

**CEF-SIERRA LEONE END OF PROJECT
EVALUATION**

FINAL REPORT

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Acronyms

ADB-African Development Bank
APC-All Peoples Congress
AAISL ActionAid International Sierra Leone
CEF-Commonwealth Education Fund
CGG-Campaign for Good Governance
CSM-Civil Society Movement
CSO-Civil Society Organizations
DFID-Department for International Development
ECOWAS-Economic Community of West African States
EFA-SL-Education for All Sierra Leone Coalition
FAWE-Forum for African Women Educationalists
GOSL-Government of Sierra Leone
INGO-International Non-Governmental Organization
LNGO-Local Non-Governmental Organization
MDG-Millennium Development Goal
MEYS-Ministry of Education Youths and Sports
MSWGCA-Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affair
NPRC-National Provisional Ruling Council
PETS-Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
PMC-Project Management Committee
PRSP-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SLTU-Sierra Leone Teachers Union
UNDP-United Nations Development Programme

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Executive Summary

Background

The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) was framed around the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on Education and gender; achieving gender equality in primary and secondary education by 2005 and universal completion of primary education by 2015. Funds for the implementation of the project were managed by three international organizations; ActionAid International (AAI), Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK (SCUK) and implemented in 17 low income commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia. In Sierra Leone, the fund was collaboratively managed by Action Aid International Sierra Leone (AAISL), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), World Vision (WV), Standard Chartered Bank, Talking Drum Studio, UNICEF and Oxfam (GB), with Action Aid as the lead agency.

The specific aim of the CEF is to strengthen the capacity of civil society groups in developing Commonwealth countries to help Governments ensure that the poorest and most marginalized children are able to enroll in, complete and achieve good quality primary education.

Unlike other interventions in the education sector which focus on physical infrastructure development (service delivery), the Commonwealth Fund focused on education advocacy with the following national objectives which are in consonance with CEF's core objectives:

1. To strengthen civil society capacity to participate in the design and implementation of national and local education plans and framework, with particular emphasis on initiatives that promote gender equity in education.
2. To enable local communities monitor government spending on education, at both national and local levels
3. To support innovative ways for civil society to ensure that children especially girls and the disadvantaged (disabled and street children) are able to access quality education.

The CEF works strategically with civil society in Commonwealth countries identified most at risk of missing the MDGs on education and gender.¹ A critical objective of the CEF is to make education a sustained national policy with the view to ensure that public schools effectively work for the education of children generally. Its work focuses on, but not limited to, the building of coalition and networks, budget tracking and monitoring of government expenditure on education, and increasing access to education for girls and the most vulnerable in societies.

In the last ten years, there has been a rise in international civil society advocacy in education. This was particularly influenced by the establishment of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the events following the hosting of the Dakar World Education

¹ "Funding Change: Sustaining Civil Society Advocacy in Education," p. 1,

Forum in 2000, and the EFA targets and the MDGs. These ideas have charted an education trajectory that checkmates government on education spending and how civil society can work within that framework to influence government to increase spending on education that would benefit all.

The project implementation was guided by the overall “Rights to End Poverty Strategic Plan” developed by Action Aid International, a document that formed the bedrock for the development of Country Strategy Paper. The guiding principles of implementation were through partnership with other organizations (local and international) working on education, inter-agency collaboration and government line ministry. The education coalition became the lead organisation to implement the CEF through its member organisations thereby creating an opportunity for networks and other members with interest in education advocacy to collaborate and work to achieve the objectives of the project.

To achieve the objectives of the end of project evaluation, the researcher relied on or rather employed the qualitative research method of data collect, using instruments/techniques such as desk research, sub-structured questionnaire method, ranking exercises, informal interviews, focus group discussions, and personal observation. Tables and chart were also used to present results.

Key Findings

Findings revealed that the CEF project in Sierra Leone is consistent with the overall government national priority as set out in the Ten-Year Education Sector Plan, National Education Policy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which aims at securing quality education that is relevant for all. The objectives of the CEF are gradually gaining wider publicity among civil society groups, the corporate sector, NGOs through discussions in different forums. Some modicum of corporate sector interest has been generated for the CEF.

Before the intervention most Civil Societies Organization working on education primarily focussed on providing services, which in many ways replicated the functions of the Ministry of Education. Currently CSOs have refocused their priorities towards education advocacy than service delivery. The right-based approach to education proved to be more sustainable than service delivery as demonstrated by some of the activities of the CEF funded projects, although some demanded demonstrative advocacy and service delivery.

Results also indicate that the Education For ALL Sierra Leone (EFASL) Coalition, a major implementing partner of CEF projects succeeded in enhancing the participation of CSOs in national education plans and policy design, and brought into play innovative approaches to educating the most marginalized children in addition to supporting local communities to monitor budgetary allocation to education and tracking of resource allocation at community level. In consequence, an increase in the enrolment and about 35% retention of the girl child were achieved in all the four regions in the country, especially in the North where the girl child enrolment had been lowest.

One of the major challenges was that for civil society groups to effectively engage and challenge some of the harmful donor, bilateral and multilateral conditionalities imposed on African governments to remove subsidies on education, their advocacy acumen must be sharpened and their capacities strengthened to ensure that they are equipped with the arguments, issues and debates surrounding education advocacy. Most members of civil society do not have the required capacity that would enable them confront and challenge not only policies that hinder the provision of quality education, but also to undertake advocacy work in the education sector. Capacity development for civil society members is required to enhance their skills in advocacy exercise. It also came out clearly that the communities are yet to internalise the setting up of the CSEF as a sustainability model/plan in the aftermath of the CEF project. There has not been a sustainable plan until a research conducted in 2006 suggested sustainable funding options. However, seed money is needed for the proposed national Civil Society Education Fund.

What was quite revealing as a failure of the CEF project was the lack of coordination among members of the PMC, the committee's inability to form quorums when meetings are convened and, by extension, cause administrative and operational delays, and general lack of commitment of members, save the lead agency, toward actualizing the CEF objectives.

Moreover, the financial and, to some extent, organizational management of the project recorded some successes but the monitoring and evaluations systems were weak and not fully participatory. There was relatively high cost incurred for the numerous researches undertaken for budget tracking and the girl child education survey. Additionally, clear understanding needs to be developed between district networks and Action Aid with regards to the organization's financial policies and procedures.

Key Recommendations

An important recommendation from the findings is that funds are needed to undertake effective training, capacity development of network members and to ensure that projects are implemented and completed in a timely fashion. Moreover, the institutional processes and procedures involved in the disbursement of funds from AAISL to EFASL Coalition/networks/partners need to be further revisited to ensure that networks have a clearer understanding of AAISL's financial policies and procedures in any future intervention of this nature.

