

End Project Evaluation

of

Commonwealth Education Fund Initiatives

Submitted to

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1 Context and Focus of CEF- EPE

Commonwealth Education Fund was established in March 2002 through a grant made by British government through DfID for strengthening the voice of civil society organizations in education policy making across 17 Commonwealth countries. After completing its five years, the CEF country programmes will be wrapped up by June 2008. Need for an external end-project-evaluation was highlighted at all levels of CEF governance and management. The EPE is aimed at:

- assessing performance, results, challenges and learning against the CEF objectives from the beginning to the end
- encouraging honest reflections and assessments of strategies, impacts for improving on-going and future interventions

In case of CEF, evaluation of conceptual understanding and processes is equally important, if not more as its outcomes and impact. Since CEF differed in its constitution, purposes and offerings from other grants made available through international agencies, especially in Pakistan, it was a task to undertake CEF initiatives.

With respect to Pakistan, a core focus of EPE exercise is the functioning, quality and future of the Coalition formed as part of CEF initiatives i.e. the Pakistan Coalition for Education. Therefore, a major part of this report is reflecting on PCE – its strengths, achievements, experiences, strategic frameworks and disconnects. Moreover, crisp options and models are discussed for realigning and restructuring PCE to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

The central aim of Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) was to strengthen the capacity of civil society in low-income Commonwealth countries to help government ensure that the poorest and most marginalized children are able to enrol and complete good quality primary education. Contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals related specifically to education and gender remained the key aims of CEF. With this aim in mind, following 3 core objectives for the CEF were identified:

1. To strengthen civil society participation in the design and implementation of national and local education plans, especially through the support for broad based national alliances and coalitions
2. To enable local communities to monitor spending on education both at national and local levels
3. To support the development of innovative approaches to educating the most marginalised children (especially girls and the most vulnerable) in a way that influences a wider policy and practice

For this purpose, three agencies- ActionAid, Save the Children UK and Oxfam GB are responsible for jointly administering CEF globally. In each of the countries, a lead agency was decided by

mutual consultation among the three agencies. For Pakistan, Save the Children UK was nominated as the lead agency whereas ActionAid is the managing agency globally.

The implementation of CEF initiatives have been far from smooth and consistent in case of Pakistan. Till 2005, when mid-term review was undertaken, there CEF in-country and CEF-UK management were finding it difficult to devise a modus operandi which kept the essence of CEF alive without becoming irrelevant and inapplicable to contextual dynamics of Pakistan. Not surprisingly, the flow and scope of activities was adversely impacted due to this lack of clarity as well as flexibility. At the same time, new strategic directions were laid out for CEF Pakistan functioning, primary focus was given to the formation of an education coalition for advocacy purposes and also to undertake activities under objectives 2 and 3.

Therefore from 2005-2007, bulk of CEF initiatives, particularly those concerned with coalition building, were undertaken. The evaluation is thus focussing more on these two years of activities while taking account of earlier discussions and developments. A number of CEF partner organizations were visited and their representatives became the primary source of information for CEF-EPE. Interactions with parent, teachers and community representatives were also undertaken to capture their perspective on CEF related activities and assess how they are affected through them, if at all. Information was also collected from the existing and previous members of the CEF management committee to look at management functioning and effectiveness. Alongside, documents such as progress reports, minutes of the meetings, and strategic plan were analyzed for understanding the processes of coalition building and other aspects of CEF. Research reports and dissemination material developed with the support from CEF were also studied to assess the scope and quality of CEF's contribution in policy advocacy for education.

2 CEF in Pakistan: Achievements, Inertias and Ways Forward

Programmatically, CEF qualifies as an ambitious undertaking with its experimentation with models of implementation, management and nature of initiatives. For instance, CEF brought together a unique strategic partnership of three INGOs. It was no mean feat to generate a modus operandi which is efficient and effective while ensuring consent amongst these organization having different organizational orientations and foci. Similarly, the concept of having a "fund for education" without it being a funded project was another aspect that needed much orientation amongst the grant managers, implementing and coalition partners. Concept of budget and budget tracking was no less alien for the community members and even government officials and NGOs at district level because the only budget received is for salary of school staff. Despite the devolution of education, budgets availability and fiscal autonomy is almost extinct in the districts and tehsils. Thus involving community members in budgeting seemed an overwhelming undertaking.

All these approaches, albeit their potential and innovativeness, are time and effort intensive and cannot have blanket implementation and understanding. In the context of CEF, these experimentations had implications for the pace, quality, productivity and effectiveness of the

initiatives. The EPE is mindful of these real challenges while assessing the achievements and impact of CEF against each objective.

Following is the summary of key processes, achievements and learnings from each of CEF objectives. Recommendations for improvement of processes and enhancement of effectiveness are presented alongside.

2.1 Objective 1:

To strengthen civil society participation in the design and implementation of national and local education plans, especially through the support for broad based national alliances and coalitions

2.1.1 Key Processes, Progress and Achievements

- Till the last quarter of 2003, CEF- Pakistan aimed at civil society strengthening by supporting concrete programmes and involved a range of implementing agencies. The purpose was to create models of innovative educational approaches and use the experience and insights for policy dialogues and advocacy with various levels of government for improving the state of schooling at tehsil, district and provincial levels. Educational alliances and networks were seen both as a process and outcome of policy advocacy and consultation where all civil society organization would come together with their experiences. Under this methodology, CEF not only supported a number of NGOs for undertaking innovative programmes on quality education and awareness but also conducted a series of policy consultations across provinces.
- In 2004, with redefining of CEF UK strategic direction, formation of a coalition as a separate entity became the single most thrust and strategy for CEF. After much debate and with a lot of reservations, CEF-Pakistan put efforts to create a coalition for education. Global Week of Action on Education was used as a platform, and CEF arranged a marathon round of provincial meetings culminating in a National level Consultative group meeting in February 2005. As a result, Pakistan Coalition for Education was formed with a vision and mission identified. The Coalition, albeit the broad-based participatory and consultative process, was essentially a requirement of CEF, a strategy that was not able to yield positive and concrete impacts. And it was seen as such by coalition members, CEF Pakistan and other important players in education sector. Consequently, the dynamics of coalition were influenced by the general sentiment, and as one MC member pointed out, many partners joined in the coalition because they perceived that funding channels will be affected otherwise, not only within CEF but also be the INGOs.
- The dynamics of coalition also made CEF Secretariat extremely cautious and careful about its own image and much time went in ensuring that CEF Secretariat was not seen as imposing its agenda and treating PCE as a donor funded project. It also led to a number of serious implications for the accountability towards concrete deliverables of PCE, details of which are discussed later.

- Formation of Pakistan Coalition for Education with a membership base of 130 formal civil society organizations (essentially NGOs and CBOS) is one of the key achievements under Objective 1. The vision, mission, values, constitution, logo, constitution of secretariat and its placement, provincial structures, financial layouts and other administrative aspects came under discussion. Documentary evidence suggests that bulk of 2005 went into figuring out logistics and administrative details while one conflict over housing of the Secretariat also arose.
- In 2006, PCE was formally launched with its National Secretariat hosted by Strengthening Participatory Organization, a national NGO with massive outreach at grassroots level through its development and institutional training activities. Provincial focal points were also identified through a participatory process and provincial secretariats were housed in those NGOs respectively.
- PCE has spelled out its vision, mission, core values and structure for itself. There was a conscious effort made to keep the structure of PCE non-hierarchical and unorthodox therefore, it was decided not to have the regular labels like Board of Governors or having a hierarchical reporting relationship. Also, they have put up a website for making basic information on PCE accessible. While discussion on these aspects is done in the next section, it is an early yet an instrumental achievement that is supposed to derive PCE's programmatic and functional framework. More recently, these aspects were discussed and elaborated in a strategic planning exercise that involved provincial partners, NRG members and current and ex-members of CEF MC and Secretariat.

Vision of PCE

To ensure free quality education for all, irrespective of gender, religion and class differences, that promotes peaces, tolerance and democracy and justice and safeguards diversity.

