

NECCSO

(Namibia Education Coalition for Civil Society Organizations)

PROGRESS REPORT December 2014

Summary of Successes & Challenges towards advocacy for QUALITY
INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL FOR ALL IN NAMIBIA!
2011 – 2014



By NECCSO- Secretariat
12/31/2014

**1. FOREWORD by Dr Marius Kudumo – UNESCO National Commission for
Namibia - Director
(revised speech at budget advocacy skills training workshop)**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

Whilst governments hold the main responsibility for ensuring that people have access to quality basic education there is a wide array of actors within a country that can and should be involved in delivering on education. Civil society is one of these partners, who can play a crucial role by bringing voices together under common platforms to make the case for education.

Hence, NECCSO is a network of stakeholders in education from organizations and institutions in civil society working in the education sector or with a keen interest in educational matters in terms of policy development, implementation, monitoring and service delivery. NECCSO believes that the contribution of a broad-based and coordinated civil society is invaluable for achieving quality, relevant, inclusive education for all.

NECCSO was born out of two separate but related initiatives. Firstly, African civil society organizations established the Africa Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA) after the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, which adopted the United Nations "Education for All – EFA Goals". ANCEFA has since its inception, encouraged the establishment of national education coalitions and in this regard undertook country visits to Namibia in June 2009 and November 2010, where local civil society agreed to form a national coalition.

Secondly in March 2010, the Namibia NGO's Forum Trust (NANGOF Trust) successfully organized a Civil Society Conference on Education, which amongst others advocated for the establishment of a broad based network of civil society organizations involved in education. On November 18, 2010, during the above mentioned consultations hosted by the NANGOF Education Sector Working Group and ANCEFA, the CSOs present unanimously agreed to merged the two initiatives and work towards the establishment of a Namibia Education Coalition of Civil Society Organizations (later coined NECCSO).

A four member Steering Committee was established to finalize the Draft Constitution, develop a work plan, mobilize resources, consult other stakeholders in education and finalize arrangements for the first General Assembly and formal launch of the Coalition.

Consequently, NECCSO was officially launched on 6th September 2011 at the inaugural General Assembly held at the Polytechnic of Namibia Hotel Schools by 30 founding member civil society organizations. It's affiliated to ANCEFA (35th member country on the continent) and has participated in sub-regional, continental and global forums on education through the network.

NECCSO strategy is to strengthen civil society's advocacy influence in the education sector and serve as a network, coordinating the advocacy work of various organizations, to help contribute to the achievement of national education development plans, the education for all (EFA) goals and the millennium development goals (MDGs) and those other conventions and plans of action dealing with education.

Vision of NECCSO is "Inclusive, quality and relevant education for all Namibians. In the short-term our **"Mission** is to promote, enable and build capacity of Namibian Civil Society to advocate for policies and practices and an enabling environment to ensure access to quality lifelong and relevant education for all.

NECCSO programs, projects, campaigns and activities are based on the following objectives:

- Develop and agree on a civil society policy advocacy agenda for the education sector
- Undertake policy dialogues with Government at all levels
- Ensure that civil society is effectively represented on various Government and statutory bodies dealing with education in various sectors
- Undertake capacity building initiatives for members.
- Liaise with the local media to ensure activities of the Coalition and education sector civil society in general are known locally and nationally.
- Promote and initiate policy analysis, research, documentation and knowledge creation to improve the education system
- Resource mobilization and constructive engagement with the donor community and the corporate sector to solicit additional resources and their effective and efficient allocation and utilization.
- To facilitate co-operation with national; sub regional; regional and global networks in pursuit of its aims.

3. INITIAL PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS OF NECCSO...

Whiles in its infancy, and being led by an Interim Steering Committee, NECCSO had the challenging tasks to coordinate civil society inputs into the National Education Conference of June 2011. Initially the plan was to formally launch NECCSO just before National Education Conference, however, it was tactically agreed to delay formal launch and to maximize all energies towards stronger civil society influence at this historic national gathering on education. See case studies elsewhere on the advocacy and lobbying around the education conference and the subsequent follow up.

