mirzapur, Oxfam has established 4 schools catering specifically to girls from the Dalit community.

CEF activity in Oxfam UP began only in 2004, with a much reduced budget component than was committed/agreed upon in the MC. This issue has already been highlighted in Chapter 2. All the 5 CEF Partners that Oxfam chose (Lok Mitra, Vigyan Foundation, Parmarth Samaj Sewa Sansthan, Samarpan and Arthik Anusandhan Karyakram) have had experiences of implementing education programs. Their partnership with Oxfam began prior to CEF.

As part of the CEF initiative, Oxfam with its Partners undertook a situational analysis (this took about 3-4 months) in 120 government schools across 4 districts in 2005/06. The

objective was to gather relevant information about the functioning of each school (that is, look at availability of infrastructure, teacher position, basic facilities etc), determine what inputs were needed, facilitate the strengthening of VECs and CBOs (to make them more pro-active regarding education), and advocate for improvements (by getting parents, children and community members to demand for better quality education...). As part of these initiatives, Oxfam Partners have facilitated the creation of Bal Sabhas, Shiksha Samitis, etc and have tried to bring parents and teachers together.

Typically, in schools and local communities where Oxfam Partners have worked, mobilizing the community (parents, community leaders, others...) has been the key effort. This is the strength of all Oxfam Partners, given their relationship with and long presence in, these communities. In urban areas, such as the slums of Lucknow, community mobilization for education is seen as part of a larger mobilization of the unorganized sector (as in the case of the 'Shehri Garib Morcha'). In most cases, these community groups have focused on the following – enrollment and retention, especially focusing on out of school children; ensuring effective Midday Meal provision; supply of equipments (e.g. games). In Lucknow, there are examples of how community action questioning the collection of Rs.25/- as admission fee has been successful in abolishing the practice.

The work with 120 schools ended in April 2007 after 18 months (including the 3-4 months they took for the situational analysis). In effect, the actual intervention with schools was for 13-14 months only. Beyond the duration of the CEF program, Oxfam has continued to work with 50 schools (25 schools from the earlier CEF project area) and 25 new schools, in an effort to deepen efforts for sustained impact and show 'models'. This process will however take time.

Starting 2007 (at the end of the CEF Program), Oxfam and its Partners have begun focusing on issues *inside the school* – for instance, discrimination of children (based on caste, class and gender) as a theme is being explored. A film has also been produced as part of this campaign. Corporal punishment is another area where there have been some discussions.

Another important strand of Oxfam's work as part of CEF has been the 'Change Maker' initiative (see box below)

'Change makers': Developing education leadership at the local level

The idea is to encourage local leadership to develop around various issues, including that of children's education. Presently, there are 400 change makers, and 60% are women. Each of them has been provided a 'kit' that contains, among other things, flashcards, a guidebook, an audio CD etc. The kit provides basic information such as details regarding the SSA scheme for instance. Change makers undergo a constant capacity building process, through training, sharing meetings and exposures. This promising initiative has not continued beyond CEF support for lack of funding. On its part, Oxfam too does not seem to have pursued for alternate means of funding to support this promising initiative.

Being part of CEF has meant that Oxfam has often worked in a 'campaign mode' – this has provided an opportunity to network with other organizations and also begin lobbying at the state level. It is very early to state if this has had any impact.

Viewed from the perspective of the CEF Oxfam's experiences illustrate the following:

- That 'model building' takes time and needs to be sustained to bring about lasting change – at best, CEF support for community mobilization and action on educational issues has initiated these processes.

- That advocacy at the local level can sustain, as people respond to issues – it is difficult to carry these voices into the policy making domain in a short term. This requires a much longer term perspective
- That withdrawing of external funding often results in a near stagnation or collapse of the initiative – the Change Maker initiative is one good example where very little has happened beyond CEF support. Is this because it is not seen by Oxfam as a priority program? Even the work with 120 schools across 4 districts has not continued in all these schools after CEF support ended.

Action Aid's initiatives under CEF

Unlike Oxfam, whose initiatives were limited to UP, Action Aid interventions under CEF spanned TN, Orissa, Nagaland, Chhatisgarh, AP, Delhi and Bihar. More than half (nearly 60%) of the budgetary allocation of AA for CEF initiatives has been allocated for the Orissa Shiksha Abhiyan, which was supported for 3 years under CEF. Other programs supported include SFC Chennai, CBGA Delhi (which has been included in the chapter on national level initiatives) and so on. Table 5 on page 14 provides details.

A quick study of Action Aid programs under CEF reveals the following – that there is a wide range of interventions that include mobilizing civil action around the general concerns in education (such as enrollment, drop out, out of school children...), advocating for the mainstreaming of inclusion in formal education, rehabilitating street children and children without adult care and protection, enabling children and teachers to inculcate democratic values, campaigning for violence against the girl child, etc. Thus, children from the most marginalized groups have got the attention in CEF interventions supported through Action Aid. Field visits as part of this evaluation only covered Orissa which happens to be a key state for Action Aid. A brief description of the Orissa Shiksha Abhiyan (OSA) follows, based on which we will reflect upon Action Aid's experiences.

The OSA objectives were: Universalize school education in Orissa; make government schools functional; Advocate for increase of education budget in Orissa up to 25% of state budget; push for quality in education; push for introduction of the Common schooling System; advocate appointment of regular teachers instead of para teachers.

OSA's activities began in 2004. Through FACE (Forum against Children's Exploitation), an NGO network, work was initiated in 10 districts with one primary school and one EGS center in each district chosen as a pilot intervention. This intensive phase saw some 400 out of school children being mainstreamed. This apart, VECs were activated to undertake regular monitoring of schools, attendance of teachers, monitor the provisioning of the mid-day meal program etc. Their interface with the teachers improved through regular meetings.