Mission of PCE

PCE aims to achieve its vision by focussing on the following key themes:

- Undertake research-based advocacy to ensure that its approach and advocacy is supported by empirical evidence and well thought out strategies.
- To focus education initiatives on capacity building especially in areas of human resources and organization processes.
- To place sufficient emphasis on mobilization (of resources, people and grassroots support) among all the coalition –partners and their target groups.
- To achieve PCE vision by influencing the policy at all levels and with all stakeholders (district, provincial, federal, NGOs/CSOs, donors).
- To more effectively use networking and collaboration among its members and various stakeholders
- To improve and increase the infrastructure and human resource required to fulfil PCE vision.

Values of PCE

In terms of values underlying the coalition's governance and functioning, the members believe in

- Transparency

- Honesty
- Commitment
- Participatory & Democratic work
- Non-hierarchical (structure & decision making)
- Realistic Approach
- Innovativeness
- Proactive Attitude
- Shared learning
- Accountability

- During its conceptualization phase as well as when it got formalized, PCE had credible and established NGOs taking lead in the provinces. This was indeed a positive sign as PCE being in nascent stages, could build on the leverage and credibility of the institutions playing its host. Keeping this in view, provincial resource groups were formed as part of PCE structure, that could not only provide advisory support to PCE but also generate momentum for its activities at province and district levels. The strategy proved quite effective as it led to impressive number of 130 members in its 2 years of PCE existence. The provincial chapters also ensured that PCE gains independent recognition and credibility by prominently advertising the platform used for advocacy. While the institutions did not keep their own identity and agendas at the forefront, and consciously used PCE as the platform, it was only natural that grassroots organizations rallied around PCE because of the trust and long-term partnership they have with the respective provincial partners.
- A number of PCE successes generate from its strong provincial chapters and their district partners. The proactiveness and commitment level to the improvement of educational delivery in their respective jurisdictions is phenomenal. Since the objectives and aims of PCE are synergetic with the overall organizational agenda in most cases, they are pursued with matching fervour and seriousness. For example, in case of Punjab, where the provincial coordinator delved into districts coordination and budget tracking for the first time, their overall experience of advocacy and connecting with children, parents and community member proved useful. Strong ties and linkages with civil society in general were also utilized by provincial chapters, which resulted in decent level of media coverage (print and radio), pooling in of resources for campaigning for Global Week of Action, for example, and other support extensions. There are several case examples where District Resource Groups and Provincial Resource Groups and partners undertook joint efforts for advocacy and awareness raising on immediate educational concerns such as closing of schools, teacher postings, community involvement, etc.
- Looking across provinces, it appears that PCE has attained the most difficult aspect of coalition building i.e. trust and compatibility amongst members. This was reflected in the joint initiatives such as that in budget tracking, consultations on National Education Policy or data generation for PCE supported research. More importantly, the views and perspectives shared on expanding the effect of PCE, issues currently being faced,

strategies for improvement and vision for PCE also indicated a strong consensus amongst these institutions.

- With respect to research-based advocacy, PCE's role is like a mixed plate. In little over two years, PCE has managed to develop important policy papers on financing of education, privatization of Education, and also one on Model for progress in education. Currently, PCE plans to translate these papers or their summaries in Urdu and circulate them amongst parliamentarians and other political representatives. There was also a research supported by PCE to be undertaken by IDSP, provincial focal point for Balochistan, some two years back. After much time spent on proposal finalization, data support, feedback by PRGs and NRG, the research is yet to be finalized and disseminated. Similarly, it is yet to be seen how research knowledge and analysis will be utilized for initiating and sustaining policy discussions.

2.1.2 Inhibiting Inertias and Issues

Like all nascent concepts and structures, formulation and operationalization of PCE has been laden with challenges and issues. Difficulties like determining feedback channels or meeting timelines are not threatening for the existence and effectiveness of PCE per se. Hence the EPE does not focus upon those. Here issues pertaining to leadership, direction, structure, role clarity, communication and strategic frameworks are discussed, which have direct and adverse implications for the spirit and real targets set for PCE.

- Although defined through an apparently consultative process, the vision of PCE seems to be in direct conflict with its core values as it is very unrealistic and also does not seem to be evidence-based. Provision of "free" education and aiming for it can be easily termed as naïve. Plethora of research studies have identified the opportunity costs and other indirect, intangible costs paid by parents and community across the globe and not just developing countries. The vision seems to be ill-informed about the equity debates in the academic and education development circles, where free education for those who can comfortably afford it is questioned while also suggesting that such individuals/communities/states need to take additional responsibility of supporting other peoples education within and outside their respective communities/countries. While state must provide free education at primary level (and some countries have included secondary education), according to EFA and other international declarations, state cannot and should not cater to other types and levels of education such as technical and vocational, higher education, professional education, specializations for free. Proclaiming to follow the rights-based approach, PCE has perhaps not realized that higher and professional education falls out of the fundamental-rights realm and are areas where both provider and recipient need to contribute.
- The vision of PCE can be termed as either very simplistic and naïve or completely unclear. It is important to at least clarify if PCE is only focussing on Universalization of Primary

Education that must be accessible, of good quality and provided for free. In that case, PCE must also rethink why other types and levels of education will not be included and their implications for its programmatic activities. Another aspect requiring clear articulation is whether PCE is concerned with schooling or education & learning or both. At present, the emphasis lies with schooling and children attending the school at primary level. This, as reiterated by representatives of Balochistan, tremendously limits the scope of PCE because it leaves out education of more than half the children of Pakistan who are out of school or engaged with a non-formal/alternative mode of education¹.

- This aspect is worth highlighting because in case of coalitions, the vision and mission need to be more specific and time bound. By definition, a coalition is a temporary alliance of distinct parties, persons, or states for joint action (refer to Webster). If the vision does not reflect the essence of a coalition, it is bound to fall in the trap of equally vague and long-drawn ineffective plans that may never attain the objectives/concerns set out to address.
- Moreover, the vision sounds jaded with no revolutionary tone and innovativeness in it to inspire public action, support and civil society solidarity. A lot of energy and fervour needs to be injected to PCE vision and mission to make it popular amongst all kinds of stakeholders and not just those involved in the business of education. Semantics are extremely important when striving for a change through mass support and action.
- Partly because of its vague vision and partly due to focus on operational concerns, the focus of PCE and educational issues it will zoom in on, have not been articulated as such. This also is reflective on PCE's effective functioning resulting in a lop-sidedness towards coordination and structure as its sole concern. Coordination and synergy will not occur in isolation and in the absence of similar conceptual and ideological priorities. More recently, PCE took the plunge of undertaking a strategic planning exercise, facilitated by a management and HR consultancy. However, looking at the draft strategy document, it can be said that this will not help PCE to create a programmatic framework. The strategies and actions presented are not only too simplistic but also reflect a poor understanding of educational dynamics and context. In addition, the provincial members expressed their reservations about the whole process of Strategic Planning Exercise. It is felt that the facilitators sought were a wrong choice and the strategic planning should have been led by the PCE members themselves with advisory support from other educational players. The final product i.e. strategy document indicates that the concerns and reservations expressed by PCE members are valid. However, the National Secretariat asserts that the strategy document was sent to all the NRG members for comments and feedback, which was not provided by any member.

¹ Responding to this finding, the PCE members in June 5, 2008 meeting, explained that they kept on adding different words because they really believed that aspects like democracy, tolerance and social justice should not be missed out. It was agreed however that in the eagerness to include every aspect, how it will translate into focused programmes was not given the required consideration.