The initial work of the above mentioned Steering Committee and the activities leading up to the formal launch was financially supported by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) through the Africa Network Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA) Regional Office for Southern Africa in Lusaka with a grant of U\$25 000 during 2011 and 2012. As a follow up to this partnership, NECCSO was successful in getting a further grant from OSISA for the Budget Advocacy Project towards the end of 2012. See *details elsewhere in this report on details and progress on this project.*

Immediately after its launch, NECCSO engaged in partnership with Ministry of Education and UNICEF and other civil society actors and the Social Accountability in Education and School Governance Project was initiated out of this partnership. This project that formerly started at the beginning of 2012 was preceded by a "National Workshop on Governance and Accountability in the Education Sector – a civil society perspective". See more on this project elsewhere in this report.

Towards the end of 2013, NECCSO collaborated with the Urban Trust of Namibia for the implementation of a UNICEF supported project aimed at developing an advocacy issues paper for safer and violence free schools in Namibia. Two consultative meetings were held in December 2013 and February 2014 with key stakeholders to discuss the draft advocacy issues paper drafted with technical assistance by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention based in Cape Town, South Africa.

The launching General Assembly of NECCSO on 6th September 2011 tasked the incoming leadership to finalize a strategic plan for NECCSO. Based on the framework provided by the General Assembly, a Draft Strategic Plan framework was designed and shared with various stakeholders for inputs and for initiating partnership discussions. The final strategic plan was discussed and approved by various Board meetings in January and April 2014.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

Overall Goal: To empower civil society actors in Namibia to advocate for quality and inclusive education for all Namibians.

Program Areas:

- Policy Advocacy and Lobbying
- Budget Tracking, Analysis and Advocacy
- Research and Information Documentation
- Educational Awareness Campaigns
- Strengthening Governance and Accountability in the education Sector

Strategic Objective One

Support through initiating, coordinating and monitoring civil society advocacy campaigns to ensure accountability towards national and international commitments towards accessible quality, inclusive and lifelong education for all.

Strategic Objective Two

Advocate for increase funding for education and monitor education budgets to ensure effective and efficient allocation and utilization of resources

Strategic Objective Three

Building the institutional capacity and profile of the Namibia Educational Coalition for Civil Society Organizations (NECCSO) and its membership to become strong, vibrant and responsive organizations to initiate, coordinate and monitor civil society advocacy actions and programs in the education sector.

4. PRESENTATION OF NECCSO PROGRESS REPORT: by Michael Jimmy - Chairperson of NECCSO Board of Trustees)

NECCSO progress reports aim to appraise and update NECCSO members, board and staff and key education stakeholders (including Government) as well as cooperating partners with progress and challenges on the network's advocacy work in Namibia.

The work of NECCSO is concerned with a vision of a strong, united, dynamic, motivated and effective civil society committed to the promotion of free and universal education. As the journey to 2015, the year of target for the EFA goals and MDGs, becomes shorter, there is increasing pressure on countries and organizations all over the world to deliver the promise of quality education for everyone. Every year NECCSO is therefore pressed to deliver on its mission, which is, "to promote, enable, and build the capacity of Namibian civil society to advocate and campaign for access to quality inclusive education for all".

This report therefore demonstrates how closely NECCSO is living its vision and mission of pressing for EFA goals and other educational commitments in Namibia. The report outlines the activities that NECCSO implemented over the past three years since its formation towards end of 2011. The report is based on the activity plans and budgets approved by NECCSO Board within the context of the strategic plan framework agreed upon at the launching General Assembly.