Activities did not focus so much on curricular or pedagogical aspects – the focus was more on the functioning of schools and provision of basic facilities. This phase of activity resulted in the government inviting AA to upscale the approach to other districts. This was when 42 Panchayats across 19 districts were chosen for grassroots level mobilization on education, with Panchayats as the focal points/units of intervention. According to AA, nearly 7000 children were mainstreamed during this period, through bridge courses²⁵ that were run by Action Aid Partners between January 2006 and December 2006. Baseline surveys covering

²⁵ 92 short term (6 month) bridge courses for children in the age group of 6-8 years; 257 long term (9-10 months) for children in the age group 9+ years were organized in 2006. These bridge courses were located in 442 schools of 42 Panchayats across 19 districts.

the status of in school children, children who had dropped out and never enrolled children helped in ascertaining the magnitude of the problem. These surveys were the starting points for the coming together of the local community (through public hearings and meetings) on the issue of children's education. This eventually led to training inputs for VEC and PRI members on their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis education. Thus, there was community action at the micro level through the VECs and PRIs.

At the same time, AA and its Partners initiated dialogues with bodies like the Teacher's Unions, Trade Unions and selected MLAs. A key event was the 'Shiksha Yatra' in 2006 covering all the 30 districts. Local NGOs hosted the Yatra, which was also supported by CEF. With the involvement of these groups, elementary education got a higher profile in the state.

Action Aid observes that the idea of mainstreaming children out of school through non-residential bridge courses (NRBC, attached to schools) is its contribution to universalizing elementary education in the state. This observation, though, is not validated²⁶ clearly by the SSA in Orissa, which acknowledges that Action Aid, with its interest in mainstreaming out of school children, did contribute to the momentum with regard to the setting up of NRBCs in the state. The SSA points out that the NRBC as a concept has been in existence since the 90's.

Support for the OSA ended in 2007, which also saw a reduction in funding over 2006. By then, CEF budgets had been reduced by half a million GBP following a meeting in Colombo in June 2006. This affected the continuity of the campaign. It is quite clear that Action Aid did not have any contingency plans either through alternative funding sources or from within its own education budgets to support the campaign further. In many ways, therefore, the story of Action Aid is quite similar to that of Oxfam – lack of continuity of work, resulting in a tapering off beyond the funding period. The impact, as a result, became diluted (see box for an example that we encountered during the visit).

What do we do next...?

Santhipalli is a slum in Bhubaneswar that has been in existence for the past 25 years. Currently, it has over 550 households. While the men folk are engaged in petty trade and labor, women usually work as domestic helps in housing societies nearby. Sakar, a local NGO Partner of Action Aid, was supported under the CEF program to mainstream out of school children in Santhipalli.

Basic educational facilities are clearly lacking in Santhipalli. Ruchika, a local NGO, runs a Balwadi in the cramped living room of one of the residents of this slum. This arrangement does not cover all children; since space is a severe constraint, the Balwadi cannot operate like any other normal pre-school.

Sakar, through its education centre, has mainstreamed 42 children in government schools in the past one year of its work in the slum. It had organized mother's committees to monitor the center's functioning. Funding abruptly stopped thereafter, given the reduction on overall CEF budgets. But the people of Santhipalli will not understand this. For them, Sakar had held out hope. In a meeting with mothers, the following statement is heard: 'You came, you did some work, which we started enjoying. You even made a film show on your work here. One year later, you left us...'

On its part, CEF states that only six out of eighty seven lakh rupees meant for Action Aid's work in Orissa were made available after budget reductions. Sakar has approached the SSA for establishing EGS centers in the slum, but this is yet to be approved.

²⁶ This is based on conversations with the present and previous State Project Directors of SSA in Orissa, who maintain that bridge courses were always a part of the thinking of the SSA and that it was not so much an NGO contribution.

Another promising initiative supported by CEF through Action Aid's North east office was for providing support for the 'Communitisation of Education' program (CoE) in Nagaland. The CoE of the government of Nagaland for devolving powers to local bodies is a good example of how local committees and bodies can be empowered. The CoE was initiated in 2002 through the larger *Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act 2002* with the objective of promoting government-community partnership for education at the grassroots level. The Objectives of the program were:

1. Promoting government -community partnership at the grassroots
2. Empowering the community by delegating management and supervision of government schools to the VEC
3. Ensuring accountability of teachers in the villages to local communities by giving the latter the power of disbursing salaries to them

Under the CoE, the community was empowered through delegation of powers to the VEC to manage and supervise government schools, and ensure the accountability of government employees. For instance, under the Communitisation Act of 2002, the VEC can invoke the 'no work, no pay' principle and take appropriate disciplinary action against erring teachers. The deductions from the salary are used by the committee for other school based activities.

Action Aid and its local Partners were actively in taking the CoE forward. With CEF funding for a period of eight months (in 2003), the key activities were the establishment of a State Resource and Facilitation Centre (SRFC) and the development of a Manual for Trainers on CoE, meant to be used while training community representatives. (See box)

The SRFC²⁷ was meant to help 'build local capacities, do research, implement pilot projects and serve as take off point for facilitating communitisation of elementary education'. Further, the 'SRFC was to provide technical support to GoN, NGOs, civil society players to implement programs for improving overall status of elementary education in the state through research, designing appropriate intervention strategies, doing evaluations of ongoing and future interventions for review and rectification, framing policies for provision of greater community role, building capacities stakeholders, undertake pilot projects to field test interventions, help in the development of plans for 3 years based on consultation and learning from pilot interventions and setting up an education management information system designed to meet the contextual needs of the state. The SRFC will facilitate establishment of networks/alliances, generate strategies and materials for intensive awareness generation program, and build a campaign on inclusive education with community participation.'