- There are apparent disconnects in the conceptual, programmatic and structural frameworks of PCE. A lot of issues have emanated from these disconnects that have impeded emergence of PCE as a strong, visible network and therefore its impact on policy design, decisions and implementation have been very minimal, if at all. Another level of disconnect exists between PCE and the implementation framework of CEF's other two objectives. Not surprisingly then, the functioning and operationalization of PCE is lopsided and operational with inconsistencies. Some manifestations of these disconnects are elaborated below:
 - The intended outcomes of enhanced networking laid out by PCE (posted on the website) are more focussed on PCE's institutional strengthening than achieving the objectives. Four of the five outcomes talk about increased capacity for research, public recognition and at best, awareness level of civil society of their roles and responsibilities. The question is how are these outcomes realizing the vision of PCE and its mission statements. This reflects not just at the disjointed approach towards the vision but also pure lack of imagination. An honest question that PCE needs to ask itself is "how enhanced research skills" and "outreach" will translate into or influence policy actions. Response to this question should be the outcomes and intents of PCE. At present, PCE consultations and activities have the overtones of talk-shop rather than an illustration of walking-the-talk!
 - The role and constitution of National Secretariat independently and in relation to provincial secretariats is poorly conceptualized and even more miserably applied. Again the operationalization is in direct contradiction to PCE values and the very reason for existence. Rather than providing leadership and strategic guidance or spearheading the networking, the role of National Secretariat is reduced to couriating information or ensuring that provincial partners comply with its directives and reporting requirements. Part of the problem lies with the very constitution of National Secretariat and its relationship with CEF. For example, the National Secretariat is dealing with disbursement of funds to Provincial Secretariats and financial reporting. For this, it is also answerable to CEF while programmatically, it is accountable to National Resource Group. In the absence of a cohesive action plan, the accounting and compliance functions have taken bulk of National Secretariat's time. Hence, the relationship between Provincial and National Secretariat is not only hierarchical and tensed.
 - Further compounding the problem is the kind of intellectual and strategic value added by the National Secretariat to various PCE initiatives or ideas put forward by the provincial secretariats. The National Secretariat is weaker when compared with the provincial secretariats (and organizations hosting them) in terms of linkages, leadership and human resource qualities/capacities, proactiveness and experience in education. Perhaps the idea of hosting a National Secretariat in a robust organization was that it will take up a scaffolding role and also invest its own expertise for leading National Secretariat, and the PCE. However, the existing

role and dynamics of National Secretariat make it clear that the concept has not transpired into an effective implementation framework.

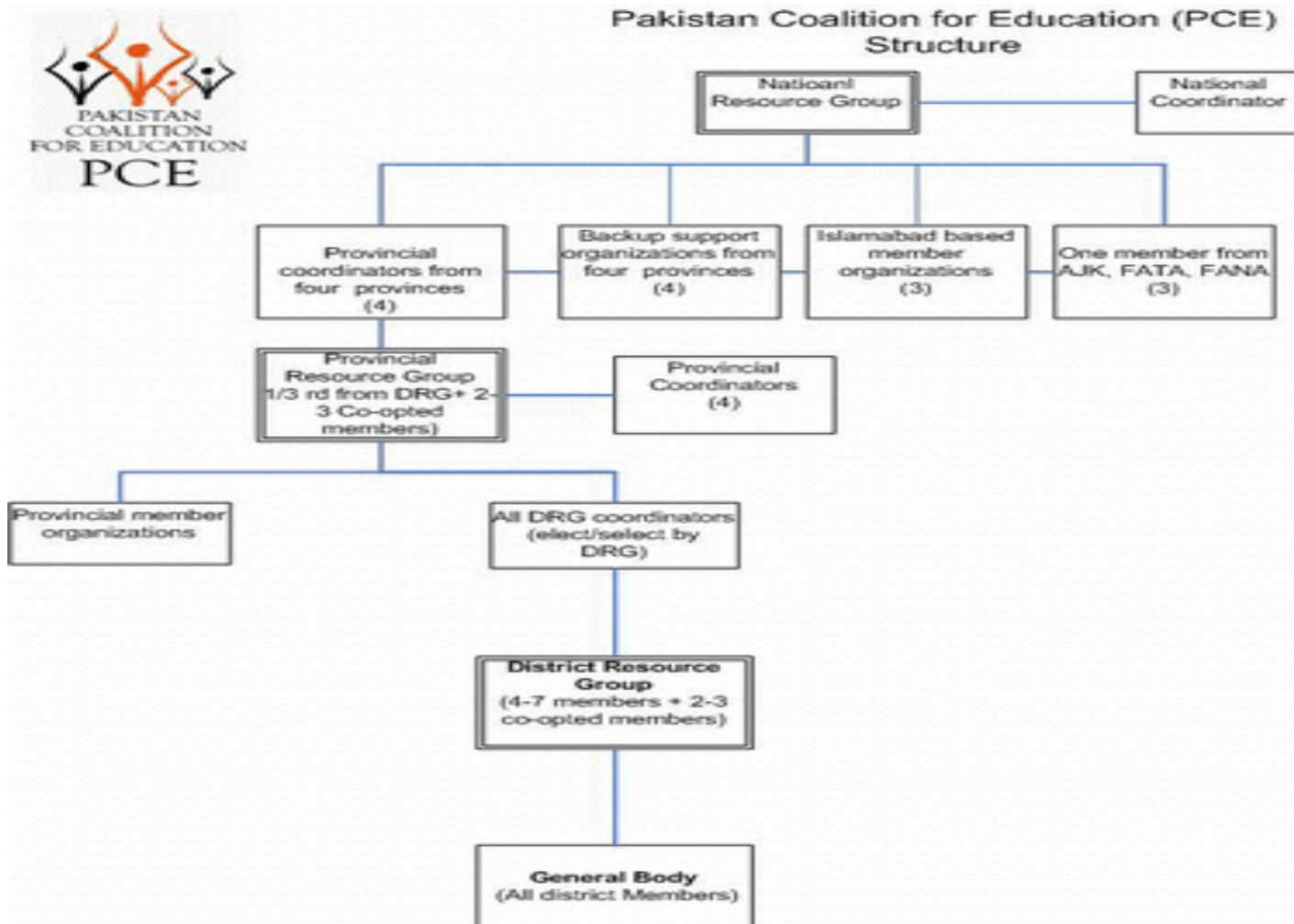
- Looking at the provincial secretariats, the nature of the institution and primacy of education as its institutional focus plays a critical role in enriching and vitalizing the PCE at that level. This is, unfortunately, not the case with the host organization i.e. SPO despite having impressive linkages across communities, districts and provinces. SPO does not have education as its first and foremost agenda. Also it is essentially a service-delivery organization although it has included research and advocacy in its organizational foci recently. That said, as the name reflects, “strengthening of participatory organizations” through capacity building is at the heart of the organization. When inquired about the selection criteria for National Secretariat, various ex-MC members said it was basically the willingness of SPO to host the PCE National Secretariat. Another ex-MC member reflected on the reason more deeply stating:

“To be honest, the decision was not well-thought out. There was already an episode with SPARC and efforts to ensure that agenda of PCE was not dominated by one organization. Also, the chaos and pressure faced by CEF-Pakistan because of strategic changes in CEF agenda and rush to form and concretize PCE was immense. The MC members were relieved to have a fairly established organization like SPO ready to take the onus and thus, it was given to the first willing institution that was there. In retrospect, it was a hasty, not-well-thought out, convenience driven decision”.
(Excerpt from ex-CEF MC member’s interview).

While the role of CEF and its internal functioning will be analysed in detail in section 3 of this report, the above quote reflects on the inherent flaws and disconnects.

- The constitution and role of NRG (National Resource Group) is also ill-conceived especially with respect to being generative and accountable. The NRG is supposed to be providing strategic guidance and monitoring the effectiveness of NRG while the National Coordinator PCE, in effect, the National Secretariat is accountable to NRG. As illustrated in the diagram below, the NRG comprises 4 provincial institutes hosting provincial secretariats, 4 back up organization, 3 federal/national institutional representations and 3 memberships from the FATA, AJK and FANA regions. Out of 14 members, 8 are those who are receiving directions from National Secretariat for various purposes directly and indirectly. Thus, there are strong chances that provincial focal points for a number of reasons may not be upfront with their views, suggestions and critique of the National Secretariat or PCE in general. By design, the accountability mechanism is a bit flawed. This is similar to devolved education set up where DCO approves the budgets of Nazim secretariat and the districts, but his/her ACR is developed, approved and countersigned by the Nazim. Conflict of interest is inherent to the structure of NRG and a lot is left to the

courage, openness, concern and integrity of the provincial members and their backup organizations.



Despite the intent and efforts of keeping PCE's Structure non-hierarchical in terms of decision making and reporting, the design of it does not render well to this purpose.

- Related to NRG is the selection of federal/national members. Out of the 3 members, Centre of Peace Development through Citizenship is relevant at least with respect to its organization focus and linkages with parliamentary bodies. Even CPDI is relatively a new entry in the development sector established in 2003 and lesser known in the education sector and policy corridors. The other two members, namely Alternative Media and SAMAR, are not even known for their work in the education and development sector. Without questioning the work/effectiveness of these two organization, it is indeed very intriguing as to why these two organizations have been selected for NRG membership. In the spirit of transparency, participatory decision making, and most importantly relevance, it

would be insightful to know how many Islamabad based organizations with education and social development as their direct focus were approached for membership, through what channels, and why have they refused to become part of the NRG.