The EFASL coalition and network members need to be further strengthened and capacitated in the light of the growing demands on them to monitor and track government funding on education. Besides, there is need for harmonization of activity plans of the networks/partners by the EFASL Coalition. Essentially, there is need for periodic national meetings, peer review and sharing of monthly reports to ensure that everyone understands and is involved in the process.

It is also recommended to invest in the EFASL structure for the coalition to stay alive. AAISL established an operations committee based on voluntarism with no administrative

cost. Because coalitions are loose associations, incentives become the driving force behind exceptional performance.

Notwithstanding the proposed support to the EFASL, it is worth noting that the CSEF structure should be supported to enhance civil society's continued participation in education advocacy in a more vibrant and independent manner. The CSEF board recruitment process which gave an opportunity for inclusion of all regional interest should be provided with adequate support for positive impact of small community based projects so as to promote ownership amongst community members thus promoting sustainability. The in-country donors and the private sector should use this as an opportunity to invest in education. An independent secretariat should be set up with adequate capacity development so as to ensure that projects selected truly meet community demands and desire to achieve the EFA and MDG goals on education by 2015. With continued community mobilisation and sensitisation, it is sure that this model can succeed.

There is need for more coordination among members of the Project Management Committee (PMC) on the one hand, and between PMC and EFASL/coalition/networks in terms of meeting regularly, increased interaction, brainstorming on issues and sharing concerns, on the other.²

² Statement made by Mr. Sam Bangura, former Education Coordinator at AAI-SL in an interview on August 29, 2008.

Chapter Two

Purpose of the Evaluation

The specific purposes of this evaluation include:

- To account, learn and share learning from achievements and failures in order to meet statutory requirements of donors, share experiences and learning, leading to sustaining the ‘good practices’ and leaving a legacy
- To share with others our aims, achievements as well as our challenges
- To allow internal and external stakeholders to explore our work and help us to assess impact, achievements and learning
- To increase our accountability to our internal peers and external partners

Methodology

As indicated in the Executive Summary, the consultant employed the qualitative research method in gathering information and collecting data for this exercise. Specifically, the researcher held preliminary meetings with key stakeholders such as officials at the Ministry of Education, the CEF Coordinator, EFASAL Secretariat and Executive members, some sections of the civil society and members of the PMC. These groups and individuals provided some direction and guidance to the researcher that culminated in the production of the report.

Much of the work the consultant was engaged in before the resumption of field data was desk research. This involved reviewing documents from ActionAid on CEF project. Some of the key strategic documents from the CEF secretariat that were consulted and helped provide useful information for the consultant included: the DFID Contract Agreement, Funding Change, Driving the Bus, CEF Approved Strategy, Mid--Term Review Report 2006, Monitoring Reports and the Financial and Narrative Reports. The consultant also examined documents from the MEYS including The Education Sector Plan, The New National Education Policy, Reports and Project Proposal from the EFASL Coalition, the M and E Framework among others. Other useful documents examined included the Child Rights Acts (2007), United Nations Girls Education Initiative Report (2007), Sierra Leone Disaster Management Policy (2006) and the Out of School Report (2008). The examination of these key documents and other relevant works provided the background to Sierra Leone’s education plan and policies including the focus on the girl child and other marginalized groups, the processes involved in the implementation of the plans, the monitoring and evaluation processes, the challenges faced and the lessons learned.

The next stage was the structuring and development of semi-structured questionnaires. This set the stage for actual field work. The administration of questionnaires to key stakeholders in the education sector; the interviewing of key informants; focus group discussions; conversational interviews and field observations were carried out in gathering data. These instruments utilized provided an indepth survey of selected issues, cases or events and provided critical insights into partners’ perspectives that informed the evaluation process.

Literature Review

In April 2004, CEF began its process of planning for sustainability and the document was circulated to all CEF countries for comment and development (CEF UK 2004). A proposal was presented to DFID for a CEF Global Mid-Term Review with the view to expand the CEF model to benefit other countries likely to face constraints in achieving the MDGs, particularly in the Francophone and non-Commonwealth Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (CEF 2005b). The planned expansion never actualized because it was not approved. However, the document spelt out the model of funding and it contributed to CEF's decision to appoint an independent research team to identify ways to build on the achievement of CEF and its partners after 2008.

Other works have specifically concentrated on the role the civil society could play in education advocacy, as well as sharing experiences in building and supporting coalitions.³ In the study conducted by the UK team in 2005, two documents came into existence that addressed the formation and management of national coalitions. The documents include: "Building and Maintaining Networks and Coalitions produced by PACT Tanzania (2005)," which speaks of how to guide the setting up of coalitions for different purposes. Next was "The Rise and Pitfalls of Civil Society Networks in Malawi of 2006" produced by INTRAC. A document that addressed issues such as building civil society capacities to enhance policy advocacy (Clemens 2006) has been published. Other works that have addressed the critical issues of the education of the girl child, marginalized groups, budget tracking and monitoring, establishment of coalitions and networks and many others have been recorded (Ahadzi 2006, Ashley and Hamilton 2005, Archer and Anyamu 2005, CEF UK 2005a, Human Rights Education 1999, Remmelzwaal 2006).

EFASL Coalition

The EFASL Coalition was established in November 2001 after the World Forum on Education in Dakar 2000. It was part of the local effort to domesticate international conventions relating to the attainment of basic quality education for all by 2015. The coalition also exists to monitor MDG/EFA activities, to analyse progress and identify gaps, to monitor school subsidies, to monitor the provision of teaching and learning materials and to follow up on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools.

Some of the EFASL defined objectives include:

1. To organise advocacy campaigns to lobby the government and the international community to deliver on time
2. To popularise the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and to make basic education accessible and affordable to every child especially the girl child in Sierra Leone
3. To cultivate a good understanding of the educational processes at all levels, and strengthen partnership at national and international levels
4. To mobilise and enhance CSOs capacity in influencing government and international community to deliver on their commitments on Education for All.

³ "Driving the Bus: The Journey of National Education Coalitions," p. 7, 2006.

The EFASL Coalition has approximately fifty active organizations including national NGOs and CBOs at all levels of society. A National Executive Committee has been established with the responsibility to manage the affairs of the coalition. The National Secretariat, which is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the coalition, has the National Coordinator and a Finance Officer who are paid staff. They are basically engaged in networking, communication and information sharing, policy debates, capacity development on advocacy transparency and accountability, documentation and dissemination of best practices in achieving EFA goals, organizing, managing and coordinating the coalition and the networks, and the development of members' skills to analyse policies and programs relating to education.