From the communication available, it is quite clear that the SRFC was set up and housed in Action Aid's field office in Kohima. The GoN also gave a green signal for the SRFC to be set up. Besides this, a training of 9 days for teachers, community leaders etc, was held, and a newsletter titled 'Spark' was published. In the initial stage, 42 schools from 23 villages spread across 5 districts were taken up for intensive work at the school/community level to demonstrate the operationalization of CoE. 25 master trainers were also identified through this process.

Though this promising initiative with an ambitious agenda was supported for a very limited period of eight months through CEF funds, the SRFC was absorbed in Action Aid's regular work as part of its 'Development Area' interventions. A separate documentation may yield some clues about its present status.

²⁷ For details, see the CoE proposal of 2003.

SCF's initiatives under CEF

SCF's core beliefs²⁸ have been mentioned earlier in chapter 1. On the ground, in AP and Orissa, the following seem to be the strands of work, to address children's discrimination and violence in the schooling process:

At the school level – establishing and orienting children's clubs/committees and creating an interface between these committees and SMCs/Panchayats; also establishing children's collectives at the block and district levels; child led indicators in schools; 'suggestion box' initiative in schools; teacher understanding of child rights and diversity; manual on positive discipline

At the community level – working with Panchayats and SMCs to make them child friendly; bringing children's issues of violence and discrimination on to their agenda; working with these as well as children's groups to address the challenges of mainstreaming out of school children

At the district and state levels – campaigning on issues of discrimination of children, as in the case of the campaign on corporal punishment; advocating for minimum standards in schooling (incorporating children's perspectives)

SCF's work in AP and Orissa stems out of the experiences of the Global March for Children (GMFC) in 2001. During this march, when children started speaking up (in the many regional workshops that had been organized), their concerns related to their discrimination, and violence cropped up again and again. These then became focal points for SCF's work in AP and Orissa. These reflections happened at a time when the CEF proposal came through in 2002 – in many ways, CEF support enabled SCF to carry on work that had already been initiated. In the initial phase of work (2003 to 2005), the focus was mostly on community mobilization on these issues identified by children (in essence, these were discussions within the community on a discourse of child rights) and formation of children's collectives at the school, block and district levels. Through these efforts (in 175 communities across the state in AP), SCF attempted to build a model of a 'child friendly school and community'.

In terms of advocating for the above approaches within the larger system, SCF seems to have made the following difference:

- Reviving a Government Order (GO) on corporal Punishment that was lying in cold storage since 2002 in AP; being instrumental in the bringing out of a GO on corporal punishment in 2004 in Orissa (after a series of meetings with MLAs, bureaucrats, NGOs...)
- Working with the AP Alliance on Child Rights; supporting the establishment of a 'Child Rights Cell' within the education department in AP – this came with a toll free number on which children could call and register complaints
- Bringing out a document on 'Minimum Standards for Quality Education in Schools of AP' (in 2007)
- SSA JRM recommendation that the child friendly approaches in schools should be scaled up; also manual on positive discipline has been made a part of B.Ed courses since 2006

²⁸ It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to provide a critique of the strategic positions of SCF on children's issues in general and education in particular. Thus, while the discussion about the meaning/scope, nature, extent and limitations of children's participation in their schooling is important, a discussion of the philosophical and conceptual underpinnings of these ideas and their critique will not be taken up here. This demands a separate space.

All the above points may be viewed as outputs rather than as impacts (as we have discussed in chapter 1). The real challenge would lie in the operationalization of these policy changes.

For instance, how will the GO on corporal punishment actually be implemented? What is the experience so far? Also, it is not very clear what difference the toll free number of the child rights cell has made – how many children have called so far, how their grievances have been addressed, what the follow up has been etc. There are no studies to tell us how this has worked. Similarly, it is already a year since the ‘Minimum Standards’ report was brought out – what has it led to? What about the child friendly school and community? We did not come across such a school during field visits. These questions need further reflection and action beyond CEF. Fortunately, SCF has managed to secure funding from the European Union (EU) to continue its work in AP, Orissa and WB. Only time will tell if the foundation laid for its work in AP and Orissa will be consolidated and taken forward.

On the ground, a number of issues related to implementation (that is, carrying an idea through...) and model building remain as the following boxes illustrate.

What happened after...?

Sulaiman Nagar and Harsh Mahal are urban slums of Hyderabad where the SCF NGO Partner Mahita has its presence. The community is predominantly Muslim, with families living here since the past 18-20 years. They have mostly migrated from villages in different parts of AP and North Karnataka. Mahita, a SCF Partner, started its motivational center in 2001 for children who had dropped out of school and for those who could not access any school. These children were then mainstreamed in government schools after passing a test. When the CEF project came in (period: 2003-2005), the motivational centers continued to be supported. However, this support has not continued after the withdrawing of CEF funds. The centers do not function now.

The parents observe that a large number of children are still out of school. Depending on interest, a few parents have continued to motivate others (mostly in their own families) to send their children to school. There is no agreement on estimates, though, of out of school children as there is no updated data to this effect at the community level. The government, parents feel, should open many more schools to cater to this population, but who will demand this? The community does not seem to be well organized around this issue. They say that there are one or two government sanctioned schools, and construction work has begun. But delays in construction due to lack of regular monitoring has led to an increase in construction costs – who will bear this additional cost? Ultimately, a half finished structure without basic facilities will be put in place.