- NRG should have been a powerful group intellectually as well as linkages, networking and recognition in the education policy circles particularly at federal level. It is quite unfortunate that the advisory and support mechanism for a nascent entity like PCE is weaker than the organization it is supposed to scaffold.
- Efficacy of PCE and therefore, CEF's inputs is also affected because of the modus operandi adopted for other two objectives of CEF. A deep sentiment amongst the National Secretariat and few Provincial Secretariats is that CEF Secretariat funds/designates two or more organizations to undertake same initiative that are being done by PCE. Another concern raised is that PCE is not kept in loop while deciding on the nature of initiative and implementing organization. Two examples are cited in this regard, one is support to HRCF for budget tracking when PCE was also taking similar endeavour and developing a paper on financing of education. Second example quoted in this regard is research on and engagement of teachers' union through a parallel platform. The CEF Secretariat maintains that it is their prerogative to support innovative ideas/initiatives/research and PCE may not always be involved in it. Moreover, such endeavours are supported to generate knowledge-base for PCE to use and build on. Lack of proactiveness, ideas and efficient functioning at PCE level were also hinted as the factors that led CEF Secretariat to diversify the source of research and analysis on key educational issues.
- Related issue is the extent to which the material (booklets, reports, information) produced under CEF are used. In its five years, CEF-Pakistan has been fairly consistent in producing good quality information through its various partners. There are at least 10-15 such reports/documents that can serve as robust rallying posts for advocacy and policy debates. It is quite bewildering as to why good quality analysis has not been used – is it because of lack of intent, ability, accessibility or all? The situation again points at lack of strategic guidance and vision.
- Emanating from the weak leadership and guidance, strategic disconnects and ineptitudes have also been hampering PCE in reaching its potential and significance. The National Secretariat seems to be over obsessive about its publicity and recognition. In this regard, provincial secretariats have had to put extra efforts and also get into debates, to work with other players in the education sector for the cause. While it is important that PCE becomes more visible, however, this should not stop it from striking generative and broad-based partnerships for advocacy and dissemination. There is a dire need to realize that recognition or acceptance of PCE's significance is a means to an end, and not the end itself. Moreover, the

most effective formulae for gaining credibility and respect is through the quality and scope of work being done in the sector, being overly particular about its identity may be termed as lack of strategic savvy and wisdom.

- Limited visibility of PCE can also be attributed to a non-existent programmatic framework and a communications strategy based on it. Approach and attitude towards PCE and its cause further exacerbates the problem. Numerous incidents were quoted by a cross section of respondents illustrating no or limited information sharing, no involvement in decision making and even reporting back on the progress/achievements particularly by National Secretariat. While it is realized that this may also be because of limited capacities of National Secretariat in terms of expertise, time and money, it is also a matter of how the work of PCE is perceived. A respondent for this evaluation elaborated on this point:

Leading and running coalition is not a 9-5 job and should not be taken like one. It demands for a passionate-relentless approach almost revolutionary in character. Unless that level of energy, fervour and commitment is there to the cause, no matter what resource you put in, it will not derive you to the targets. Grassroots support and involvement of community does not need sophisticated tools and too much of money – what is critical is the ability to bond with people and take them along. Vision, leadership and strategy are three things that are missing from PCE to this date – you correct that and all the problems will be resolved.

2.1.3 Enhancing the Effectiveness and Impact

PCE is reaching 3 years of existence and 2 years of formal launching. It is true that PCE is still in its nascent stages and any coalition will require time to strengthen and make a mark. However, time is not the only factor that guarantees success of a coalition, as suggested by research evidence across the globe. In the absence of a clear vision, strategic direction, serious implementation, even an eternity will not suffice.

It is a suitable time for serious reflection, reconnaissance and reconfiguration of PCE keeping in view the original purpose of constituting a coalition, progress and lurking issues. Conclusion of CEF Fund also necessitate PCE to rethink and strategize its core foci and modus operandi.

Following are some critical recommendations in this regard:

What Works in Coalitions

Evaluation is an ongoing process throughout the life of a coalition. Every major coalition event should be evaluated. Surveys of coalition members will give lead agencies an idea of the level of involvement of each member. It is ideal to evaluate whether or not further collaboration between members may occur in addition to their participation in the coalition. This information may be especially useful for formative evaluations. Likewise, simple pre/posttests and satisfaction surveys work well for trainings, courses, and conferences. Content analysis of meeting agendas, minutes, and attendance lists will help determine if process, outcome, and impact objectives were met and will help identify unintended successes. Taking the time to evaluate the effectiveness of coalition efforts is a way of acknowledging that the skills and contributions of coalition members are important. Honest reflection also assures that the coalition grows from its experiences, regardless of the programmatic outcome. Evaluating a coalition can lead to changes in a coalition's approach. In addition, evaluation can increase a coalition's effectiveness and can assure that the community and participants benefit from the coalition's activities.

- Before getting into any discussion on structure of PCE, it is essential that PCE revisits its *raison de etré* and reconceptualizes its main programmes and strategies accordingly. This is imperative not only for having focussed activities but also if PCE is aiming to secure resources for its functioning independent of CEF. Tangible and clear outcomes play an important role in raising the trust of people in a cause or entity. PCE must prioritize issues it wants to address and determine a *modus operandi*. Needless to say that the process needs to be participatory and inclusive in nature.
- At the heart of PCE reconstitution is the ideological and paradigmatic choices that PCE wants to make for itself. This has not come out clearly in the various consultations although concerns about a donor driven initiative and CEF agenda overshadowing PCE's identity have been raised continually. If the PCE wants to be independent of donor funding, the existing structure as well as geographic scope will have to change drastically. However, if PCE is willing to work through donors to meet its agenda, only few corrections in the design will be required although a very strong programmatic and operational framework will be required.
- If PCE decides to work through donors for few more years, with an eventual goal to establish itself as a separate independent entity, following steps need to be undertaken for cohesive and effective functioning of PCE:
 - First and foremost, the role of NRG needs to be changed. At present, NRG has dual identities – it is used as a channel for coordination across provinces and national PCE secretariats, and look after implementation aspects. The second role, albeit dormant, is to provide leadership and strategic guidance to PCE. As discussed earlier, there are inherent flaws in this design. It is recommended that coordination agenda/purpose is bifurcated from that of advisory role. This will ensure that a well-informed and experience governance mechanism is in place which can look at the implementation scope, quality and effectiveness of PCE while also providing academic and technical input to PCE for realizing its vision.
 - Constitution of NRG also needs to change. PCE must strive to get influential, recognized and effective institutions or institutions on board particularly at national level. Moreover, a balanced representation of thinkers, academics, business persons and strategic planners should be there. PCE needs to learn from examples of other steering committees, networks and philanthropic institutions. For instance, Microfinance Network of Pakistan, LUMS University, Shaukat Khanam Memorial Trust, Idara Taleem o Agahi, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, Punjab Education Foundation, HRCP, and many others have gained from keeping diverse and committed individuals/institutions in their governance bodies.