The major achievements of the coalition over the years have been their active participation in education plans and policies as well as major education legislations and policies and parliamentary acts. Moreover, with funds from the CEF they conducted successful research on budget tracking, girl child education which has influenced enrolment, advocacy on IMF stringent macro-economic policies and the training of School Management Committees in the regions of the country.

Role of the PMC

The Project Management committee of CEF Sierra Leone comprised ActionAid, which is the lead agency, World Vision Sierra Leone, Standard Chartered Bank Sierra Limited, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam GB, Talking Drum Studio and UNICEF. Oxfam GB withdrew in 2007 due to work load, short staff and redefinition of priorities.

One major responsibility/role of the PMC was to define policy and operational guidelines for the CEF. It must be noted that this responsibility was not successfully carried out due to changes in representation and poor attendance of members, which made it difficult, if not impossible to form a quorum. As a result, most of the strategic and operational decisions were taken by the lead agency from 2006 to 2008. Additionally, the evaluation clearly depicts that there was a weak feedback mechanism from the PMC membership, which culminated in delay to disburse funds for the implementation of projects. Equally worth noting, project proposals assessed by the CEF secretariat were never approved on time by the PMC due to the above factors.

Another key function of the PMC was the development of a vision for the sustainability of CEF work. As the study clearly indicates, no sustainability plan was developed until after the CEF Sustainability Research was done in 2006. Although CSEF has been launched in-country, members of the PMC, with the exception of Action Aid, have shown remarkable lax to support the process especially in securing seed money for CSEF.

Functions of the Country Secretariat

One of the duties of the country secretariat was to facilitate the development of strategic plans. This was to be done in concert with the PMC whose approval was required. CEF

SL secretariat clearly performed this function to ensure that CEFs work endures for the longer term. The secretariat requested, received and reviewed proposals from partners country-wide. The reviewed proposals and recommendations were later sent to the PMC for approval.

In addition, the CEF secretariat provided support to partners in the design and implementation of appropriate monitoring and evaluation system. However, the Monitoring and Evaluation frame work developed was weak and not participatory. Coalitions and networks were not fully involved in the monitoring and evaluation exercise, which rendered the exercise ineffective. The secretariat also embarked on capacity building/development of partners and coalition throughout the country. Training, workshops and institutional support was provided to the EFASL Coalition/networks. Moreover, the CEF secretariat helped built linkages of the EFASL Coalition with regional bodies like ANCEFA and GCE.

The secretariat has not been without challenges and limitations. One such glaring limitation was that it failed to mainstream gender in its projects. Additionally, it failed to involve most stakeholders at the sub-national level in the formation of education networks. This resulted in misrepresentation, lack of coordination and failure to properly and effectively implement CEF projects.

Role of DFID

DFID provided the initial grant of ten million pounds in support of CEF project. In Sierra Leone, however, in country DFID office did not provide much of oversight right throughout the project duration but gave technical support in setting up of the Civil Society Education Fund. DFID's technical support to the development of more EFA plans with gender equity cannot be overstated.

As one of its goal, DFID also assisted in providing funds to the government of Sierra Leone to better track government expenditure on education through the Public Expenditure Tracking System (PETS). This created an opportunity for CSOs to know what government spends on education, follow up on the overall expenditure and to advocate an increase in subsidies for the education sector.

Assessing advocacy capacity of civil society organisations in Sierra Leone before and after CEF intervention

It is an unquestionable fact that for advocacy to succeed there must be the requisite institutional capacity to handle the complex tasks and responsibilities involved in the process. This means that the bodies charged with the responsibility for advocacy must have the financial, technical, personnel and logistic requirements to implement it. What is required is a network where ideas are exchanged and effective communication between the different parties ensured. The advocacy organisations must be well organised with a clear mandate, specified terms of reference and sphere of influence. Most significantly, they must be able to win the confidence of the parties they represent.

Prior to CEF intervention, not much was done in terms of concrete efforts at doing advocacy on key educational themes and issues. Even though religious organisations (Christians and Muslims) continue to play a very significant role in promoting education in Sierra Leone, they have not been very active in terms of doing advocacy on crucial educational issues like the education of the girl child, equal access to educational services and facilities, proper, timely and adequate remuneration for teachers, post-training employment, education for self-reliance and job creation and many others.

Work in the area of education over the years has been largely centred on the construction/rehabilitation of physical infrastructure and the provision of basic teaching and learning materials. Even teacher training and retention, and the formation and strengthening of Community – Teachers Associations (CTA) were not prioritised until quite recently when some CSOs and the government launched the distance learning programme hosted by the Freetown Teachers College (FTC). This was sponsored mainly by PLAN International (PLAN). Other organisations like Catholic Relief Services (CRS) have supported work with CTAs on a very small scale in some parts of the country.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Action Aid Sierra Leone have come up with very alarming figures about the high drop-out rate of girls and the generally low ratios at the secondary level. These appalling statistics, coupled with the ever increasing gender awareness and the active agitation of the women of Sierra Leone about women's rights, have caught government's attention. The government was swift to respond by paying school fees for girls entering Junior Secondary Schools in the North and East where the statistics were most alarming in 2003. FAWE, Action Aid and PLAN International have been leading campaigners in this area. The CEF project with its continuous sensitization campaigns on girl child education advocated for the extension of the privilege to the south and western areas of Sierra Leone

Talking Drums Studio, Sierra Leone Teachers Union and Anti Corruption Commission conducted an 8-month long assessment to ascertain community perspectives on quality education in Sierra Leone. They made a presentation to the Parliamentary Sub-committee on Education outlining their findings and requesting that they initiate action geared towards addressing core issues that affect quality education in the country. Key issues looked into included the government's quality education and free education policy, ownership and responsibility for education, parental responsibility, motivation in the classroom, the role of the Sierra Leone Teachers Union and the Ministry of Education Science and Technology. Some of the recommendations were: more intensive information and sensitisation at the community level; ownership, proprietorship and active participation of communities in the management and operations of schools; improvement in the conditions of service for teachers; equity and fairness in the distribution of resources and opportunities; combating poverty which is a major limitation to equal access to education.

The coalition expected action from the Parliamentary sub-committee on education among which were the following:

- That parliament ensures that their constituents are aware of the objectives of government and their own role in pursuing that goal.

