

## **STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF PARENTS TEACHING ASSOCIATIONS IN EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

The Steering Committee in developing the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) strategy in Nigeria identified the National Parents Association of Nigeria (NAPTAN) as one of its strategic partners in the effort to ensuring that civil society supports government to ensure that all Nigerian children have access to good quality education by 2015. This is based on the realization that in the delivery of quality education there are four principal actors; the State as the duty bearer, the child as the right holder, the parent as the first educator and the teacher as the professional instructor. It is common knowledge that for rights to be enforced there is the need for advocacy or demand for the implementation of such rights. The Parents Teachers Association has been known to be one of the earliest civil associations advocating for the rights of children, especially within the school environment.

According to the Unites States' National Parents Teachers Association mission and purpose statement, the PTA seeks to promote the welfare of the child and youth at home, in the school and in the community. The PTA has also sough to raise the standard of life at home, secure laws that protect children and youth, bridge the gap between home and school, and to build and develop efforts connecting educators with the public in securing the highest standards in mental and physical, social and spiritual education. The Commonwealth Education Fund therefore organized a round table with the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) of Nigeria to determine the role of the PTA in the Education for All Planning process. The Round Table which took place at the National Council of Colleges of Education Hall, Abuja on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2004 had in attendance representatives of the Central PTA from the six geo-political zones, representatives of government from the Federal Ministry of Education, International Development Partners and local Non-Governmental Organizations.



The meeting identified capacity gap and finance as the major constraints facing the PTA in Nigeria and acknowledged that the current engagement of the PTA in the provision of education service was only a stop-gap measure since the

government had failed in its responsibilities to deliver education especially at the local government areas. They argued that in most local government areas the impact of government is not felt and that the only schools available have been provided by the PTA through levies and other self help projects. It was agreed that there is the need to press on government to bring educational services to the communities.

The meeting rose with the understanding that the responsibility of education delivery was that of the government and that the PTA's role was supportive, specifically one of ensuring the welfare of the child within the school environment and the home. In carrying out its role the PTA will need to develop its capacity in the area of policy and advocacy, it will need to increase its understanding of the Education for All framework and other education standards to be able to partner with the government. The CEF has promised support to the PTA in the area of capacity building to enable the PTA lobby for policies that will increase access to basic education for all Nigerian children especially girls and the poor and marginalized. The CEF will be meeting with the leadership of the PTA to work out terms of engagement between the CEF in Nigeria and the PTA.

### **Faith Based and Religious Organization contributing to the EFA process in Nigeria**

With the clarion call of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) indicating a role for all stakeholders in the process, the Dakar framework recognizing a broad role for civil society and the global commitment to achieving Education For All through the Millennium Development Goals, it became important to explore the debate about the role of faith-based organizations in delivering the country's mission of '...Free and compulsory, basic education for all...'

Religious and Faith Based Organizations have contributed to the transformation of the educational system in Nigeria. In addition to the traditional religions which emphasized teaching the individual how to preserve the cultural norms and values, the Islamic education emphasized the Koran in Arabic while the European mission introduced western education towards the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Their mission was to introduce the Christian religion through schools and the products of these schools then became catechists and support staff to the colonialists. Today the imbalance in the level of education between the North and South of Nigeria can be attributed to the level of acceptance of western type education. It is imperative at this stage in our national development to begin to map out who the players in education are and what might be their roles in contributing to the achievement of EFA.

In the light of this, The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) organized a Round Table on the Role of Faith Based Organizations (FBO) in achieving EFA. The objectives were to create an opportunity for faith based and religious

organizations to constructively review their involvement in the delivery of education in Nigeria over the years and assess the achievements and challenges. The round table was to also explore opportunities for faith-based interventions in basic education and to develop strategies and approaches to support the delivery of basic education in Nigeria. The event, which took place on the 30th of June 2004 in Abuja, was attended by a total of 31 participants representing faith-based organizations, religious organizations, civil society organizations and International Development Partners.



Participants at the event recounted not only how religious organizations have been in the fore front of the provision of good quality education in Nigeria but also that government supported their efforts through the grant in aid scheme. They however regretted the take over of schools from religious organizations as government's intervention in trying to bridge the gap in education between the Northern and Southern states. Participants not only called on government to return such schools but to also support religious organizations with grants to run religious based schools arguing that religious organizations are more prudent in the use of resources and also deliver better quality education with moral instructions. Participant therefore warned that unless government encouraged the teaching of moral instruction based on the faith of the pupils along with standard curriculum, parents were not likely to continue to send their children to school without sound moral instructions.