As elaborated below, NECCSO is implementing the following projects and programs - **Social Accountability in Education and School Governance Project, Budget Advocacy and Tracking Project and Building the Institutional Capacity of NECCSO to Monitor the implementation of the June 2011 National Conference on Education.**

Before concluding, the report also highlights key challenges and lessons learnt in the course of this period. A summarized financial report is provided at the end, as well as priorities and plans for 2015 based on the strategic plan.

5. NECCSO PROGRAMS, PROJECTS AND CAMPAIGNS: 2011 to 2014

5.1. Social Accountability in Education Project

Overall goal of the Project is the strengthening of social accountability and governance systems within the education sector. There were two main targets as reflected below.

Target 1: Social accountability tools and capacity for effective school governance developed

Target 2: Twenty four (24) pilot schools in 2 regions (48) utilizing social accountability tools in school development planning and performance monitoring

Social Accountability in Education and School Governance Project is based on a unique multi-stakeholder partnership between UNICEF Namibia and Ministry of Education in collaborating with a consortium of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) under the auspices of the Namibia Education Coalition for Civil Society Organizations (NECCSO) and the Urban Trust of Namibia (UTN). Other CSO partners include, Namibia Institute for Democracy and the Legal Assistance Centre.

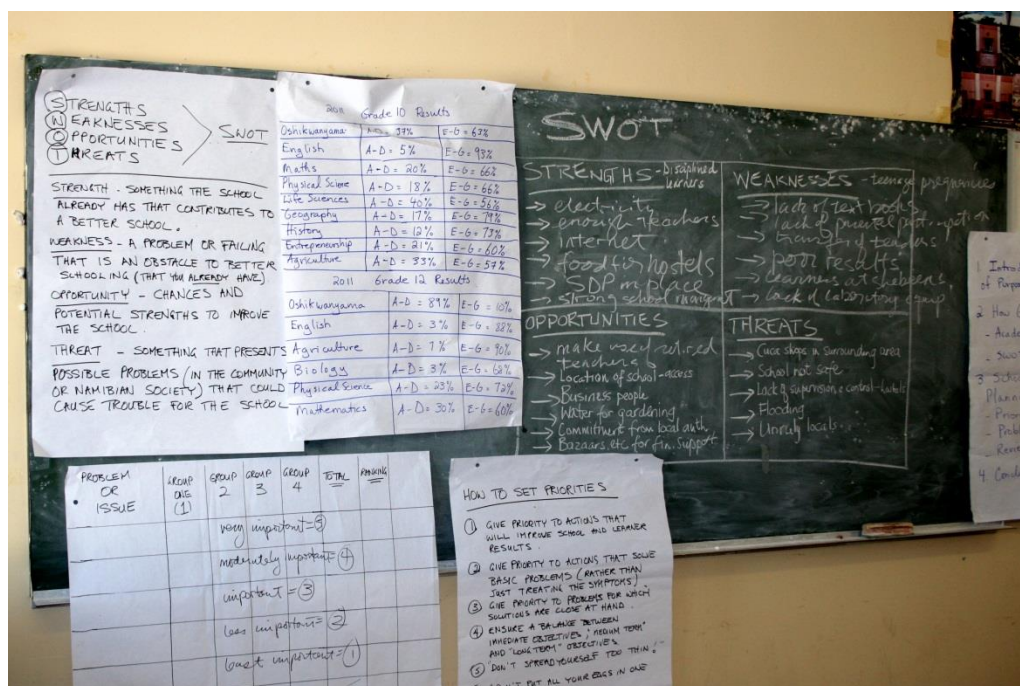
This partnership is aimed at strengthening the role of CSOs in the education sector in general, but more specifically to lay the foundation for proactive engagement in promoting accountability and effective community involvement in school governance.

Institutional capacity and project management

The project is jointly managed by the Namibia Education Coalition on Civil Society Organizations (NECCSO) and the Urban Trust of Namibia (UTN) from the offices in 3 Schonlein Street, Windhoek West. Uhuru Dempers has been engaged as the Technical Assistant and is assisted by Patricia Gurubes Coordinator for the Hardap Region and Nestor Fabian and Maria Indongo from the UTN's SESCIT Program.