- As shared by various respondents during the EPE exercise, role and placement of National Secretariat merits reconfiguration. PCE needs to go back to the drawing board and determine criteria for selecting host institution for National and Provincial Secretariats. While willingness and eagerness to host can be a point to consider, nature and presence of institution as well as the commitment of leadership needs to be included as criteria.
- It is fortunate that 3 years tenure of hosting National Secretariat is complete now, and thus, presents an ideal opportunity to change the host institution. The process of selection should be transparent and criteria driven and not convenience oriented. It is important to redress the effects of hasty decision taken by CEF-MC few years back that has significantly contributed to existing dilemmas of PCE. Selection of hosting institution should be done once criteria are developed and through an open process. There are two considerations that must guide this – first, the PCE vision and host-institution’s vision and goals should be complimenting each other if not exactly similar. Second, it will be counter-productive to ask the existing PRG or NRG to nominate the host-institution. The pool from which institutions are selected must expand. Also, role of the host-institution for running NS as well as contribution made to it must be clearly defined and documented.
- Physical presence in the ICT should be seen as a desirable condition for hosting National Secretariat but it should not be an essential one. What matters most is the way policy is influenced and efforts undertaken for it. In terms of coordination, approach and attitude towards coalition initiatives is the determining factor in bringing partners together. Several examples exist in the education sector where the institution has no physical presence in ICT yet has played a successful role in policy advocacy and change, and vice versa.
- The other option for PCE is to move away from being hosted by any institution with or without donor funding. Again, vision and programme focus should be central to taking this decision and consequent structural changes. Presented here are a set of recommendations vis-à-vis PCE working as an independent entity:
 - A systemic approach will have to be adopted. This will mean a group of professionals being on board with expertise in education and development as well as strategic planning and administration of a broad-base NGO.
 - PCE will have to stick to one-point agenda and define the programmatic contours of it for federal, provincial and district levels.
 - If PCE chooses campaigning mode for policy advocacy and civil society participation, then, the role of National Secretariat will be to chart out broad guidelines whereas province and district partners will have to be given complete autonomy with respect to implementation mechanisms.

The resource availability is likely to be stringent in initial years therefore stewardship and optimal use of available resources for PCE initiatives will become the guiding principle.

- If PCE takes up research based approach to policy influence and advocacy, then, its thrust should be on generating analysis based on any and all information available on education system. Following that, PCE will take up the role of an education-monitor and undertake dissemination of analyses across Civil Society, Public and Private sectors for policy advocacy. The expertise required in this case will slightly more research and advocacy focussed.
- Irrespective of the operational framework, what is essential for PCE is to have the patronage as well as specific inputs from all key education players.
- Understanding of policy influence also has to deepen for increasing the effectiveness of PCE. Barring a few examples, the approach of PCE is more inward and to an extent self-serving towards Civil Society or to be precise NGOs and CBOs. At best, education departments and federal ministry of education is engaged with for policy advocacy. What is left out of the realm are the various ministries, National Institutes, divisions, finance, and legislative entities. The education provision especially be the public sector is hinged with all the other national frameworks and policies. Unless these frameworks are cognizant of and aligned with each other, real change at any level is a distant dream.

2.2 Objective 2

To enable local communities to monitor spending on education both at national and local levels

2.2.1 Key Processes, Progress and Achievements

- CEF has supported Human Rights Commission for Pakistan (HRCP) to involve communities for tracking educational spending at union council and district levels. Four districts namely Karachi, Quetta, Multan and Peshawar were selected where educational spending for primary education was monitored with the involvement of community members, parents, members of School Management Committee/Parent Teacher Committees, and local government representatives.
- Information collated on school indicators and budgets was used for awareness raising at UC level and community was also supported to utilize provisions such as CCB Funds, 50% of which can be utilized for education.
- A number of training sessions/workshops were conducted for school stakeholders and community members on budget tracking and their respective roles. A TOT for 12 persons was also organized on budgetary concept and tracking. In addition, PCE collaborated

with HRCP to have workshops for its provincial members. PCE members find it useful for district budget tracking and felt with some variations, those techniques could be applied for provinces.

- HRCP developed an informative portfolio of budget documents including a manual on budgets, case studies on financing of primary education in 5 districts, and a guide to participatory budget analysis for primary education. These documents demystify the budget processes that are either kept away from becoming public knowledge or are made to sound extremely difficult. Hence, they serve as an important starting point for creating awareness about budget allocation for primary schooling and key processes.
- PCE also undertook an initiative for collecting information on districts budgets across the four provinces, as part of its own research. Other than involving HRCP for capacity building, the outcome of the research in a form of report or analysis is yet to be seen.
- During the process of budget tracking, information collection was a major issue and government officials would not be willing to provide information to parents, community members and other members in the districts. Responding to this, CEF commissioned CPDI to develop a series of information booklets that helped in understanding that information acquisition is basic right of every citizen but also identified mechanisms and channels to pursue if the government officials did not collaborate. The information booklets are an important and useful material for advocacy prepared under CEF for citizens' rights.
- General interest level in education and school functioning rose in the communities where budget-tracking exercise was undertaken. Stakeholders involved in this process reflected that they acted like pressure groups for local government who in turn ensured that school processes become aligned with the policies. For instance in one of the UC schools, the formation of PTC was done in an isolated way where nominated members were not even aware of their nomination, consequently, the PTC was defunct. Through regular awareness raising sessions, UC nazim and few act community members approached the school management and reconvened PTC members, informed them about their roles and responsibilities and ensured that PTC becomes functional.

2.2.2 Impeding Issues and Challenges

- Tracking of educational spending at school or UC level, despite its significance and criticality, is non-applicable in the case of Pakistan especially at primary level. HRCP field monitors retorted that community can track spending when there will be money to begin with. In the devolved set up, schools have not received any development budgets for years. In some districts, even SMC/PTC/School council budgets have not been received and teachers end up paying for register, chalk or duster out of their own pockets or students pooling in. Only salaries have been given in majority of districts thus there is

nothing to spend or track per se. It was also felt that absolute focus on budget tracking was ill-conceived as it did not take account of education system in Pakistan.

- A constant struggle faced by the field staff was about prioritizing the needs – the needs of the community did not match with the project focus on budget tracking. HRCP felt it was not just to ask community to forget about their issues and only work on their project objectives. Hence, they tried to accommodate communities' concerns in the awareness raising sessions and also pushed political representatives to address them.
- CEF funding cycle has been counter productive to the initiative. Every 8th month or so, the project activities were put to a complete halt while the next round of grant took another 3-5 months to be channelled. The abruptness and gaps in between two funding cycles not only reduced the sustainability of project results but also dwindled community's trust. It was lucky that HRCP has a lot of credibility due to which they could resume the work or include some of the project activities in their own work with the communities. From a strategic viewpoint, it is extremely naïve for CEF to believe that same pace and quality of community mobilization can be resumed with the same team retained, after funding inconsistencies and gaps.
- Another issue faced by CEF partners was the frequent change in reporting templates and mechanisms. It reflects negatively on CEF's own professional capacities and clarity.
- Utilization of HRCP documents remained limited partly because of resource availability and partly because of a lack of strategy to use them. Resources allocated for publication were limited and the budget tracking information and ideas could not be widely disseminated. As an HRCP member reflected that for advocacy, the message needs to be visible everywhere, 200 or 1000 posters are inadequate for this purpose. On the other hand, limited use of HRCP material or involvement with PCE reflects on a lack of strategy for maximising the learnings and benefits of CEF supported initiatives. CEF Secretariat should have ensured that both PCE and HRCP activities were tied in to reduce duplication and maximise the impact of initiatives and investments.

2.2.3 Recommendations

- As suggested by various stakeholders, more than budget tracking, creating interface between school community and political representatives is relevant for the communities as their immediate issues get resolved.
- The material developed by HRCP as well as that by CDPI on constitutional and legislative rights for access to education should be used as prime focus for awareness raising and involvement of community members.
- Responsiveness to community's aspirations/needs should be increased. In fact, every funded initiative should have a provision for ensuring that community's priorities are also met.

- As indicated above, budget tracking in isolation has little relevance for Pakistan. In future, this exercise should entail concrete advocacy with the education department so it changes the equation for primary education and its budgeting.