The meeting rose with the agreement that the leader of the two main religions in Nigeria (Islam and Christianity) will meet to deliberate and iron out differences before presenting a common position to the government. The Commonwealth Education Fund will be facilitating the meeting of religious leaders and will also support the submission of finding to the government.

## **Nigeria Participated in the Global Week of Action 2004**

Part of the Global Action Week activities in April 2004 was marked at the National level by the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) partnering with government and other International Development Partners with support from the Commonwealth Education Fund. Three main activities were carried out at the national level and these included; the *Missing Out Map* which involved children drawing a map of their community and locating house holds with children out of school, the second activity was *Politicians Go back to School* where some legislators and Ministers went back to schools within their constituencies to see things for themselves and the third event was the *Big Lobby* which saw children go to the National Assembly to advocate for children who are out of school.

Perhaps the most important of the week's activities was the *big lobby* for children by children. This event took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2004 and it saw Nigerian Children embark on a massive Lobby for out of school children. At the National Level, the activity was organized by AAIN working closely with the Federal Ministry of Education, UNESCO CSACEFA supported by the Commonwealth Education Fund. No fewer than 50 schoolchildren, 20 out of school children from local communities and some concerned parents visited the National Assembly for a round table dialogue with Legislators and Policy Makers at the National Level. The politicians' panel was chaired by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

As a result of pressure put on politicians during the week the Universal Basic Education Bill which guarantees free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children has been passed into Law. The Chair of the House of Representatives Committee on Education, Dr. Garba Matazu, promised that the legislature will partner with civil society to monitor government spending on education in 2004. Dr. Matazu also promised that there will be a national summit on education where all stakeholders including children will gather to discuss education.

The *Politicians Go Back to School* activity was also a great success as the then Minister of State for Women Affairs and Youth Development Princes Funke Adedoyin, the Minister of State for Education Hajiya Binta Musa Ibrahim, the Deputy House Committee Chairman on Education and the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Nomadic Education Dr. Nafisa Mohammed all went to different schools to take lessons and see for themselves the current situation. The outcome is that politicians themselves have carried the issue forward calling on government and their counterparts to put more funding into education and to provide free basic education which will create access to education for all Nigerian children.

In addition to the activities at the National level, 34 of the 36 states in Nigeria also took part in the activities of the Week of Action at the state and community levels.

As a result of the activities of the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) members at the state level, the Anambra State House of Assembly has now adopted the Child's Right Act of the Federal Government. In many States, school children went to their State Houses of Assembly to dialogue with their elected officials.

The Global Week of Action is an annual event organized by the Global Campaign for Education and is a global response to the Education problems around the world. NGOs, civil movements and unions from 164 countries participate in a massive mobilization to build pressure on Governments and the international community to provide the necessary resources and political leadership to achieve the education related Millennium Development Goals and Dakar goals by of 2015.

### **Editorial**

Ahead of the Education for All (EFA) Forum in Dakar 2000 the government in Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in 1999. In Dakar it was agreed that the responsibility for the delivery of education was that of the national government however there was a clear role for civil society to partner with national governments in the delivery of education. Following Dakar therefore, a unit was created in the Federal Ministry of Education to coordinate the Education For All process and a Coordinator was appointed from civil society to lead the EFA process. She has since commenced work with the constitution of EFA forum both at the national and state levels. In May 2004 the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Bill was also passed into law and a UBE Commission established as the vehicle for the delivery of EFA. The UBE Act guarantees free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children.

In spite of all of these efforts by the Federal government to ensure that Education for All is achieved in Nigeria there are still huge gaps between policy statements and their implementation. For instance how can we enforce the provisions in the UBE Act when a parent fails to send his/her child to school because the school is a long distance away from their home or when a parent takes the child to school and there are no classrooms, not enough teachers or teaching material? The answer to these questions may provide the reason for why some State Governments recently announced discriminatory fees for indigenes and non-indigenes in their states.

Discrimination in access to education was the bane of education delivery in most parts of the country. An attempt to centralize education and reduce the gap was made with the take over of religious schools, discontinuation of the grant in aid scheme and the introduction of the Universal Primary Education between 1966 and 1979. The Education For All Declaration of 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand and the reaffirmation of the declaration in 2000 in Dakar Senegal have called on all nations to eliminate all forms of discrimination in access to education in order to achieve EFA.