- That the communities have a vital role to play in the achievement of quality education. Their participation and eventual ownership is vital in the overall process not to mention their monitoring and oversight responsibilities
- That social reintegration and national recovery are issues for the entire population. The citizenry need to be aware that government is doing more than merely replacing infrastructure, and is working to improve systems and processes to deliver services.
- That there is need for more advocacy on key educational issues.
- That parliament has a role to play to ensure that government achieves its objectives in terms of oversight.⁴

It is apparent from all of the above that most CSOs simply have not prioritised advocacy on educational issues and themes. This is, however, not peculiar to education alone. Topical issues such as good governance, human rights and accountability have not been properly addressed before. One can blame this on lack of capacity of CSOs to undertake advocacy exercise on the one hand, and lack of resources to effectuate any meaningful work on advocacy, on the other. Equally worth noting is the over reliance of CSOs on donor funding of their projects rather than initiating internal resource generation mechanism. This has bred dependency and in the event donors cease to provide support, CSOs have nothing to fall back on.

Even though the Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) has been active in advocacy work, it has not been very active in education advocacy. The Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU) on its part has been active in advocating mainly on issues relating to conditions of service for teachers (their constituents) but very limited, if any, on education advocacy. Peoples Educational Association (PEA) and PADECO have been active over the years in doing work on adult education and creating awareness in communities around the country about but not much has been achieved. PEA has worked with organisations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and a few others in the design of non-formal primary education in Sierra Leone.

Apart from the above mentioned exercises by the various organizations, there is actually no vibrant coalition of CSOs to advocate on educational issues in Sierra Leone. There is clearly the need to build the capacity of civil society to advocate for better access to education. Because of the high turn-over rate in most CSOs, their advocacy capacities are not stable. Staff members often leave after many investments have been put into building their capacities. CSOs in Sierra Leone must therefore work closely with other key actors like the Global Movement for Children (GMC), Education for All (EFA) and UNICEF to build and strengthen capacities of their members.

FAWE and PLAN International have been very active around the country in raising awareness within communities on the importance of creating equal access for girls and boys to primary school education. Talking Drums Studios (TDS) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) have also sponsored many radio and

⁴ Paper presented by the Quality Education Coalition comprising Talking Drums Studio, Sierra Leone Teachers Union and Anti Corruption Commission to the Parliamentary sub-committee on Education.

television programmes geared towards creating this awareness. There is need for an intensification of these programmes if the much anticipated goals are to be achieved.

Given that Civil Society has been deliberately weakened and suffocated by successive governments in Sierra Leone, one needs to lower the bar in assessing their activities in the domain of advocacy. In fact advocacy work of Sierra Leone Civil Society has been largely sporadic and haphazard in nature. A number of limitations and inadequacies not to mention capacity gaps such as inadequate funds, organizational capacity and programmatic needs have served as bottle necks in the operationalization of CSOs.

It is, therefore, worth noting that after 4 years of CEF Project, CSOs advocacy work in education is gradually growing and gaining momentum. The EFASL Secretariat has been established and is up and running, while the EFASL Coalition has been restructured to effectively engage in policy and advocacy work in education. The Coalition's collaboration with other development partners in the Education Sector Plan Review for Basic Education in order to "adjust to changing needs as well as be informed by new knowledge and advances" is a commendable step in the right direction.

CEF activities should, therefore, focus on building the capacity of civil society groups and communities through training coupled with the provision of the requisite logistics and financial resources; the establishment of appropriate structures for advocacy; the development of viable advocacy programmes and campaigns around the network; supporting the creation of viable coalitions for advocacy and establishing appropriate networks for advocacy at all levels of society.

Chapter Three

General Findings

3.1 Presentation of Findings

The following representation of various stakeholders organisations involved in the implementation of the Commonwealth Education Fund was targeted for the survey.

Research instruments such as questionnaires, focus group discussion guide, check list interview schedules were administered to these respondents at different times, occasions and places to solicit information from them.

1. Mr. Moray Fofanah – Standard Chartered Bank S/L Ltd
2. Mr. Abdul Rashid – Search for Common Grounds
3. Mr. Patrick Zombo – EFASL National Coordinator
4. Mr. Festus Minnah – Civil Society Movement of S/Leone
5. Mr. Nelson Williams - EFA Coordinator, Ministry of Education
6. Mr. Reginald King – Basic Education Division, Ministry of Education
7. Ms. Mary J. Coker – Bo District Education Network
8. Mr. Richard Thorley – Bombali District Education Network
9. Mr. Moses O. Kamara – Freetown/Western Area
10. Mr. Augustine G. Karim – Focal Person for the Western Area EFA-SL Coalition
11. Mr. Edmond J. Alpha – Kailahun District Education Network
12. Mr. Augustine M. Kambo – Freetown, Western Area
13. Mr. Davidson Kuyateh – Secretary General, S/Leone Teacher Union
14. Mr. Jonathan Saffa – CEF Coordinator, AAI-SL
15. Mr. Sam Bangura – Former Education Coordinator AAI-SL
16. Mr. Peter O. Koroma – Partners in Adult Education Coordination Office (PADECO)
17. Mr. Patrick Sandi – Bo District Education Network
18. Mr. Saffa Lahai – Kailahun District Education Network
19. Mr. Michael Bangura – Bombali District Education Network
20. Ms. Tigidankay Willie – FAWE, Western Area Branch
21. Mr. Patrick B. Brown – President, Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools

22. Ms. Vamboi – Chief Social Development Officer, Ministry of Social Welfare,
Gender and Children’s Affairs
23. Mr. Edward Juma Abu – Children Associate with War (CAW)
24. Mr. Mambu Massaquoi – Kailahun District Education network

Responses to research instruments by EFASL Coalition/partners/Project Management Committee members and other stakeholders