2.3 Objective 3:

Support the development of innovative approaches to educating the most marginalised children (especially girls and the most vulnerable) in a way that influences a wider policy and practice

2.3.1 Understanding of the Objective and Achievements

- In the initial two years of CEF, there was a significant level of debates on implementation approaches for Objective 3. Supporting different NGOs in developing and implementing innovative programmes was perceived as the key tool for meeting Objective 3. This resulted in 9-12 months partnership with 3-4 local NGOs who first created innovative and inclusive models for marginalised children and community groups. As a second step, these NGOs widely disseminated their learnings for bringing about policy changes especially at grass-roots level including tehsil, taluka and district. The approach though synchronised with Pakistani culture and context, did collide with CEF's mandate of not supporting service delivery initiatives. At the time of mid-term evaluation, CEF was faced with a catch 22 situation, as *supporting the development of innovative approaches invariably lead to supporting service delivery of those innovations.*
- Two types of initiatives were supported under Objective 3 after the strategic shift of CEF: (a) those contributing to research and knowledge base on key issues in education (b) advocacy based initiatives aimed at political leadership and parliamentarians for taking concrete actions as well as Civil Society.
- In the first category, CEF support resulted in good quality and in-depth research studies that can not only fill in knowledge gap on key issues but can also be used as advocacy tools. Following is the range of research issues explored through CEF support:
 - Through Sindh Education Foundation, CEF supported documentation of educational innovations. This put together the best practices and successful pilot or small scale programmes by the Civil Society organizations. The documentation is invaluable as it focuses on what worked in Pakistan for supporting marginalized children either because of poverty, child-labour, gender, or disability. Also it highlights the policy avenues available through which pilot programmes could be scaled-up or replicated. Another research endeavour supported through CEF was the critical analysis of EFA plans and frameworks in Sindh and their impact and relevance for contextual realities.
 - CEF supported Adult Basic Education Society –Teacher Empowerment Centre (ABES-TEC) for research-based strengthening of teachers' networks. In this regard,

a research in eight districts of Punjab and Balochistan was undertaken with a prime focus on involving teachers in policy making, school governance while exploring the roles for teachers' unions. A series of sessions of consultations with teacher union representatives and teachers in general were carried out to discuss research findings and align roles for positive outcome.

- CEF supported the Alliance for Education Development, a network of 6 key NGOs, to organize a regional conference on "Local Governance: Text and Contexts". The main objective of the conference was to share state of the art knowledge on local governance models, policies and their actual implementation. The outcomes and recommendations were to feed into the national plans of action corresponding to EFA goals and SAARC Social Charter. A key outcome of this conference was the development of South Asian Forum for Education Development where researchers, policy makers, ministries, educational practitioners and thinkers came together to promote partnerships for learning and creating solutions to core educational issues. CEF also provided support to SAFED to organize regional meetings for furthering the outcomes of the conference.
- CEF, in collaboration with PCE, supported Social Development Policy Institute (SDPI) to undertake a citizen's review of the National Education Policy (1998-2010) in the wake of new education policy formulation. While the recommendations were shared with the Ministry of Education, the report in its own right brings out the often unheard/sidelined viewpoint of the Civil Society on education.
- Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives has been supported for engaging parliamentary committees for effective education sector reforms and their implementation. CPDI, with support from CEF, launched an active and aggressive advocacy campaign with Parliamentarians. Through the relentless efforts to engage parliamentarians, the Senate Committee for Education evidently became active. Moreover, CPDI took out a report on performance of Standing Committee of the Senate on Education during October 2005-January 2007 capturing all the actions and inactions for public reference. This proved an effective mechanism for raising interest levels and making the parliamentarians accountable for their roles.
- CPDI also developed a series of advocacy booklets on constitutional and tax-payers rights and how a common citizen or an organized group can engaged and influence the political representatives. Another exercise by CPDI, pertinent owing to the political situation, was to map Education and commitments made for its promotion by all political parties in their manifestos.
- A very important success of CEF, through its research advocacy work, is the development of regional linkages. First, the PCE members were facilitated to meet with CEF committees in India and Bangladesh along with exposure visits/sessions with coalitions functioning in South Asian countries. Second, and even more significant, was the

networking between parliamentarians of the three countries. It was for the first time that the members of Senate Education Committee of Pakistan met with their regional counterparts. These activities helped in initiating a culture of collaboration and active engagement of political partners for the cause of education. It is also important that such initiatives are continued and sustained to transcend into more organic linkages across the region.

2.3.2 Maximizing the Utilization of Innovations: *Issues and Potential*

- As indicated in previous sections, the successes of CEF, both in terms of knowledge generated or processes/forums initiated, remain highly under-utilized. Partly it can be attributed to a very nascent culture of evidence/research based initiatives in Pakistan. However, what is more alarming is that CEF and its various partners are unable to build on each others' successes and knowledge generated. It seems that CEF is sprouting all the various documents and research initiatives that have their own life and will never be connected to each other. It was initially discussed that the outcomes of Objective 3 will form the basis for the advocacy undertaken through alliances. Unfortunately that is yet to be realized. With its phasing out, CEF has no means to ensure that the knowledge generated becomes a reference point. However, it may be effective to create a research repository which can be widely accessed by PCE members as well as other educational players.
- The scope of information dissemination also needs to broaden up. At present, the reports have circulation limited to few hundred people and mostly, within the education sector. When policy analysis is generated, it is wise to disseminate it as widely as possible through all media. CEF should work for a less-territorial attitude of the organizations developing these analysis. Consequently, it can be made available to international, regional, national and local advocacy groups, web forums, etc for wider use.

3 Managing, Coordinating and Facilitating CEF initiatives in Pakistan

3.1 *Inter agency collaboration for CEF Operationalization*

- There has been a realization on part of all the three International NGOs, ActionAid International, Oxfam GB and Save the Children, UK, that CEF implementation would be laden with challenges owing to varying foci and institutional approach of each organization. Very initial phases of developing an implementation strategy for CEF illustrated that the realization was indeed real. It was after a series of marathon meetings spanned over few months that the INGOs reached a convergence point. However, as an understanding of CEF as well as stable inter-agency collaboration was being reached, the strategic focus of CEF UK changed and that disturbed the equilibrium posing a new series of challenges for the team.

- While an independent secretariat was formed and programmes started rolling out, it does not appear that CEF Management Committee was not able to recover from the loss of momentum faced then. The existence of CEF MC has been rather inconsequential and ineffective as evident from the schisms within and across CEF objectives and initiatives. It is true that after PCE formation, the role of CEF-MC as well as CEF-Secretariat had to be less directive and controlling, however, it did not mean that it will have no role to play at all.
- Discussions with ex-MC members, current and ex-CEF coordinators, PCE members as well as analysis of the structural adjustments point at various factors that have contributed to this considerable disinterest in CEF operationalization. Central factor is the accountability for CEF operationalization, time and resources allocated for it. Save the Children-UK, being the implementing agency and running the CEF Secretariat, obviously was accountable for its operationalization. Hence, became the only active contributor amongst the three INGOs. At the time of Mid-term evaluation, some concerns were voiced about immense amount of time invested by other two INGOs purely on a voluntary basis whereas Save the Children-UK was budgeting even the advisory time to CEF. This was a valid concern that remained unresolved as MC members from ActionAid or Oxfam GB did not have time budgeted for CEF neither does it feature as something their performance is assessed upon.
- ActionAid and Oxfam representatives appreciated the consistent efforts made by CEF-Secretariat for involving them in CEF related matters and issues. However, they conceded that setting out separate time for CEF was difficult that led to their absence from MC meetings or not having them at all. During this EPE exercise, MC members were unable to recall when the last MC meeting took place and who attended it but were sure that it did not happen in last six months. It is indeed reflective of CEF's own accountability when constitutionally, MC was supposed to meet every month.
- Another factor that came into play was the composition of CEF – MC. Initially, a senior representative, Programme Officer or above level, directly managing advocacy or education portfolio was supposed to be the part of MC. It was because of this that CEF operationalization was well thought out and coherent albeit convenience driven. Later, MC were not only changing frequently with a new face there for every meeting but also MC members did not feature in the top leadership in their own institutions. Hence, the nature of decision making and inputs changed dramatically. At some point, it was decided that country directors will be represented at MC however, this was not only short-lived but also added to the chaos and bureaucracy of decision making and leadership for CEF.
- Consequently, the role of MC from being an advisory and governance body changed into information recipients of CEF Secretariat. Frequent turnover of focal persons of INGOs ensured that orientation to CEF becomes a permanent agenda for all MC meetings.

