

## **Response to the consultation on the EFA FTI's Global and Regional Activities programme (Global Campaign for Education)**

We are submitting this input in response to FTI's proposal for the launch of the new GRA. Our input is a cross-cutting response rather than on a particular thematic area. The Northern/INGO CSO constituency has made separate submissions on the themes.

GCE welcomes the proposal to incorporate this programme into the FTI activities. While we agree strongly that the focus of FTI funding should be on supporting the delivery of government-owned education sector plans, we are convinced that there is real added-value to be derived from FTI allocating a proportion of funds to this level of activity. We also welcome the specificity of the themes and concur that these are priority areas where a stronger knowledge base is needed.

GCE believes that policy change to achieve education goals is driven by political imperatives. Therefore, as well as ensuring that the knowledge base on the issues identified is robust, the GRA should be attentive to the political economy in which leverage for policy change can be achieved. Governments are the primary 'owners' and implementers of policy and resource allocation decisions, however their sphere of action is influenced by vested interests (eg urban elites) and by systemic weaknesses (eg weak fiduciary capacity at sub-national level). Therefore the GRA, in seeking to strengthen capacity, enhance understanding and improve knowledge and accountability should provide for activities that lie outside of the knowledge frame of reference. This implies extending its scope towards working with actors that can work within and influence political processes, and provide insights into the interaction between decision-making and implementation.

Civil society organisations are uniquely well-placed to help fulfil these functions. As well as influencing policy and budget decisions based on their grass-roots experience of education delivery, they are able to generate evidence on the efficiency and distribution of resources in the education sector, and how effectively political decisions are implemented in reality – whether 'actions follow words'. True accountability at national level depends on collecting and using such insights, in conjunction with mobilisation of popular concern. Such work is particularly valuable in the context of a donor-partner relationship which uses aid modalities such as budget support and sector budget support. Civil society can also play a role in holding donors accountable for aid effectiveness, for example by reporting on the impact of delays in disbursement on the school level.

We therefore propose that the GRA's eligible activities should explicitly recognise the unique role of civil society organisations in the development, implementation and monitoring of sustainable ESPs – not as service deliverers (unless sub-contracted to do so by government) but to play the part of 'watch-dog' on the basis of local knowledge and political awareness. Activities that will be undertaken to fulfil this role include (but are not limited to): budget tracking; public expenditure monitoring; education resource mapping; building of data banks; citizen oversight; media and public awareness campaigns; case studies on implementation and effectiveness of government policy.

One specific dimension of the current GRA proposal that is problematic for this kind of work is the specification that projects should only be funded over a 2 year period. While we appreciate that this is

probably adequate for a traditional research/knowledge development type of programme, it does not fit with the political realities in a country. For a start, the cycle of political commitment-policy decision-budgetary allocation-implementation of policy-evidence of results is typically considerably longer than 2 years. Secondly the work of collecting and analysing evidence, power-mapping and leverage of key stakeholders and mobilisation of public concern (if appropriate) also requires a longer time-horizon. GCE urges that this aspect of the GRA be reconsidered at least for support to civil society organisations.

Over the coming period, GCE and its regional partners will be synthesising learning from the CSEF project, demonstrating not only that the capacity of national coalitions has been enhanced substantially, but also that their advocacy work has had a real impact on specific policies, processes and practices, and increased resources, efficiently and transparently spent. We look forward to working within the framework of the new GRA to continue and build on this work, in order to ensure successful achievement of results for the whole FTI Partnership. We hope that the consultation process will be fruitful and quickly resolved in order to ensure that GCE can apply in a timely fashion to take our work through the CSEF to the next phase.