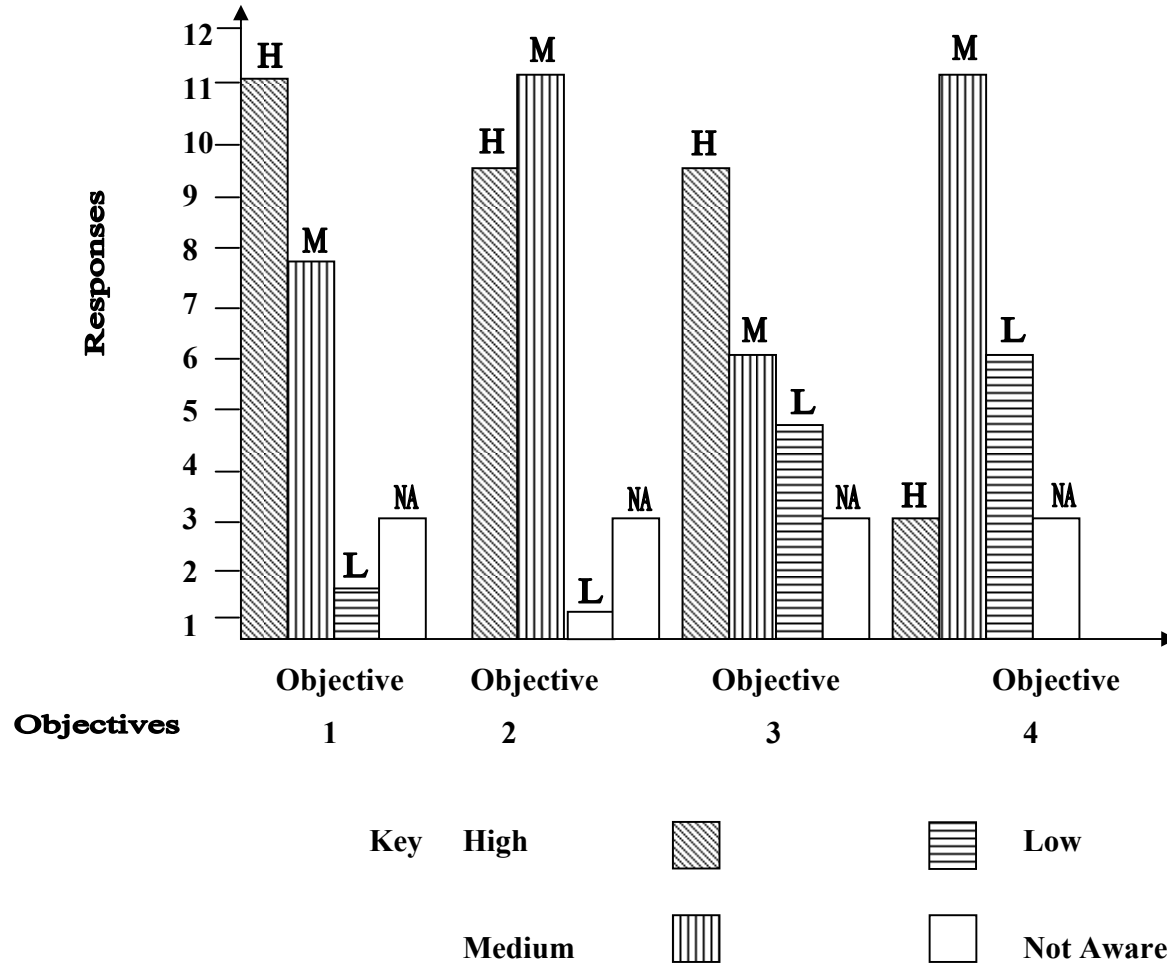
No.	Name	Sex	1 Strengthening civil society	2 Supporting local communities to monitor spending on education both at local and national levels	3 Supporting the Dev. of innovative approaches to educating the most vulnerable children, especially girls in a way that influence a wider policy and practice	4 Inter-Agency collaboration and internal functioning of the CEF
1.	Moray Fofanah	M	M	M	L	M
2.	Abdul Rashid	M	L	M	L	M
3.	Patrick Zombo	M	H	H	H	M
4.	Festus Minah	M	M	H	M	M
5.	Nelson Williams	M	M	M	H	L
6.	Reginald King	M	M	M	H	L
7.	Mary G. Coker	F	H	M	M	L
8.	Richard Tholley	M	H	H	L	M
9.	Moses O. Kamara	M	H	H	M	L
10.	Augustine G. Karim	M	M	H	H	H
11.	Edmond J. Alpha	M	M	M	M	M
12.	Augustine M. Kargbo	M				

13.	Davidson Kuyeteh	M	H	M	M	L
14.	Jonathan Saffa	M	H	H	H	H
15.	Sam Bangura	M	M	M	L	M
16.	Peter O. Kamara	M	H	M	L	M
17.	Patrick Sandi	M	H	H	H	M
18.	Saffa Lahai	M	H	H	H	M
19.	Michael Bangura	M	H	H	H	L
20.	Tigidankay Willie	F	NA	NA	NA	NA
21.	Patrick K. Brown	M	NA	NA	NA	NA
22.	Ms. Vamboi	F	NA	NA	NA	NA
23.	Edward J. Abu	M	H	M	H	H
24.	Paul Massaquoi	M	M	M	M	M
	<u>Rating of responses</u> H = High		M = Medium	L = Low	Na – Not Aware	

Percentages of responses to CEF End Project Evaluation core Objectives

Core Objectives	No. of responses	H – High		M – Medium		L - Low		NA – NOT AWARE	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strengthening civil society	24	11	45.8	8	33.3	1	4.2	3	12.5
Supporting local communities to monitor spending on education both at local and national levels	24	9	37.5	11	45.8	0	0	3	12.5
Supporting the development of innovative approaches to education the most vulnerable children (especially the girls) in a way that influence a wider policy and practice	24	9	37.5	6	25	5	20.8	3	12.5
Inter-Agency collaboration and internal functioning of the CEF	24	3	12.5	11	45.8	6	25	3	12.5

A Bar Chart illustrating the various responses



Box1: The Value of an educated girl child

CEF project has raised our awareness on girl child education. Before now, we use to prefer our sons to our daughters. Because of poverty, we allow our daughters to enter into early marriages and retain our sons in schools. Most of these sons never did well and some are basically eking out their living in urban towns and hardly visit home. This is unlike educated daughters. They are always in contacts with their parents. The daughters usually visit home when their parents are sick, when there is funeral and during vacations. It is important that we focus our spending on educating our girl child. For our boys, we may only do so for ladies of other parents.

A female participant, FGD, Njaluahun Village, Kailahun District

3.2 Analysis of responses

Responses of the various EFASL coalition/networks/PMC members and stakeholders indicate that out of a total of 24 respondents in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the CFE in strengthening civil society organisation in Sierra Leone that could play the advocacy role for more funding by government to be directed to the education sector, 11 rated it as high, which is 45.8%; 8 as medium, which is 33.3%, 1 as low, which is 4.2% and 3, which is 12.5% said they were not aware of the project.

On the issue of support of CEF to local communities to monitor spending on education both at local and national levels of 9 respondents rated it as high, which is 37.5%; 11 as medium, which is 45.8%; and 3, which is 12.5% said they were not aware of the project.

About CEF support to the development of innovation approach to educating the most marginalised children (especially girls and the most vulnerable) in a way that influence a wider policy and practice, 9, which is 37.5% rated it as high; 6, which is 25% rated it as medium; 5, which is 20.8% rated it as low; and 3, which is 12.5% opined they were not aware of the project.