- It is also intriguing that Action Aid and Oxfam were hesitant in responding to an independent concept/funding proposal put forth by PCE, as shared by various ex-MC members. Moreover, as pointed out by a provincial PCE focal point, initiatives similar to PCE are funded by these INGOs, AL-Baik advocacy forum was cited as an example of this. The PCE members are rightly concerned about the level of commitment and seriousness of the CEF INGOs when they are evidently unsupportive of an initiative like PCE that is also conceived by them. Lately, PCE has received support from Action Aid to conduct a series of consultation on the new Education Policy. A contributing factor to this may be that CEF's financial support to PCE is reaching its end.
- It is evident that successes and lessons generated from CEF are not built upon in the programmatic/strategic framework of each of the INGO. While ActionAid and Oxfam may have not done it because of their limited interaction with CEF, It was perplexing as to why it was not done by Save the Children as it was playing a lead role. Placement of CEF Coordinator in organizational hierarchy is identified as a main contributing factor for these disconnects. The CEF Coordinator, irrespective of the demanding TORs, stands at the fourth tier of decision making in Save the Children, reporting to line manager. The Coordinator does not have the organizational standing to directly contribute to education programming and ensure synchrony/maximization/scaling up of CEF learnings or initiatives. It is true that the Coordinator can put forth such proposals even to the Country Director, but this will be a stand-alone activity and not a systemic process. Another reflection offered by a responded, was that the institutional approach of INGO may have implicated the decision of continuing with CEF initiatives. For instance, Save the Children-UK does not undertake advocacy programmes and deals more with project activities. Thus supporting a broad-based coalition or running advocacy campaigns may be well outside the scope of institution or expertise available to them.

3.2 Reflections on CEF Operationalization

- For Pakistan, CEF was an over-doze of experimentation with too many models at too many fronts simultaneously. The very concept of CEF was different from a traditional/straight-jacket funding project. Then formation of Coalition was done because adamant insistence of CEF notwithstanding the past experiences with coalition. And to top it all, there was inter-agency collaboration that is a challenging prospect even in straight-delivery focussed projects let alone an evolving model for participatory advocacy.
- The outcomes of CEF are thus not surprising. It has seen relative success under its objectives especially with respect to creation of new knowledge and/or forums for learning and sharing. There are no two opinions on the potential and instrumentality of initiatives like PCE or research study on EFA plans and their effectiveness. However, a question worth asking is whether the amount of money and efforts put channelled

through CEF match the size and significance of the outcomes. An honest answer will be in negative.

- Just like PCE, CEF had a lot of potential if it was seriously and coherently planned and implemented in Pakistan. It has yielded very interesting results in other countries. While accepting that African countries have a long history of people-based advocacy initiatives, it will be naïve to think that Pakistan could not have done better with it if only willingness and preparedness to undertake CEF was focussed upon.
- The approach taken by INGOs for CEF operationalization did not match the purpose and notion of CEF. As we raise concerns about NGOs/Civil Society for implementing an advocacy programme, capacities of INGOS and their country offices for guiding and managing such programmes also need to be questioned and improved upon. Till that time, straight jacket, service delivery oriented programmes are the best route available to transfer the benefits to children. Otherwise, the social development interventions will continue to miss their mark with only minimal trickle down benefits for children and their education.

Appendices

Appendix A:

Comments on the End Project Evaluation by PCE

Following are the comments submitted by National Secretariat of PCE on the End of Project Evaluation on September 22, 2008. Most of the comments made here are not coherent with the reflections of PCE National Resource Group and ensuing discussions of June 5, 2008 when the EPE findings were shared with them. For instance, all the NRG members barring NS representatives agreed that the ownership showed by SPO for PCE is arguably limited. One example cited was the space and content in the Annual report of SPO where PCE was not mentioned as compared to the Annual Reports of all the other institutions who have dedicated a whole section to PCE activities in their respective provinces.

The comments are posted here as were submitted without any modifications or editing. Some of these are incorporated in the final report as the perspective of PCE/NS while others, that comprise of numerous clichés and rhetoric without substantial evidence are not included.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **National Secretariate PCE** <nationalsecretariat@pcep.org>

Date: Mon, Sep 22, 2008 at 5:50 PM

Subject: Re: PCE Minutes and feedback on proposal and CEF EPE

To: Sadaf Zulfiqar Ali <sadafzali@gmail.com>

Cc: Alif Laila Book Bus Society <aliflaila_lhr@hotmail.com>, Kamleshwer <kamleshwer2000@yahoo.com>, Asif Lehri <asiflehri@yahoo.com>, Ibrash <ibrashpasha@hotmail.com>, Nighat Razaq <nighat@spopk.org>

Dear Sadaf,

please find attached the comments by PCE members on the CEF-PCE evaluation report. Secondly you have been informed about our engagement in the FOSI proposal due to which we have been unable to submit the NRG minutes. I will be sending them shortly within this week. The FOSI proposal would be shared tomorrow as we are working on it and will be sending the same tomorrow. We apologize for any inconvenience caused by the delayed response from our side.

Regards

Zehra

Sadaf Zulfiqar Ali wrote:

Dear PCE Team,

Hope this finds you well. This is with reference to CEF end of project evaluation report shared on 16th July 2008. It was shared quite often that team has reviewed the report and wishes to share detail feedback. Unfortunately despite more than 2 months, no feedback has been received as yet. In view of this, the report is considered final and we will be submitting the PCE chapter as it is.

Moreover it is important for us to document the future direction and commitments of PCE as to on what juncture CEF has wrapped off re PCE. In view of this, can I request you to share the meeting minutes/write up or any such document at earliest, that could provide us with some ideas of future plans of PCE.

Also if you could share any feedback on proposal so that we can finalise it within this week since this is the last working week of CEF secretariat.

An early response will be much appreciated.

Best Regards, Sadaf Zulfiqar

Comments on EPE

PCE-members appreciated the exercise as it has been a learning experience for the coalition and the report is a reflective report. However the members feel that taking into account the time constraints, diverse and widely spread membership, the lack of resources both in kind and finances PCE has done quite well which has not come out very clearly in the report.

Members also feel that the report started off on the wrong foot. Visions are larger than life, they are of necessity all encompassing and hence less tangible. I frankly do not think a vision can be vague. I do agree, however that something simple such as creating life long learners could replace free education for all.

Members while commenting the report resonated their feelings and experiences that we come from a complex society where competition, not collaboration is the norm. For organizations to gel together and leave their own identities in the background so that a collective identity can be created is no small order, and two years not a long time period either. Though PCE has not mastered that yet, i.e. seeing itself apart from the organizations it is housed in, but feel compelled to say that a good beginning has been made.

Resources have been grossly limited and that is an area that needs serious looking into. Perhaps the new PCE should be set up after seed money has been made available so that people can focus on the work and not worry about the funds all the time

Some members have also agreed that the mission needs to be made more crisp, fresh and at the same time inspiring and stimulating. No doubt we are all part of formulating the present mission but it is better to come up with a new smart mission. We are all mature enough to embrace improvements and correct our course when required so.

PCE does not agree with the report submitted by the external consultant. Without understanding the organizations housing the national Secretariat, it is not fair to accuse it of not being up to the mark. The consultant didn't have a single meeting with the CE/Management of SPO. The only SPO member meeting the consultant was in the capacity of the General Secretary -PCE. Some of the observations are seriously biased due to a complete lack of information about SPO as an organization and they undermine the support that SPO has provided.

PCE doesn't agree with the fact that any dynamics of the coalition led the CEF to be cautious in its behaviour and attitude with PCE. They have remained a donor and PCE has always remained a project for CEF. Various documentary evidence exists to substantiate that it was PCE pressing the idea of being recognized as a coalition and a movement rather than a project to CEF. There have been no major implications for the accountability towards concrete deliverables of PCE. The later details mentioned in this evaluation report just mention two research studies for which the CEF was always kept in loop. The CEF had been time and again asked for technical support in this regard. Failing to gain this support, the assistance of volunteers from the civil society organizations of Islamabad was sought. These two researches have been the only deliverable that was delayed.

PCE-NS calls for sharing the documentary evidence that the evaluators in mentioning in relation to the conflict over housing of PCE secretariat. This was a unanimous decision by the NRG members of the meeting, minutes of which can be provided as evidence. Neither was there any conflict at the time of its initiation as the GB selected SPARC to house its first secretariat which was shifted to SPO due to less human and financial resource at SPARC to SPO in Dec 2005.

The evaluator has failed to recognize that PCE has grown over the time in terms of its conceptual and programmatic frameworks. Starting off with a simple vision of free quality for all, the same now talks about inclusive education and promotion of peace, tolerance, democracy, justice and diversity. We would not agree that the comments of one provincial secretariat should be generalized. The members interviewed were the same who participated in the strategic planning exercise where ample time and emphasis was placed on revising the vision statement. The group collectively agreed on the vision statement and has to be owned by all, although difference of opinion is always respected and given space in PCE.