At the end of our discussion, a comment is heard thus: ‘They (the government) make flyovers...but what about our lives...?’

In other areas, three motivation centers of Mahita have now been taken over by the National Child Labor Project (NCLP). This ensures continuity of effort.

From the field visit notes: April 2008

The question that arises from these examples is this: how does one ensure that community mobilization processes do not depend only on external funding all the time (CEF in this case)? What does it take to develop strong community based organizations that have the confidence to negotiate with the government system, and do this consistently over time? In this case, CEF funding was too short (for two years?) for anything concrete to take shape. What are the ways in which this work can be continued till the goal of universal coverage is reached?

Some more examples...and challenges

Challenges of eliciting and incorporating children’s perspectives

1. There is a pattern in the way children’s groups work. In a majority of the cases, children share that they have reported about child marriages (which have been stopped as a result), complaints against teachers who punish them, about children who have dropped out (there are examples of children being brought back to school by

other children), about school cleanliness, personal hygiene, etc. This common pattern of activity in the children's clubs seems to suggest that these agendas are often influenced very much by adults. What are the actual day to day concerns that bother children? This may need more attention; examples other than the above did not come up in discussions with children.

The key challenge will be to *contextualize/localize* child rights in the life worlds of children rather than only provide a generic package as above – what are the socio-economic and political issues that impinge upon their lives? What are their childhood concerns and anxieties that will need attention? How can the notion of child rights be used to understand and address them? How can children respond to these challenges?

2. An important idea that lies at the heart of eliciting children's perspectives is that of the 'Child Led Indicators' (CLI), which seems to have entered the discourse sometime in 2005. The CLI is supposed to be a set of markers for the functioning of the school, and these are totally determined by children. The CLI can range from issues related to school infrastructure to classroom environment, learning etc. In practice, we did not see this idea in operation. In one school, what appeared to be a wish list (regarding shortage of rooms, absence of school cleanliness etc) was put up on the walls of the school. Surely, this is not the way the CLI should work? Sometimes, the danger with such ideas is that they become more important than their practice!

3. The 'suggestion box' is meant to provide children the opportunity to contribute suggestions for the betterment of school, air grievances, raise issues, and so on. There is no documentation of the experiences of using the suggestion box as an instrument to improve school, and examples of this idea having made a difference are also not easily forthcoming.

SCF points out that the examples stated above are not universal, and there are Partners like CAFORD for instance in Anantapur district of AP, where these issues have been addressed well.

4. The government school at Harshmahal is part of SCF's initiative of developing a 'child friendly school' in the past 3 years. It is clear that much more work has to go in if the idea of a child friendly school has to be put in place. During our visit, we spent sometime observing a class (grade 1) in progress. The teacher stood at the board. With a cane in her hand, she was pointing out to words on the board which children had to repeat after her. The repetition exercise went on and on for 20 minutes. Children were getting restless, and we waited patiently for something else to happen. Then the teacher invited some selected children to the board, and the mindless repetition of words continued...the class repeated after these children. The cane, it seems, is only used as a pointing device. It serves no other purpose, according to the teacher.

From the field visit notes: April 2008

The above examples illustrate the kind of challenges one encounters in the actual implementation of an idea. Regular reflection and critical examination of the idea, monitoring, adaptation, if necessary, demonstration, and documentation of experiences are essential if ideas such as these have to be built up into models that will be used for the purposes of advocacy. Links between micro level action and macro policy can only happen as a result of these ingredients. Only over a sustained period of time can micro level action influence macro policy, followed by implementation of that policy in a cyclic process.

These initiatives apart, other interesting state level initiatives supported by CEF (under SCF) include the West Bengal Education Network (WBEN). (See box below for a brief description of WBEN.)

WBEN started as an informal platform for 101-12 NGOs in 1996. However, it was not until 2003/04 that a formal network was in place, with rules on membership etc. Presently, WBEN is an alliance across 14 districts and 200 blocks of West Bengal. The alliances exist both at district as well as block levels. In 2005, CEF funds were routed through SCF to WBEN for a two year program. SCF was expected to do financial as well as program monitoring also. Unlike in AP, where SCF has been more active, its role in WB was minimal. Constant transfer of staff in SCF is cited as one reason why SCF could not get more actively involved in WBEN's work.

WBEN has focused so far on school infrastructure, VEC strengthening, people's participation, participation of children, and has also campaigned for the education bill. At the village level, the network works with SHGs, youth groups, farmer's groups etc to mobilize them on education. Its

impact so far seems to be mainly in getting additional school infrastructure, new school buildings, and in ensuring basic facilities are met in schools. Some inroads have also been made with respect to one teacher schools. There are examples where local bodies/groups have actually spent their own resources in appointing teachers. The third area is increased parental awareness and participation whose direct consequence is increased attendance and regularity of children in schools. Another area where parental/community involvement has made a difference is in the Midday Meal (MDM) scheme – as a result of a campaign in 2007, WBEN was instrumental in exposing corruption in the scheme, in which the good quality rice supplied was exchanged for substandard rice at the block level.

In-school processes, which are poor in quality, have not yet got WBEN's attention. It is felt that there has to be more expertise within the network for this. The network also plans to work more on education issues at the secondary level in the coming months.