Project administration and financial management is handled by the UTN and Patience Mukandi is the responsible staff member.

Uhuru Dempers represents the civil society partners in the National Project Steering Committee Chaired by Edda Bohn (Director for Program Quality Assurance: Ministry of Education) with representation from UNICEF, UNESCO and the Directors from the two pilot regions.



Highlight of Social Accountability in Education and School Governance Project:

Highlights and achievements during the initial project period (2011/2014) for the Social Accountability and School Governance Project included the following:

National Workshop on Improving Governance and Accountability within the Namibian Education Sector: Role Civil Society: held on 21st and 22nd November 2011-

organised by NECCSO in collaboration with the Urban Trust of Namibia and UNICEF and facilitated by Professor Joseph Diescho, Herbert Jauch and John Nakuta-full report available. This workshop attended by more than sixty participants from all over Namibia was officially opened by Dr David Namwandi, than the Deputy Minister of Education and key facilitators included Professor Joseph Diescho, John Nakuta from University of Namibia (UNAM) Human Rights Centre and Herbert Jauch an Independent Labour expert and activist. One of the key recommendations from this workshop was that a project be initiated to improve accountability within the education sector by ensuring increase stakeholder-community involvement in education. Hence the Social Accountability in Education and School Governance Project was launched at the beginning of 2012. Full workshop available.

School level project launching: 2012- Sensitization and awareness raising at school community level in the initial 8 pilot schools from Hardap and Ohangwena regions. All pilot schools individually organized launching ceremonies, attended by parents, learners, teachers, community leaders and members of the public, including key education stakeholders to raise awareness on the objectives of the Social Accountability in Education and School Governance Project. NECCSO supported the schools with the organization of this school level program and encourage its member NGOs to participate these events. In most instances, civil society representatives (Patricia Gurubes for Hardap, Nestor Florian for Ohangwena and Uhuru Dempers) shared the podium with other stakeholders (UNICEF and Ministry of Education) and address those gatherings with emphasis on community and parental involvement in education and motivating learners and teachers.



- **Workshop to kick-start Project Activities: - April 2012-** Two-day Inception workshop with key stakeholders from pilot and non-pilot regions to introduce project rationale and objectives, operationalise the project and agree on implementation modalities. Half of the participants were drawn from civil society organizations working at school level at various communities.

Regional Outreach to Pilot Schools: Number of intensive school monitoring outreach visits were undertaken to pilot schools in 2013 and 2014. The initial visits were aimed at assessing the current status at schools (baseline information), introducing the project concept and aims and mobilizing school community. The follow up visits concentrated on planning of project activities, assisting schools to integrate project activities in school calendars, advise on process with school development plans and organizing education stakeholders forums.

Social Accountability Toolkit:

- Drafting, validation and testing of Social Accountability Toolkit/Manual at national, regional and school level with technical assistance from Montrose (east and southern Africa consortium of development consultants) through UNICEF.
- The draft Social Accountability Toolkit was first tried and tested during the two-day national workshop in July 2012 with participants from all the initial 8 pilot schools and facilitated by two external facilitators from Montrose. Civil Society representatives (5) from UTN-NECCSO also attended together with representatives from the Project Team.
- This was followed up with regional level training intervention in Ongwediva later in July 2012, attended by the same participants as for the above mentioned national workshop as well as additional school level participants from pilot schools in Ohangwena, including, from school boards and school management and civil society organizations.
- Once the Toolkit was revised based on the above mentioned national and regional level, a two-day training of trainer's workshop was held for twenty civil society facilitators drawn from organizations with experience in working at school level with external facilitation by Montrose in October 2012.
- The toolkit was further validated at a one day workshop of civil society organizations with UNICEF and Ministry of Education in Windhoek. Final validation of the Toolkit was held with senior education officials from Ministry of Education at the end of January 2013 and the Toolkit was finally approved at the Project Steering Committee meeting in March 2013.