Responses for the inter-agency collaboration and internal functioning of the CEF, 3, which is 12.5%, rated it as high; 11, which is 45.8% as medium; 6, which is 25% as low and 3, which is 12.5% revealed that they were not aware of the project.

3.3 Project Relevance

The CEF project is very consistent with the overall government national priority as set out in the Ten-Year Education Sector Plan, National Education Policy and the PRSP, which aims at securing education that is relevant and of good quality. The CEF Project is also guided by the overall “Rights to End Poverty Strategic Plan”. The guiding principles for the project covering partnership, inter-agency collaboration and holistic and systematic approach are pertinent and appropriate.

The project, without doubt, is relevant because civil society and other education stakeholders have refocused their vision and attention more on advocacy interventions and much less on service delivery. The increased awareness to educate the girl child and other vulnerable groups in the country, which has been a priority of the government, cannot be overstated. In the North and Eastern regions, the girl child education scheme has been funded by the government.

3.4 Project Effectiveness

From focus group discussions with coalition and network members, a representative from Freetown stated that school enrolment of the Girl Child has been on the increase since the end of the civil strife in 2002 mainly through advocacy work of the coalition although retention of same remains a challenge.⁵

Although it may be too early to conclude, the setting up of the CSEF as a sustainability model/plan have not yet been fully internalized in the communities. More capacity building workshops and trainings and awareness creation seminars need to be put in place to allow communities to internalize the plan.

The government is prohibited to increase salaries for teachers against rising cost of living; employ more trained and qualified teachers; meet the target of pupil-teacher ratio (40 pupils to 1 teacher); and, therefore, cannot retain the available trained and qualified teachers in schools. This has a debilitating effect on achieving EFA objectives and the MDGs.

Sensitization of the girl child education in all four regions of the country was appropriate especially for the Northern region where the enrolment of the girl child has been lower.

The EFASL coalition established functional networks. The networks have undertaken projects such as the Girl Child Education Survey carried out in the Kailahun district, training in budget tracking and monitoring in the Western Area, and the training of School Management Committees in the Bo districts. However, the capacity building of partners on advocacy planning and implementation was favourable but not sustainable because of limited time and other resources.

⁵ This revelation came from the Mr. Moses O. Kamara of the Freetown Network during the focus group discussion, July 20, 2008

The objectives of the CEF are gradually gaining wider publicity among civil society groups, the corporate sector, NGOs through discussions in different forums.⁶ Some modicum of corporate sector interest has been generated for the CEF. This gain has to be taken forward

It was discovered from the findings that the knowledge-base of members of civil society is highly unfocussed and shallow to champion advocacy on education. This is particularly true with civil society engagement with International Financial Institutions and donor countries. Their capacity has to be sharpened and strengthened if external policies negating EFA objectives are to be challenged.

According to the current CEF Coordinator at AAI, the effort of the EFASL has ensured that the voices of the people have not only been echoed but also their vision on education especially that of the girl child and marginalized groups have been awakened and stimulated to reflect on some of the objectives of EFA.

It came out clearly in a workshop organized by AAI for civil society that civil society has used advocacy and lobbying to engage government to account for education funding in the country. For instance, CS has met with the Parliamentary Committee on education and District Oversight Committees to influence budgetary allocations. To actualize the effectiveness of members, the coalition has established the Organizational Skills and Capacity Coordinating with paid staff. It can, however, be hastily pointed out that this aspect needs to be further strengthened as gaps continue to exist, and funding is always a problem.

3.5 Project Impact

A significant finding of the study suggests that EFA achieved more in strengthening civil society and supporting local communities to monitor spending on education than on supporting the development of innovative approaches to educating the most marginalized children and inter-agency collaboration and internal functioning.

Parents, pupils and ordinary community members were satisfied with some of the activities of the CEF funded project although some demanded demonstrative advocacy

The project impact, without doubt, has been encouraging given the institutional and sometimes structural problems facing EFASL Coalition. Coalitions and networks have been established countrywide. They are serving as catalysts in disseminating relevant education information to the people, increasing people's awareness and helping to involve the local people in education advocacy. Capacity building of major education stakeholders on budget tracking, allocation and monitoring has been ongoing, and has greatly impacted on CEF objectives.

The coalition has led to the development of more EFA plans emphasizing on gender equity, increase in dialogue on the issue of the girl child and marginalized children's'

⁶ Mr. Murray Fofana of the Sierra Leone Chartered Bank told me in an interview held with him on July 20, 2008.

access to education and drawn government's attention to the constraints in achieving education for all.⁷

In terms of time and resources, AAI has prudently managed the initial fund of \$150,000 disbursed to establish EFASL and to undertake certain activities. The establishment of the EFASL secretariat with paid staff, the formation of coalitions and networks countrywide, the resourceful seminars and workshops conducted in the last five years and many other activities have positively impacted on education advocacy in Sierra Leone.

It was revealed during an interview with the EFA Coordinator at the Ministry of Education that there is need to design specific education modules to meet the needs of poor disadvantaged people especially overgrown children that dropped out of school during the decade long civil war. GoSL in collaboration with donor partners have taken bold strides to address this unfortunate situation that has resulted in the increase in literacy rate in the country.⁸ For example, the Complementary Rapid Education Program established in 2002 reveal that the Sierra Leone Girl Child Project has been providing books and uniforms for the use of girls in schools. The project has not only increased the enrolment and retention of the girl child and marginalized children but it has also provided much-needed relief to poor parents who find it difficult to meet the cost of schooling.

3.6 Project Sustainability

One of the key findings from discussions with Ministry of Education officials is that a very close working relationship exists between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and EFASL, which is critical to the realization of EFA objectives. The complimentary working relationship has engendered debates and stimulated fruitful engagements between civil society and the government on matters bordering on education.

The establishment and formation of networks countrywide indicate that EFASL Coalition is determined to indigenize and make CEF locally owned. Local ownership of any project is the first step toward sustainability. EFASL is also building the capacity of stakeholders at all levels to enhance their capabilities to manage CEF activities at different levels of interaction. Workshops, seminars and training programmes have characterized CEF capacity building agenda for its stakeholders.

Additionally, civil society groups engaged in education activities have been involved not only as conduits for disseminating information but also in the planning and implementation of CEF activities countrywide. This has increased confidence building and partnership between CEF and CSOs.

However, external funding remains a nightmare. Internal revenue generation to fund education advocacy and projects is expected to be inadequate if ever available. As a matter of fact, advocacy to establish the Civil Society Education Fund in the aftermath of

⁷ Interview with Sam Bangura, former Education Coordinator at AAI, August 25, 2008.