Overall observations

Each of the three agencies has essentially continued with its mainstream program (i.e. its prior ongoing engagements) through CEF funds. In the case of Oxfam, its limited work in UP on education received a fillip with CEF funds. Thus, CEF has been a 'source of funds' rather than a fund that was managed jointly at the state level – indeed, what is conspicuous is the absence of collaboration between the three agencies at the state level as well. Why did this not happen? Perhaps each agency was preoccupied with its own organizational requirements, well entrenched in its own approaches and beliefs, and not open to collaboration. For instance, Action Aid supported the Balatejassu project in AP, while SCF had its campaign on corporal punishment and the minimum standards study. Collaborative action was not evident in these initiatives. Similarly, there was no coming together as far as Oxfam was concerned.

Notwithstanding the above comment, in contrast to the national level, state and sub state level interventions seem to have had some purpose. They also have had more effect, going by the examples we have seen. The results of these interventions are more readily visible. As we have seen, some of the interventions are models (like SCF, and Oxfam) for instance, and some of them are more geared towards the campaign mode, as in the case of the Orissa Shiksha Abhiyan, or the Minimum Standards report in AP. The key concern, however, is continuity and time needed for demonstration. If models have to be demonstrated, is this kind of support enough? What are we trying to demonstrate? This recognition needs to be built in, if we want to see lasting changes in mindsets, in policy and in action on the ground.

State level initiatives had (and still have) the potential to make a lasting change provided there had been continuity of support. On the other hand, it can also be argued that CEF support was essentially meant for further building up momentum, and was not meant for a long term by design. In essence, it can be argued that the fund was mostly for leveraging additional resources. If that indeed was the case, the CEF criteria and goals should have been very different – instead of looking for impact in terms of civil society strengthening and improving schools and model building, the criteria could have instead focused on creating/strengthening momentum in civil society and raising additional resources. Thus, they could have been more realistic.

Much of the work done in CEF seems to be focused more on aspects outside the school. There are few examples of interventions designed to bring about a change in the classroom dynamics and in the way children are taught. Yet, this is the most critical factor that determines the nature of the schooling experience of every child. While reports of how many children were enrolled or put back into school abound, little is said about what happens inside

the school. We know that school related factors are important in children dropping out or getting pushed out of the schooling system altogether. The exceptions to this observation are Pratham and SCF, though in SCF's school level interventions, it is difficult to discern what exactly has changed inside the classroom.

Finally, lack of systematic documentation of experiences and results/changes, achievements and frustrations, makes it difficult to assess the result of many initiatives. In many ways, this is unfortunate, given the time and resources that have been expended.

Chapter 6 – What could have been...

1. Some comments in the background

This chapter essentially attempts to place CEF experiences in India in perspective. CEF's entry into India in 2002 has more or less coincided with at least two important developments in the education sector. The first is the passing of the education bill by Parliament in November 2001. Civil action played a key role in the passage of the bill, which recognizes education as a fundamental right. Many questions and concerns, though, remain regarding the bill. This has been discussed earlier. The second development is the launch of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the flagship program of the GoI on universalizing elementary education in 2001/02. Thus, recognition of education as a fundamental right as well as allocating substantially more financial resources for it through schemes like the SSA, seem to have happened with these two developments. Further, the profile of education as an issue was enhanced, given the increased activity by civil society groups. It is with this background that we must now reflect on the CEF experience as a whole. The following inter-related and overlapping points and their elaboration represent this reflection.

2. What to advocate for – perhaps this was not clearly stated, nor was it worked out in the beginning itself. For instance, the contextual analysis (in addition to the criteria developed internationally) was undertaken by CEF²⁹ only as late as 2007-08!

As an example of where action was needed, it is indeed striking to note that nearly seven years after November 2001 the education bill hangs in balance. It is yet to be ratified as an Act by Parliament. There are at least seven drafts of the bill in circulation and no one really knows which draft will be taken for consideration by Parliament. There is no clarity if the present government will even push this before its tenure ends next year. There is also the concern that the bill will now be passed on to the states and this may dilute it further – the states may now implement the bill with varying degrees of commitment. Clearly, there were plenty of opportunities and challenges for civil action on this matter. CEF could have played a key facilitative role especially in an era when large coalitions like NAFRE had splintered. Support to PCCSS, an emerging coalition and splinter group of NAFRE, did come about much later (in 2007), the last year of the CEF in India.

We have also seen how much of the work was 'around the school' while school related factors could also have been focused upon. It is interesting to note that there was little or no CEF involvement in the exercise of developing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005), an important national level document to have come out during its period of operation. Other, 'in-school' issues dealing with curriculum, pedagogy, teachers, etc also did not figure out though the revised goal of CEF (from December 2004) was to look at the school as a 'unit of operation'. What is striking is that NGOs that have traditionally worked on education³⁰ were not part of the 'net' that CEF cast in its search for Partners and in its work on education advocacy.

3. Duration of the CEF program in India – a long term perspective, which is so essential to bring about lasting change, has not informed CEF's strategy in India. Initially, the program was designed for a period of only three years, starting from 2002. It was later extended (under reduced funding from 1.7 mi GBP to 1.2 mi GBP) by two more years till 2007 mainly due to gross under spending during the period up to 2005. A phase wise ten year (at least!)

²⁹ See, *Contextual Analysis of Education Sector in India (2007-08)*, CEF India Secretariat

³⁰ To name a few: Digantar, Bodh, Sandhan (Rajasthan), Ekalavya (MP), CLR (Pune).

perspective should have informed the intervention. We have seen how short duration funding of two years or even three years has not helped in sustaining initiatives, especially during their critical period. In this regard the point must be made that model building (which was stated by the CEF India MC³¹ as an essential ingredient of the India strategy) takes time. Outputs (of which there are many!) do not often lead to desired impact. There is also a tendency to confuse output with impact. Ultimately, CEF operated in a project rather than process mode – expenditure, rather than meaningful linkages, relationships and facilitation became the driving force.