This edition of CEF Newsletter attempts to examine how Nigeria is working towards the attainment of EFA Goals and how far State Governments are buying into the Universal Basic Education programme of the Federal Government. The newsletter will look at how other partners and stakeholders are responding to the call for free and compulsory education for all Nigerians.

We wish you happy reading.

Dr. Nguyan S. Feese  
CEF Coordinator

### **Zamfara State Imposes Discriminatory School Fees**

The Commissioner for Education for Zamfara State, Alhaji Ibrahim Dammaliki recently announced that non indigenes residing in the state should bid free education farewell. Fees for non-indigenes for primary school have been put at N5000 for boys and N10,000 for girls in all-female school per term. Non-indigenes in boarding secondary schools are to pay N25,000 and N10,000 for day school. The question is what is the justification for paying fees and why the huge disparity even between non-indigene boys and girls? If the Zamfara State Government was up to speed with national and international debates on how to attain Education for All they would have known that there is a pressing need to ensure that girls enroll and complete primary education. It is being feared that Nigeria is one of the countries that may not achieve the Millennium Development Goal on attaining gender parity in primary school enrolment by 2005.

This Zamfara policy of discriminatory fees is clearly a violation of the provisions of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004. It is an attempt to reverse the gains made in the area of education delivery in Nigeria. CSACEFA therefore has a task to attack the trend before it spreads to other States of the Federation. As it stands Bauchi and Niger States have also announced school fees for non-indigenes in their States. Both Bauchi and Niger States charge fees even for indigenes just that non-indigenes are charged higher fees.

Contrary to the Zamfara, Bauchi and Niger States position, the Jigawa, Nassarawa and Yobe States are pursuing Education for All vigorously. The Permanent Secretary in the Yobe State Ministry of Education announced that children of school age are expected to obtain at least a junior secondary certificate following nine years of schooling. Alhaji Mohammed Samila said the state government would pay all examination fees, feed all students in all boarding schools, pay all outstanding teachers' salaries and provide housing for teachers in a bid to improve the quality of education delivery in Yobe State. In addition, Heads of institutions are now being giving imprest ranging from N50,000 to

N100,000 depending on the student population to run the their schools. This is a step in the right direction.

### **Civil Society Engagement with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**

The West African Sub-regional meeting of the African Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) was held in Dakar, Senegal on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2004. The meeting which had in attendance representatives of national coalitions on education from Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo deliberated on issues affecting the sub-region specifically mentioning poor governance leading to economic crisis, low school enrolment, the impact of HIV and AIDS and conflicts within the sub-region. Participants resolved that it was time for civil society to proactively engage with national governments, sub- regional and regional bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) to advocate for good governance and improved service delivery and pro-poor policies.

Countries at the sub-regional meeting recalled how four years after the World Education Forum in Dakar, millions of children among them West African children are still missing their right to education due to poverty, the impacts of HIV/AIDS and conflicts. In addition, very few West African Governments have developed a credible Action Plan for achieving Education for All (EFA) as indicated in the Dakar Framework of Action (DFA). According to the DFA a credible plan is one that is produced in a participatory and transparent manner with inputs from all stakeholders; civil society and the private sector.

Even those countries that have produced their EFA Plans are unable to implement for lack of resources meanwhile the DFA states that no country with credible plan should be allowed to suffer from lack of resources. In other words, the Education for All Forum in Dakar assigned responsibilities of the delivery of education to national governments, the responsibility of raising additional funds to achieve EFA to the International community and called on civil society to support government in the effort to ensure that Education for All is achieved by 2015. The guiding principle is one partnership amongst all the stakeholders; national governments, International Development Partners, the Private Sector and Civil Society.

As a first step towards engagement with sub-regional bodies; ECOWAS and regional structures like the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), representatives of the 10 national coalitions from West African Countries which met in Dakar, (Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo) wrote a letter to the Secretary General of

ECOWAS as part of the activities marking the 2004 Global Week of Action and requested the Secretary general to use his good office and request Presidents and Heads of States within the West African Sub-region to:

- Expedite action in developing National EFA Plans and commit themselves to its implementation
- Ensure compliance with the agreed regional target of 6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education, with at least 3% of the GDP for basic education
- Ensure that all hidden costs of education (user fees, PTAs subscriptions, development levy and others) are removed and education is free in the real sense
- Ensure that NEPAD Secretariat has a coherent EFA strategy and action plan based on partnerships between governments, donors and civil society to face all education issues.
- Ensure a clear and improved national budgetary allocation to education that reflects commitment to achievement the Education for All goals.