⁸ Interview with Mr. Nelson Williams, EFA Coordinator at the Ministry of Education, July, 3, 2008.

CEF remains a far dream. An initial external funding for CSEF-SL is needed not only to jump start the new initiative but also to sustain those activities that are ongoing.

The EFA Coordinator in the Ministry of Education opined that the GoSL is determined to reduce illiteracy rate in the country. To actualize this, vocational and technical training centres have been established with the support of the vocational and technical division of the Ministry of Education. According to him, these are approaches meant to encourage the education of girls and marginalized youths in the country. This encourages the people to take up education as a right and means of livelihood.

3.6 Project Monitoring and Evaluation

It came out clearly in the focus group discussions that five networks have been established in the south, north and eastern parts of the country. The national EFASL coalition has worked out plans on how to effectively monitor and engage these regional networks on campaign and advocacy issues. The EFASL coalition will link with the District networks and monitor their activities through:

- Registration of networks with the national EFA coalition
- Networks identify issues or campaigns in their localities and feed back into EFA for harmonised action
- Periodic National meetings and review of programmes or activities
- Regular updating on activity plan on both sides.
- Organising dialogue forums
- Peer review and reflection processes
- Training to build the capacity of networks
- Invitation of networks to national project planning by EFASL coalition. This will avoid duplication and open room for dialogue between the coalition and networks.
- Sharing of reports.

The training of School Management Committees (SMCs) to play oversight, monitoring and evaluation roles is quite revealing and worthy of note. The SMCs are not only monitoring resources from the central government but also have the responsibility to monitor and, in most cases, evaluate the performance of teachers through regular visits, meetings and during extra-curricular activities. Equally significant, awareness creation has engendered community members to be vigilant about the education of the girl child and other vulnerable groups.

Chapter Four

4.1 Challenges

Financial, logistical and technical resources are required to develop and strengthen the capacity of the coalition and networks to attract grants to guarantee sustainability when the CEF funding would have ended

A ground-up or people-centred approach is required to involve people at the networks and local levels so that their voices and concerns are taken into consideration when policies are crafted at the top

The Ministry of Finance Public Expenditure Tracking System (PETS), which uses an index called Integrity Index to measure the effectiveness of service delivery from government sources to local communities, faces an enormous challenge. It is mooted that funding for the project is yet to be received to carry out the project

Expectations of some stakeholders such as the SLTU are very high in terms of putting the Union in total control of CEF resources and the project because of its numerical strength and position in the EFASL Coalition and education sector. This has and continues to invariably affect the commitment of its members toward educational advocacy.

The macro economic policies/conditionalities/benchmarks of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and donor countries gravely constrain government spending on education particularly in the recruitment of trained and qualified teachers (including female teachers) and salary increase to meet the hiking cost of living. These policies have a negative impact on the achievement of CEF objectives and those of the MDGs of education for all by 2015

The challenge highlighted in the implementation of the project to strengthen civil society AAISL has not fully succeeded to follow through on the Annual Action Plan. The lead organization has not fully engaged networks in tailoring work plans. This has augured ill for a coordinated action

Although the project has registered some successes such as the restructuring of the management and administrative structures of the EFASL Coalition and the establishment of networks and networking activities at the local level and the creation of regional links with ANCEFA and GCE, collaboration with INGOs implementing EFA objectives, there appear to be a gap when one measures the project objectives against the achievements.

The reasons for this can be summed up as follows:

- Ineffective monitoring and supervision of projects and programs
- Some of the organizations targeted lacked the technical and strategic capacities to effectively engage in education advocacy.
- Training provided for advocacy, budget literacy and advocacy planning and implementation project planning were short in terms of duration and not well focussed probably because of inadequate funds to cover all four regions of the country.

The coalition continues to have a difficult time to influence the GoSL to pay subsidies to schools on time. By implication, the utilization of these funds were not been effectively monitored. For example, First term's subsidies were paid during the second term that gave scope to school administrators to use the fund otherwise instead of the intended purpose. The late payment of subsidies also triggered an inflation in school charges levied by school administrators. The coalition was unable to address this anomaly that clearly negated the objectives of EFA.

Networks in the Northern Region were distinctly small in size and, therefore, lacked the capacity to effectively engage policy makers on advocacy, budget tracking, and monitoring and influencing education policy. Broadly, it was discovered that the activities of networks were uncoordinated. They hardly shared experiences, learning processes and ideas that could have helped in actualizing the EFA objectives in the country. This deficiency enhanced by lack of inadequate information culminated in the setback to achieve Education for All by 2005.

It was discovered that instead of education stakeholders establishing networks in the districts, it was the education coordinator at AAI that helped establish networks. These were sometimes done without the input and knowledge of focal persons. For instance, networks have been established in the Bombali district without the knowledge of the focal person. This has not been the case in other regions especially in the Western Area.

Complaints from members of the Focus Group reveal that networks are hardly accorded the upper-hand to take full control of their budgets. This has resulted in under-funding and, therefore, discontinuity of projects. For instance, the training of SMCs in the Bo district was under funded that left a swath of other stakeholders not receiving training.

4.2 Lessons Learned

Lessons learned from the evaluation can be summarised as follows:

The EFASL Coalition is not well coordinated and sufficiently functional (very few staff to cover the entire country), while the networks are not adequately capacitated to undertake research on advocacy themes identified in the advocacy consultation report. Members often rely on the coalition for implementation rather than coordination.

The disbursement of funds from AAISL to networks while working to restructure the management and administrative structure of the EFASL Coalition plague the effective implementation of projects at the initial stage. Additionally, the issue of who controls the funds have preoccupied the networks and education stakeholders to a point that they have lost focus on vital advocacy issues such as the preparation of activity plans that would be in consonance with CEF criteria

The PMC needs to have regular and well-coordinated meetings to address burning operational issues. It is also essential for it to be gender sensitive

Involvement of partners at all levels of project implementation creates a sense of ownership and gives greater voice to the CEF course

It was learned that partnership provides space for shared learning and information

Budget tracking remains critical and until CS has access to information on the quantum of funds allocated by government, timing for distribution to various schools and the controllers of the funds are known, accountability will be compromised.

4.3 Recommendations

Adequate financial, logistical and technical support is required to enable networks and the coalition to undertake projects such as budget tracking, girl child surveys, training of SMCs and to build a sustainable civil society with the objective to pursue EFA objectives and MDGs. Provision of funds is therefore recommended for training of more SMCs at the local level so that they could effectively debate educational issues that affect their local schools cannot be overstated.