PCE doesn't agree with the evaluators in terms of a vision and mission statements being time bound as they never are. It's the objectives and the outcomes that need to be time bound. It would have been much appreciated if the evaluators could actually indicate what lacking has been observed in technical terms instead of generalized comments,

jaded with biasness and using words that speak about a perceived negative skewedness in approach by the evaluator.

PCE is not lopsided towards coordination and structural issue alone as the evaluators depicts in her observation. If that would have been the case PCE would never had been able to do concrete work and advocate concerns/run campaigns on governance issue in education planning and management, budget tracking, planning and utilization in education sector, standardization of education system in Pakistan, the issue of privatization, inclusive education, adult literacy, teachers and their role, girl child education, education policy and a multitude of other education sector issues. The CEF is itself witness to this work and some how the impression being given in the evaluation reports depicts PCE as a group focused on coordination and structural issues. Although the later are important in themselves but not the “sole concern” as stated by the evaluator.

PCE agrees with the fact there has been a disconnect between PCE and the other two objectives of CEF, but these don't have an implication on the emergency of PCE as a networks and its impact. There has never been an intention by CEF to create that synergy and the blame shift of PCE and linking it with the work of PCE isn't fair at this juncture. Although PCE has made formal collaborations with two partners of CEF (CPDI and HRCP) but that has been an initiative from the coalition side. CPDI was than given formal membership and later became part of the decision making forum (NRG) of PCE.

For correction of record, SAMAR and alternative Media are not two different NRG members. It is one organization SAMAR. The evaluator has been very perceptive while commenting about the federal level NRG members. The PCE also doesn't agree with the observation made by the evaluator on the two organizations CPDI and SAMAR who were taken on board as NRG members. Both these organization carried a good working relationship as member PCE at the federal level. The NS was requested by the NRG to look for credible organizations that would be willing to support the cause of PCE and contribute in federal level advocacy campaigns. Various organizations were contacted, the record of which is available at NS. A positive long term commitment was shown by the above mentioned members. NS proposed these organizations against the vacant posts in NRG and the NRG members formally approved their status after which they were taken onboard. CPDI is though a relatively nascent organization but have a well respected position in the development sector of Islamabad due to their work with Parliamentarians and Standing Committees. Secondly SAMAR carries repute in the media sector and their role as media monitors and a pro-people media and research institution. Their membership as an NRG member was confirmed on the basis of support that they could provide to PCE and its cause. Without inquiring about these organizations with the NS and the NRG, how can the evaluator comments about the approach, spirit of transparency, participatory decision making and relevance.

The role of NS has been assessed at a very micro level and strictly in contractual terms with CEF alone. The relationship between the NS and PSs has been viewed as hierarchical due to the contractual obligations that PCE has had with CEF. If viewed in a broader perspective where PCE is working in different collaboration and at different levels both national and international, PCE would not agree to this assessment. PSs don't comply with the directives from NS rather direct the NS in terms of the programmatic directions,

campaigns and TORs in case where formal commitments by certain PCE members are required. When working with donors certain accountability and reporting mechanisms have to be followed. PCE would like the evaluator to look around the globe and see a few cases where similar examples can be cited. A cohesive action plan can not guarantee non hierarchical and open relationships. For the later two other areas need to be explored, studied and suggested.

PCE would like further inquiry into the assessment drawn by the evaluator whereby the NS has been declared weaker than the PSs and also the host organization weaker than the organizations hosting the PSs. The observation is based on mere judgment and pre-conceived notions. The evaluator without asking any question to SPO and specially its management about leadership can not understand the organization, its functions, its mechanisms, the support provided, the strength it carries, the human resource and technical expertise provided to PCE. A nascent network like PCE can not suddenly become robust and its operations and visibility increase to the extent desired by the evaluator which by no means has been documented as an expected level by the members and the host organizations of PCE. Determining a desired level by an evaluator at the end of CEFs tenure would rather be considered a wish list by CEF and the evaluator. The members though not happy but satisfied with what the coalition has been able to achieve in a two year meagre support provided by CEF. Talking crudely in monetary terms the investment made available to PCE was for running campaigns and not strengthening the coalition to the extent expected by CEF/Evaluator. If the basic mandate of CEF was to strengthen the coalition than it would be fair to say that not much has been invested whether at the national or provincial level, at the human resource or the physical infrastructure level. From the beginning the fault for the weaknesses in the conceptual, programmatic and structural frameworks of PCE lie with CEF not with PCE, they did not conceive any strategy for the sound initiation of the coalition, Providing meagre resources and then expecting to perform miracles is not fair.

SPO is not a service delivery organization as reflected in the report. The inclusion of advocacy and research in its foci is not a recent one. SPO has been advocating on issues of public concern since mid 90s. Although admitting that education has not been the sole issue being advocated but never the less the comments of the evaluator are not fair with respect to judging the organization without trying to understand the organization. Similarly ex-MC members had nothing to do while selecting SPO as the national secretariat of PCE. It was the NRG who decided that it should be housed in SPO. Being a national support organization it is able to support the coalition in many aspects including but not limited to the institutional and financial support. We would like to inquire about the reliability of the data being quoted as no MC member has ever had a direct link with PCE. Generalizing results on a word of mouth approach is never reliable. It was for the first time at the sharing meeting of this end project evaluation by the consultant where all three agencies (SC-UK, OXFAM and ActionAid) were present. Not to mention that the representatives of the later two had just recently joined the CEF-MC team. The previous MC members had no continuity as MS members and have had no direct interaction with the PCE national or provincial chapter. CEF Secretariat has been the conduit of information between PCE and CEF-MC.

We agree that so far PCE has been lucky of having honest, loyal and committed partners. Thus the conflict of interest by any member has not been an issue of concern. We are already in the process of forming an advisory body. Efforts of the same will be made more rigorous and time bound now.

PEC disagrees with the evaluator's description of the stand taken by the CEF in terms of not synergizing the CEF's initiatives at country level, owing to the lack of pro-activeness, ideas and efficient functioning of PCE. It was long before the PCE support even continued that these partners were identified. It was CEF-UK who took the plunge of realigning CEF's global agenda with the country wide approach. PCE had pushed for a partner's forum of CEF where all partners could sit and discuss their initiatives and see how they can supplement the efforts of each other. Not by CEF but one such meeting was called by SC-UK for its project partners. PCE being one small partner of SC-UK attended the meeting. It would have been worth while if such a forum could have been formed and made functional where all partners could sit and discuss the CEF supported initiatives. Secondly the research conducted by other CEF partners have been used by PCE in its advocacy campaigns. The report "Connecting the Dots" by ABES, the Budget Tracking Manuals and other brochures by HRCP and the research by Sindh Education Foundation was been widely referred and used by the PCE members at various occasions. We have not been very mindful of quoting the use of these reports but one can be cautious in future.

The recommendations suggested in the report will be weighed carefully by the NRG members and a road map of PCE in the best interest of the coalition will be developed. The next NRG meeting will be looking into the details of these recommendations and formulating next steps.

Appendix B

List of Documents and Materials referred to for EPE

- Documents on PCE Structure and Functioning
 - Constitution of PCE
 - Introduction to and structure of PCE as posted on PCE website
 - Final Draft Strategic Planning Document, produced by AASA
 - Minutes of the meetings of National Resource Group (NRG) from Feb 2005 – January 2008

- Progress Reports
 - Quarterly reports submitted to CEF UK by CEF Secretariat from 2005-2008
 - Collated reports on PCE activities submitted by National Secretariat to CEF Secretariat. All issues available for the period of 2005-2007.
 - Sample of reports submitted by Provincial Secretariat to National Secretariat

- Media Releases/Responses by PCE
 - All media clippings, articles and press releases issued by PCE National and all Provincial Secretariats
 - Critique, feedback and recommendations on “Education in Pakistan – A White Paper” by Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE), Islamabad

- Analysis on CEF
 - Commonwealth Education Fund (2007). Funding Change: Sustaining civil society advocacy in education.
 - Bano, M (2006). Sustaining Funding for Civil Society Advocacy in Education in Pakistan: a Report for CEF. (Unpublished)

- All Research/Reports/Papers commissioned by PCE/ developed through CEF Support