Another point that emerges in connection with time is that there should have been a preparatory phase built in. During this phase, a shared understanding and articulation based on a contextual analysis could have been undertaken by the three agencies involved, along with a systematic mapping of things that needed to be done. Instead, what we have witnessed is a rapid expansion in phase 1, spurred also by the pressure of spending that has resulted in a scattered approach without any consolidation of work or experiences.

4. Design of the program – going by the number of partnerships initiated as the program commenced, it appears that the CEF was first intended as a pan Indian initiative. Indeed, innovative approaches in diverse places such as Nagaland, Ladakh, Tamilnadu and so on, were identified and supported, to begin with. However, these initiatives were short lived and it is not clear what the actual gains from such short term support were, both at the state and national levels. Following the mid term review of 2004, the CEF in India essentially became a program for the three core agencies involved in the program – Action Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children. It was decided that the program would operate only in three states viz. Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh for reasons of ‘compactness’. It was reasoned that it would be difficult to manage programs in many different states; what was needed was a more ‘compact and pragmatic’ approach over a smaller geography. By default, this geography then was limited to the three states where AA, SCF and Oxfam had presence. Consequently, budget allocations further were focused on these three agencies and their respective Partners. In doing so, CEF lost the opportunity to become a truly national initiative. It became an ‘additional source of funding’ for Action Aid, Save the Children and Oxfam to essentially continue doing their work. The national level profile and the body of credible work that could have resulted in had CEF developed a greater profile did not happen. Instead, it became a random collection of projects scattered over some states, with little impact nationally.

5. Coordination between three agencies – it must be acknowledged that the CEF in India brought together diverse agencies such as AA, SCF and Oxfam for the first time and that too, regarding the theme of children’s education. Action Aid was designated as the ‘Lead Agency’. The Management Committee (MC), with representation from the three agencies, became the nodal point for decision making and direction setting for the CEF in India. An Advisory Board consisting of eminent persons in the field of education and child rights was constituted to provide strategic inputs. Based on discussions with many key persons associated with the Management Committee and the Secretariat, the following observations have emerged with respect to how the three agencies (and the structures like the MC, AG and Secretariat) worked with each other:

5.1 Role of the Management Committee (MC) – The MC had the three country directors and/or their representatives as their members. Given their own preoccupations with regard to managing their own organizations (each of which was in some transition or the other) the

³¹ In its communications with the CEF UK Secretariat in 2002, when it was pointed out by the latter that the India proposal looked more like a program implementation proposal rather than as a proposal for advocacy.

country directors were unable to give the much needed time that CEF demanded. To compound matters, the MC itself was not stable with the key representatives moving on no sooner had the program begun. When new members joined, priorities changed. Not only that, the MC was often slow to respond to proposal approval, sometimes taking months to give the go ahead for new partnerships, initiatives etc. This led to undue delays. In the absence of any sound guidelines for proposal formulation, selection etc, ad hoc decisions were taken. The unequal budget distribution between the three agencies which has been written about earlier is a case in point that illustrates the lack of coordination between Action Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children through the MC. That this issue was not sorted out (despite a ‘basic principle of equitable distribution of budgets’ in place and despite concerns expressed by Oxfam in this regard in late 2002) indicates the lack of coordination at the highest decision making level. The rejection of the NAFRE proposal without providing a rationale is another.

The ICICI experience points to lapses in decision making at the MC level. ICICI proposed to give a matching grant of USD 1.5 mi, which was returned by CEF! One argument is that there was little point in taking this money when CEF was facing the problem of gross under spending. The other argument is that there were ‘technical issues with ICICI funds’ that needed to be sorted out. Viewed from a larger perspective, one may say that this was an opportunity lost in terms of making effective use of available resources to build a national profile for CEF activity. The ICICI grant could have been used to extend the program period and also meet programming requirements for which resources were not available from the CEF kitty. From all these above observations, it appears that CEF was used by the three agencies to extend their own education programs – convergence of ideas, experiences and a coming together to manage the CEF, did not happen.

Another point that emerges out of discussions is whether country directors were the best candidates as MC members. Given their preoccupations, were they always in a sound position to take decisions regarding education and push the CEF agenda? The MC members themselves changed at the level of the country heads. This affected the momentum and functioning of the MC. The requirement was for people who had an intimate knowledge and understanding of the educational sector in India, and credibility as well to play a leadership role, since the MC was a decision making body that was expected to steer CEF’s direction in India.

5.2 The Advisory Group – The Advisory Group (AG) was meant to ‘inform CEF on policy directions, emerging issues and opportunities³²’. It came into being in 2003. In many ways, though the AG was not a decision making body, it was expected to play a crucial role in terms of direction setting. The AG, consisting of highly experienced and well known persons from the education sector, provided an excellent opportunity for CEF to not only use their knowledge, understanding and experience, but also use their presence to build up a truly national profile and establish linkages with the highest decision making structures within government at the national as well as state levels. It is not clear why the AG did not meet more than two times (in 2003), after which it appears to have been disbanded. Some members resigned on their own, not happy with the functioning of the group. This was another opportunity lost especially with regard to tapping human resources for strategic thinking, as a result of internal management issues.

5.3 The CEF Secretariat – the secretariat was envisaged to play a coordinating role and it was expected to report to the MC. In hindsight, we may ask the question – was the role of coordination enough for CEF to meet the immense challenges of working with diverse

³² See the CEF India proposal of 10th September 2002

coalitions? The secretariat actually needed to play a leadership role. It needed senior persons with experience in the education sector, who could facilitate networking, coalition building, provide direction etc, none of which was accomplished due to organizational constraints.