The CEF coalition and network members need to be restructured and officially register them for legitimacy and authenticity. They should be further strengthened in light of the growing demands on them to monitor and track government funding on education. Capacity development to attract grants and donor funds in proposal writing is also required for key coalition and network personnel.

It is recommended that a national civil society education fund be established in Sierra Leone with structures to provide funding for education advocacy. There is need to fund the CSEF so as to allow it to operate independently and transparently. Community mobilisation, mass education and sensitisation on the process should be continuous to deepen the understanding of community members and to make way for ownership of the entire process.

In the same vein, EFASL secretariat needs to be fully capacitated to make it more effective and less reliant on AAISL, the lead agency. There is therefore need to for an independent operational well staffed secretariat to work with its counterpart at the Ministry of Education, Youths and Sports. The collaboration will give civil society more credibility and also help the networks to monitor educational expenditure and ensure education advocacy at national and local levels. Training is key in building the capacity of personnel of the secretariat. It is recommended that for the training to have a nation-wide impact, specialist trainers in particular fields need to be employed.

In addition to the above recommendations, there is need for more coordination among members of the Project Management Committee in terms of meeting regularly, increased interaction, brainstorming of issues and sharing concerns. More involvement and commitment is required of members if this committee is to be functional for the successful implementation of CSEF and monitoring of coalition activities.

It is recommended to invest in the EFASL structure for the coalition to stay alive. What AAISL encourages is the establishment of an operations committee based on voluntarism with no administrative cost. Because coalitions are loose associations, incentives become the driving force behind exceptional performance.

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**Appendix
Annex 1**

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. In hindsight, do you consider CEF on track with regards to its objectives?
2. What strategies has CEF employed in achieving its objectives/
3. How accountable has the CEF and PMC been to the networks/coalitions/local communities?
4. How have these achievements been shared?
5. What do you consider to be the failures in terms of project objectives?
6. What lessons have been learnt from the achievements/challenges and failures?
7. Could it have been done differently?
8. Has funding been a problem?
9. Has CEF received funding from Government?
10. How have you been tracking and monitoring government funding on education?
11. How can you describe your relationship with CSOs with regards to CEF objectives?
12. Has there been local input in terms of resource mobilization and monitoring of funds?
13. What strategies have been put in place to sustain CEF project when CEF funding expires?
14. What have been the challenges?
15. What is your impression about the PMC?
16. How do you respond to the negative perspectives especially from stakeholders?

**Annex 2
QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. How can you measure the effectiveness of the CEF in strengthening your organizations capacity?
 - A. .High
 - B. .Low
 - C. .Medium

2. Was the CEF useful in creating alliances and network between your organization and others?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

3. Were you working in partnership?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

4. What kind of support did you get from the CEF?
 - A. Monetary

- B. Material
- C. Training
- D. Others (specify)

5. Was the CEF of any other benefit to the coalition?

- A. Yes
- B. No

6. If yes, what benefit did you derive as an organization from both the CEF and the coalition?

- A. Advocacy in education for all
- B. Sensitization on the MDGs
- C. Awareness raising on the EFA and MDGs close collaboration with other members of the coalition

7. Did you involve grassroots people in the project?

- A. Yes
- B. No

8. If yes, how?

- A. Actively
- B. Passively

If no, why?

- A. Lack of enough funds
- B. Lack of technical skills
- C. There was no need

9. If the answer to No.8 is (a), how did you actively involve them?

- A. At the planning stage
- B. At the implementation stage
- C. At the monitoring stage
- D. At both planning and implementation stages

10. Was there emphasis on gender equality in decision making?

- A. Yes
- B. No

11. Did you stress on the issue of woman and girls in the advocacy for Education for All?

- A. Yes
- B. No

12. If no, why?

- A. They are not always prepared to come forward
- B. Sierra Leone has a low turnout of woman and girls for every program
- C. There are traditional constraints
- D. Others (Specify)

13. What is the nature of the coalition?

- A. Broad-based
- B. Limited

14. If broad based, how?

- A. Young boys and girls only
- B. Boys, girls, women and men

15. Where was the main funds acquired for the coalition?

- A. CEF
- B. Subscriptions
- C. Others (specify)

16. Can the coalition be sustained without CEF?

- A. Yes
- B. No

17. If yes, How?

- A. Community contribution
- B. Inter-agency subscription
- C. Funding from others donors

18. How has the coalition brought about changes in practices, effectiveness and increased the capacity of civil society to engage in policy debates and development of advocacy campaigns?

- A. Fairly
- B. Well
- C. Very well

19. Has the coalition led to increased awareness of civil society organizations to engage government on national policy issues?

- A Yes
- B No

20. What has the coalition led to as bench mark?

- A. Increased dialogue on the issue of access to education of girls and marginalized children
- B. More EFA plans have been developed with emphasis on gender equality
- C. The capacity of government has been increased to address the constraints in achieving education for all

21. What is the significance of CEF funding for the alliance?

- A. Provision of resources
- B. Facilitation
- C. Provided opportunity for networking

- D. Provided knowledge and information on EFA and MDGs
- E. Knowledge sharing

22. Were there difficulties or challenges in the implementation of the project? What are they?

23. What are the lessons learnt?

Section 11

1. Are the local communities with which you worked been able to monitor spending on education?

- A. Yes
- B. No

2. If yes, How?

- A. Through budget research
- B. Through budget analysis
- C. Through advocacy
- D. Through budget tracking
- E. Others (specify)

3. Is there any available data on the budget and expenditure at national, district or local levels?

- A. Locally
- B. Nationally

13. How sustainable is the CEF project in achieving EFA objectives?

14. Would you have done it differently?

Section C.

A. What approaches did you adopt to encourage the education of girls and the marginalized/vulnerable youths?

B. What did you achieve from this?

- a. Change in government policy to ward the education of girls and vulnerable youths
- b. Improved access to primary school enrolment for girls and the marginalized

E. What are the challenges encountered in supporting the approaches to educating marginalized children?

F. How many NGOs are represented on the CEF management committee?

Name of NGO Number of people

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

5

6

E. How often does the CEF Management committee meet?

- A Daily
- B Weekly
- C Bi-weekly
- D Monthly
- E Others (specify)

F. How are decisions arrived at in CEF Committee meeting?

- A. Simple majority
- B. Consensus
- C. Pronouncement

G Are the members of the coalition involved in

- A. Budget planning and reporting
- B. Key decision making process
- C. Providing key information and learning
- D. All stages of program design and implementation
- E. Assessment of progress and change

H What are the challenges in the inter-agency collaboration and internal functioning?