- *An introductory section on the purpose of the tool, the role of SBs, overview of NSPI, guidelines for use and who should be involved in the process.*

Section 1: - 'How Good is our School Characteristics of a good school.

Evaluating your school.

Monitoring school performance

Simplified school self-assessment checklist

Section 2: School Development and Improvement

-Prioritising problems for action.

-Designing strategies and solutions.

-Drafting a plan of action

Section 3: Promoting Community Involvement

-Community stakeholder mapping.

-How can the community help the school?

-Tips and strategies on community mobilisation.

In addition to the Toolkit, a comprehensive Checklist in the form of Questionnaires were designed as one of the tools for school self-evaluation. These checklists enables various stakeholders to assess their schools on a variety of aspects and compliments existing internal and external school evaluations with an emphasis on opinions and perceptions of stakeholders. These tools will be useful for any school to apply as part of school improvement and to mobilise stakeholder involvement.

Additional schools added to Pilot in April/May 2013: Orientations sessions held with the additional pilot school official in Ohangwena on 23rd April 2013 and 28th May 2013 for Hardap. Equal number of 20 schools added for both Hardap and Ohangwena.

Regional and Circuit level Training of Trainers: As indicated above, more than twenty facilitators from civil organizations were trained in the use and application of the Social Accountability Toolkit. These facilitators further provided training to more than 240 school based facilitators (5 from each of the 48 pilot schools) on the use of the toolkit at school level in June and July 2013. These intervention and investment will ensure sustainability of the projects efforts beyond the lifespan of the pilot project.

After the above mentioned training and orientation sessions, School Based facilitators have spearheaded interventions at school level for school self-evaluation and review of existing school development plans (SDP) and development of detailed plans of action for 2014 and beyond. Most schools for the first time involved key stakeholders in assessing their schools using various tools in the Toolkit, including the checklist and identified strengths and weaknesses of their schools and designed actions to improve the situation.

Education Stakeholders Forums: School community level consultations with key stakeholders: Education Stakeholder Forums were held at all the 48 pilot schools (where more than 2 pilot schools exist in one town/village they organized joint forums) between 2012 and 2014, starting with the initial 8 Pilot Schools of Dr WM Jod Primary School in Gibeon, Kalkrand Primary School in Kalkrand, Sonop Primary School in Mariental and Ondeikela Combined School in Odibo. NECCSO with inputs from other projects partners developed a concept note with objectives, program and proposed participants for the stakeholder forums.

These Forums were attended by Regional Councillors and Town/Village Councillors, Government Ministries and agencies (in particular - Ministry of Health and Social Services, the Police, Social Workers from Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare) and NGOs and community-based organisations; Local business community and the corporate

sector (including shop and shebeen owners); Traditional leaders and Churches and faith-based organizations; Student Unions/Learner Representative Councils; Teachers Unions and other Trade Unions; School support staff (Cleaners, drivers etc...); Regional Education Directorate and Education Officers).

Common factor of most of the these Forums were that they established local committees consisting of stakeholders to coordinate and monitor the implementation of recommendations contained in the plan of action agreed at the conclusion of these meetings. Some of the Local Committees at schools already held their first meetings and started to implement the plan of action. Most schools indicated that these forums were held for the first time in the history of their schools, where stakeholders gathered to discuss challenges and how to overcome them. Schools realised the benefits of regular stakeholders meetings and established local stakeholder committees to follow up on the recommendations made and the plans of actions developed. In some school communities, stakeholders have taken ownership of the process and have already taken concrete actions by implementing the recommendations they agreed upon and there are numerous examples in this regard from various schools.

Some schools have already recorded change in attitudes from parents and stakeholders towards their roles and responsibilities in education, partly because of the awareness created by the Social Accountability Project through various events at school level.