The problems of the secretariat were further compounded by turn over of personnel – for instance, during the five year duration of CEF in India, there were three Secretariat Coordinators. A similar picture emerges when we look at other secretariat staff. The last of these Coordinators (shifted into this position from Action Aid) also had the additional responsibility of managing her portfolio in the parent organization. All these frequent changes affected CEF's momentum and work. Another point that emerges from discussion regarding the functioning of the secretariat is its autonomy. The MC, it appears, controlled the secretariat; consequently, the secretariat was not provided the space or support it needed to manage the program. In this connection, it has already been mentioned that there were delays in proposal approval.

Given the enormity of the task for CEF in India, senior persons, with long years of experience and credibility within the education sector, could have been a part of the secretariat team, playing a leadership and facilitation role in addition to the important role of coordination and management. Of course, one may still ask: would the presence of a senior team have worked, given the fractured nature of civil society in India, along the lines of personality and ideology? This can be speculated upon. The point made here is that the secretariat needed to look beyond a coordinating role, and that is where people with more credibility and acceptability in the education field may have made a difference.

5.4 Leadership role/lead agency – Action Aid was designated as the 'lead agency'. By definition, this implied a leadership role for the organization. That Action Aid played this role is not evident based on observations arising from a number of discussions in the course of the evaluation. It is clear that each of the three agencies 'went their own ways' (given their own well entrenched agendas) with little or no coming together to pool resources, ideas, understanding, share experiences, learning from each other and consolidating work. In effect, CEF became 'nobody's baby.'

5.5 Sharing of experiences and learning from each other – we have seen that very little of this happened during the course of CEF, at the state or national level. The MC was unable to bring together the key agencies involved to pool ideas, resources (human, technical and financial) together.

6. Strengthening civil society organizations and networks – this was a key criterion for CEF. There were a number of efforts at the local, state and national level during the course of CEF. It was realized that this would be key to the success of CEF in India. How effective were the efforts, and what are the experiences? CEF either supported or was in touch with a rich variety of organizations working in distinct geographical regions, with different categories of children at risk, from different socio-economic communities, in different ways having assimilated varied experiences over time.

Perhaps the difficulties of effective coalition building and networking were not anticipated completely. It proved to be much more difficult than anticipated. As we have already seen, at the national level, CEF was not been able to bring together diverse organizations and networks on one platform. Work at the state level seems to have been much more effective, as we have already seen. The actual problem may not lie with CEF, but with the notion of networking itself in the Indian context. There seem to be a number of problems in practical terms:

- Within the same sector such as education, groups tend to cling on to rigid ideological and political positions -- flexibility and accommodation of diverse ideas is thus not implicitly or explicitly encouraged. There are inevitable hierarchies, political and conceptual differences among the CSOs, which are often not reconciled.
- One did sense personality and ego clashes that are compounded by conflicting interests of member organizations who vie for funds for similar work from the same donors. This has already been discussed.
- Can diverse organizations and networks come together over the medium and long term? CSOs tend to come together more effectively for work that is short term and more 'event based', as it happened in the case of NAFRE and the education bill. It seems difficult to sustain momentum, which is crucial to bring about a lasting influence on policy.

Time, patience, skilled and sustained facilitation of diverse groups was required in order to move them to see beyond their ideological differences. In principle, this would have been possible had it not been for organizational constraints that have already been pointed out. This skilled facilitation that one is referring to required a certain kind of leadership in CEF, which was hard to come by. It also required time, which was on short supply.

Sustaining processes – without a long term perspective, processes that were initiated could not be sustained for lack of continuity of funding. Partnerships initiated in the earlier, 'scattered' phase, were supported for a short duration. It is difficult to ascertain the changes that resulted from such short term support. What about the continuity of numerous small initiatives that were funded in the pre-MTR phase...?

The core agencies (barring SCF) have not built in mechanisms to ensure continuity of work beyond the tenure of CEF. For instance, Action Aid's Orissa Shiksha Abhiyan has come to a virtual halt for want of further support. So is the case with Oxfam's work on 'Change Makers' and to some extent, its work with government schools as well. In the case of SCF, funding from the EU provides the opportunity for processes that were put in place and/or consolidated during CEF's tenure, to continue. It is difficult to make out whether EU resources will be used to consolidate and strengthen existing initiatives or start new programs.

Lack of a shared understanding – CEF support included a wide range of programs that presumably had an equally wide range of ideological underpinnings as well as an understanding of what it means to advocate. To recollect some of the key themes/areas: Communitization of Education, Local Level Planning, Inclusive education, large scale testing and measuring some learning outcomes in children, engaging with children's perspectives, bringing in the dimension of child rights and child protection, working on education leadership, budget tracking...the list can be expanded further. It may be tempting to look at this impressive variety and say that CEF was like an umbrella initiative that was accommodating diverse ideologies and approaches in the spirit of 'anything goes'. On the flip side, we may also ask – what does this all amount to, at the national or state level or in terms of education policy? Who is consolidating these experiences into a coherent whole from which learning can be crystallized?

It may have therefore helped to develop a shared understanding of the *what*, *with who*, and the *how* of education advocacy. This approach may not have been inclusive, but it would have at least brought a more intense focus on a few unresolved issues at hand.

Chapter 7 – Doing it all over again...