Participants then pledged their commitment to working with ECOWAS and ensuring the achievement of Education for All within the sub-region by 2015. The ANCEFA West African Sub-Regional Meeting was declared open by the Education Minister for Senegal Mr. M Sourang. He welcomed participants to Senegal and informed them that Governments in the Sub-region were taking the EFA process serious and indicated that a meeting of Education Ministers from the sub-region was going to take place in Ghana. The objective of the meeting he said was to share information on national plans in order to learn lessons and move the process forward. He pledged the commitment of Ministers to partner with civil society

The Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) is a network of 30 African national civil society coalitions operating in various sectors of Education for All (EFA) across Sub-Saharan Africa. ANCEFA was formed by 23 African civil society coalitions in April 2000, just after the World Education Forum in Dakar. ANCEFA exists to mobilize public opinion, address pertinent issues of concern, influence policy, and build sustainable partnerships in Africa and beyond for the achievement of EFA goals.

### **The Child's Right Act 2003 and the Right to Education**

The Child Rights Act 2003, a wholly indigenised Nigerian Statute, was passed into Law by the National Assembly in July 2003 and received the assent of The President of The Federal Republic of Nigeria that same year. The contents of this momentous piece of legislation are drawn substantially from the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the OAU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Although Nigeria had ratified the CRC since 1991, by the Constitution

of The Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, an international treaty has no municipal effect unless it is enacted into Law by our National Assembly. With the CRC, as several similar others, this domestication is yet to be effected by our Lawmakers.

It has been a long, drawn out battle to get the Child Rights Bill passed into Law. The first draft of the Act was prepared as a Decree by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the early 1990's and submitted to the Federal Military Government in 1994. A Compatibility Committee, comprising religious leaders, human rights activists, educationists and lawyers, was then established to consider its contents, to ensure that they conformed generally to the positive aspects of our religious, cultural and traditional values. The Committee submitted its Report with an amended Draft copy late in 1998. Efforts to get the Decree passed into Law were then overtaken by a series of political upheavals on the Nigerian landscape, and the contents of the Draft were finally dusted up and work began in earnest by stakeholders to ensure that the Bill was passed, late in the year 2000. The Federal Government presented the Bill to the National Assembly for its consideration early in the year 2002, but much to the consternation of many, it was stepped down by the august members in October 2002. The reasons given then were related to the seeming conflicts that arose by the inclusion of a few of the provisions, relating to religion, culture and tradition. A formidable team of interested groups led by Federal Government itself, including International Development Partners, The Human Rights Commission, civil society (rights activists, educationists and the media) and children rose in unison to address the concerns raised by the National Assembly, after which the Bill was re-presented in December of the same year, and finally passed in July 2003.

Although the Act has been passed by the National Assembly, its provisions do not apply nationwide, but only in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. This is because under the Nigerian Constitution, 'children' are an item on our residual legislative list, which issues are reserved for lawmaking at State level, alone. The Federal Legislature therefore does not have the power to pass a law governing the concerns of children that would apply at State or Local Government level. The different State Governments and their State Houses of Assembly are therefore now being lobbied to pass the Law in their own jurisdictions, with as little modification as possible.

Myriad problems abound on the African Continent, which adversely affect the majority of our teeming populace, as a direct consequence of poverty, disease and illiteracy. As in all developing countries, there is a keen contest for the distribution of the limited resources available, including the provision of adequate health care, qualitative education, food security and opportunities for skill acquisition and employment, shelter, basic infrastructure, etc; the prioritization of these needs are largely a matter of political expediency. Millions of Nigerian children, being of the more vulnerable, voiceless category, face especially extenuating problems of disadvantage, discrimination, abuse, harmful traditional practices and cultural beliefs and exploitation, which only serve to compound

their chances for basic survival and natural development, let alone their being enabled to achieve their fullest potential through quality education.

Part 11 (comprising Sections 3 to 20) deals essentially with the rights and responsibilities of the child and further entrenches certain constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights, including the rights to survival and development, to a name and identity, freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, thought, conscience and religion, to private and family life, movement, from discrimination, the right to dignity, leisure, recreation and cultural activities, health services, parental care, protection and maintenance and to **free, compulsory and universal primary education**. It is also Government's responsibility to encourage the child to attend and complete secondary education. The Act provides for the protection and assistance for children in especially difficult circumstances (refugees, special needs, etc) as well as guarantees for the unborn child its life, health and welfare. Emphasis is placed, in this section, on the responsibilities of the child to his or her family and society, as well as the responsibility of parents and guardians to children and their wards.

Mrs Maryam Uwais,  
Member CEF Steering Committee