Key advocacy issues and recommendations emerging from local stakeholder forums and school visits by project team members. Advocacy issues emerging from the regional and local stakeholder's forums were raised with policy makers including the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social and Community Development of the National Assembly and at the Annual Education Review of the Ministry of Education and stakeholders.

- Cluster system where it's being used effectively has great benefits for improving school performance; however in some Circuits the Cluster system is dormant and needs to be urgently reactivated. Initially Circuit and Cluster level structures were effectively used for academic matters and extra-mural activities such as sports. However, these institutional frameworks could also be useful for advocacy for school improvement and sharing of experience to improve governance, school improvement and social accountability within the education sector in general.
- Support and service delivery from Regional Education Directorates needs urgent attention as most schools complained about delays or lack of responses. These includes with provision of basic services and resources including appointment of teachers, distribution of textbooks and school furniture, basic maintenance, academic support and guidance with school governance. Sometimes even written correspondences are not acknowledged or responded to and important files getting misplaced or lost and a general lack of accountability and professionalism from some staff members within the Ministry of Education and other line Ministries were reported.
- External school evaluation (NESE/RESE) has only being conducted in a very few schools in the pilot project and those that have completed the process have indicated its usefulness for school improvement.

- School Board structures limits rather than facilitates stakeholder community involvement and it was recommended to consider other platforms where parents and broader community can participate and monitor education progress and ensure social accountability and also participate in school improvement initiatives. Education stakeholder forums and the local committees established after those forums are some of the platforms that can be useful in this regard. School Boards need support in approaches and strategies for parental and community involvement at the school level.
- Reactivation of Regional Education Forums to take forward issues identified by School Boards and local education forums – in the two pilot regions, (Hardap and Oshana) but also in most other regional education directorates, the Regional Education Forums (as provided for in the Education Act) has been dormant and attempts to reactivate over the past two years has not been successful. Office of the Minister, Governors and Regional Directors need to take urgent action.
- Participants at the local education stakeholders forums recommended that Terms of Reference (modus operandi) be developed to guide the functioning of local education forums. Regular meetings of forums to ensure plan of actions agreed upon are monitored and effectively implemented.
- Members of School Boards requested for more comprehensive training of school board members to equip them with skills, knowledge and competencies to better govern schools. In addition, training and orientation in other policies, legislation and regulations (in addition to Education Act) that has bearing on school governance and management were also recommended.
- Many schools still perform very poorly academically despite improved infrastructure, qualified and well remunerated teachers and better learning environment. Therefore, school management and school boards were tasked to improve monitoring of performance of staff and for parents to assist with motivation and encouragement of learners.
- Schools requested stakeholders especially various government departments, business sector and community leaders to assist schools with socio-economic challenges having an impact on teaching and learning, including health issues, poverty and violence/crime.
- Discipline has deteriorated amongst both learners and teachers according to stakeholders and therefore concrete measures for positive discipline need to be implemented as a matter of urgency. These measures will replace corporal punishment towards learners which has been outlawed but still widely practiced in Namibian schools.
- Many schools still lack basic infrastructure despite education sector getting the highest allocation from the national budget. Therefore Regional Directorates and Ministry of Education were requested to allocate more funds for capital projects.
- Despite basic education being declared free and compulsory, there are still learners of school-going age out on the streets, on farms and in villages (including dropouts) and therefore it was recommended to initiate a “back to school campaign” to ensure hundred percent school attendance.

- Reading and comprehension especially at primary school level was identified as a major challenge and recommendations made for special intervention to improve reading during early grades.
- Effective implementation of the language policy, especially with regards to mother tongue use as medium of instruction in lower primary whiles improving English proficiency of teachers.
- Access to early education is still a privilege limited to the minority and therefore it was recommended to launch a campaign to inform parents about the benefits and advantages of early childhood education.