A question that emerged during the course of the evaluation is this: If one were to do CEF all over again, how would one need to go about it? In many ways, the response to this question is contained in our discussions in the previous chapters in general and in chapter 6 in particular.

Some thinking on this question has already taken place within CEF in 2006. A document³³ simply titled ‘CEF India Report’ explores in some detail three possible scenarios post CEF:

- “To learn from mistakes, disseminate experience and shut shop
- To build an autonomous organization and pursue the objective of education advocacy
- To collaborate with other organizations already working on advocacy and provide them with support in the areas that CEF has the skills/capacity, without building a parallel organization.”

Without repeating what has already been discussed in the document mentioned above, the way forward can incorporate elements of all the three scenarios above. If we consider option 1, then the key lessons in terms of ‘what should not be done’ would be what we have explored in the previous chapter. We had raised here issues of duration, design, focus³⁴, leadership, coordination, shared understanding, network building etc. All of these need deeper reflection among the three agencies and other Partners who were involved.

Documentation and sharing of experiences is an area that needs much effort in the near future, and if another avatar of CEF were to take place, taking stock and looking back could be a key strand of work in the beginning itself. Civil initiatives are often quite notorious for their lack of systematic documentation with the result that important insights and learning are lost. In the preceding chapters, a number of examples that CEF has supported have been mentioned. These include Oxfam’s ‘Change makers’ initiative, EWES’s promising work on local level educational planning, SCF’s work on engaging with children’s perspectives, the Communitization program in Nagaland, Action Aid’s engagement with Teacher Unions, Pratham’s ASER and so on. Though CEF support for these interventions was not over an extended period of time, it would still be worthwhile to record these experiences (both in terms of what was achieved and what failed...) and share them for the benefit of the sector.

In order not to lose out on the huge body of work in CEF, options two and three (particularly option 3) seem to be the directions in which future effort can move. Again, Kiran Bhatti’s paper outlines the various possible scenarios with respect to establishing an autonomous organization and/or collaborating with/supporting existing organizations. The following points will need to be asked:

What are we advocating for? This needs clear articulation.

Who will we advocate to? At what level?

How will we go about it?

From past experience, it may help if ambitions are kept modest and if there is focus. Finding ways (through collaboration with the corporate sector, private banks, international donors and government) to sustain the promising state level interventions mentioned above may be the most realistic way of moving forward.

³³ Written by Kiran Bhatti, date not mentioned

³⁴ Among others, any education advocacy effort must have a *clear position* on the many unresolved issues in education. Some issues: English medium instruction in government schools; policy of automatic promotion; Early Child Care and Development and its links with education; teacher preparation, selection and nurturing (including para teachers); understanding of quality; decentralization in education; institutional reform; issues related to testing of children; privatization...the list goes on!

Annexure 1 -- Interactions during the course of the evaluation

Sl no.	Persons met	Organization	Nature of interaction
1	Ambrish Rai	PCCSS	Interview
2	Meenakshi Singh	Oxfam	Interview
3	Shireen Miller	SCF BRB	Interview
4	Chris Marsden, Debdudd Panda	CEF	Interview/Discussion
5	Shantha Sinha	NCPCR	Interview
6	Babu Matthew	Action Aid	Interview
7	Niraj Seth	KPMG	Interview
8	Govinda	NUEPA	Interview
9	Sandeep Chachra	Action Aid Asia Regional Office	Interview
10	PRI members	Produttur Panchayat, Shankarpalli Mandal	Discussion
11	PRI members	Dhobhipet Panchayat, Shankarpalli Mandal	Discussion
12	Staff members	MVF	Discussion
13	Parents, community representatives	Chintalmet/Mahita	Discussion
14	School children	Chintalmet/Mahita	Discussion
15	Parents, community representatives	Harsh Mahal/Mahita	Discussion
16	Madhusudhan	SSA	Interview
17	Ramesh, Swaroop	Mahita (SCF Partner)	Discussion
18	Children, Community members	Village Serkanpalli/Sadhana	Discussion
19	Children, Community members	Village Chandapur/Sadhana	Discussion
20	Children at Child Rights Resource Center	Sadhana	Discussion
21	Alok, Subhash, Lakshminarayan	SCF	Discussion
22	Headmaster	Primary School Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar/Sakar	Interview
23	Ambika Nanda, Debasri, Subbalakshmi, Kalyani, Swaroopa	Action Aid, Sakar	Discussion
24	Prafulla, Pradepto Naik	Action Aid/WCVH	Discussion
25	Boral	Teacher's Union, Orissa	Interview
26	Panchayat members	Arakakhuda Panchayat (Action Aid)	Discussion
27	Swapan Panda	West Bengal Education Network	Interview
28	Community members	Santhipalli/SAKAR	Discussion
29	Community members	Baba Ka Purva/Vigyan Foundation	Discussion
30	Yamini	CBGA, Delhi	Discussion
31	Pooja	CBGA, Delhi	Discussion
32	Shiva	CBGA, Delhi	Discussion
33	Vinaykanth	EWES, Bihar	Interview (Phone)

Time Schedule

Dates (2008)	Description
Last week of March	Sharing of documentation with evaluator
March 31 to April 2	Briefing in the CEF secretariat; interviews in Delhi
April 3 to April 6	Visit to AP, to MVF and SCF project areas
April 7 to April 9	Visit to Orissa, to Action Aid program areas
April 22 and April 23	Visit to UP, to Oxfam program areas
April 24 to 26	De-briefing at CEF office, study of available documentation
April 27 to May 15	Preparation of draft report
May 15 to June 30	Submission and finalization of evaluation document

Annexure 2 – Evaluation TOR (to be attached...)