Challenges with implementation of the Social Accountability in Education and School Governance Project:

- Diversity of the target communities in terms of language, levels of formal education, employment conditions and socio-economic status presents particularly challenges to a project of this nature promoting grassroots community involvement. Facilitation of the various processes tried to consider and accommodate these difficulties but it remains.
- Distances between pilot schools and the cost associated with that presents an obstacle as resource are limited.
- Changing attitudes, perceptions and peoples and community habits are difficult to transform in a short space of project period. For many years communities believed that schools are “government property” and they have no role to play or demand for accountability and therefore it will take time to change those perceptions.
- Access to school communities remains a challenge as schools are challenged with completing their academic and extramural programs and accommodating multiple requests from variety of stakeholders for interventions such as the Social Accountability Project.
- Capacity challenges within civil society organizations both in terms of human, material and financial resources. As the project funds are not able to cover all the capacity gaps and needs, the organizations involved in project implementation are challenged with making contribution for successful implementation of the project.

Concluding summary of Social Accountability Project

Social Accountability in Education and School Governance Project was assessed in August and September 2014 through a mid-term evaluation by two local consultants (Ms Deedee Yates and Mr Justin Ellis). Their report was presented and discussed at a two day strategic reflection and way forward planning meeting on 21st and 22nd September 2014 in Otjiwarongo. On 3rd December 2014, the Project Steering Committee agreed on the following resolutions for the way forward.

5.2. BUDGET ADVOCACY PROJECT:

NECCSO is implementing this project with financial and technical assistance from the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA).

The overall goal of the project is to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of education budgets in Namibia.

Highlight of Education Budget Advocacy Project:

Highlights and achievements of objectives during the project implementation period (2012/2014) for the Education Budget Advocacy Project included the following:

Objectives One:

- To build the capacity of the Namibia Educational Coalition for Civil Society Organizations (NECCSO) in resource monitoring and budget tracking of the education sector;

Desktop study and collection of materials and documentation on budget advocacy and monitoring

NECCSO has collected existing materials, toolkits and documentation on civil society budget advocacy and tracking. Sources from which these materials were collected included the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), Action Aid, national education coalitions in particular (Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe). These materials were used to compile an inventory of materials to be used as reference by Namibian civil society organizations after the training sessions have been completed.

Locally, the Legal Assistance Centre, NANGOF Trust, Ministry of Finance and the Institute for Public Policy Research have also developed materials that simplify and analyze the public budget process. This information has been collected and used in the compilation of the advocacy resource tools inventory.

Regional Exchange Visits to Botswana and South Africa

Apart from collecting information and case studies through desktop studies and internet based research, NECCSO also undertook a regional exchange visit to Botswana and South Africa in November/December 2012,

As part of this exchange visit, NECCSO attended a 2day Regional Workshop on Innovative Financing for Education, organized by OSISA in Magaliesburg outside Johannesburg.

During the visit to South Africa, the delegation conducted consultations with a number of civil society institutions engaged in budget advocacy work. The Institute for Democratic South Africa (IDASA) was visited to learn more about their work in child budgeting campaigns. Other organizations included the School Governing Councils Association of South Africa, South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and GCE offices.

In Botswana the visit was hosted by the Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONCO) and included exchanges with staff members responsible for the budget advocacy campaign and member organizations involved in the education sector. NECCSO also had exchanges with its counterpart, the Botswana Education Coalition and shared experiences generally on networking, building strong and effective coalitions, and on the importance of budget advocacy as part of the coalition's priority programs.

Training and Orientation workshop on Education Budget – Vote 10 and Strategic Plans of the Ministry

Two intensive training workshop were organized for about 50 participants from civil society organizations in 2013 and 2014. Both workshops were held at the Hotel Pension

Alexander and the 2013 training workshop was held on 22nd April 2013. The workshop in 2014 was held on 25th and 26th June.

Objectives of the Civil Society Budget Advocacy and Monitoring Training Workshops were to:

- Understand how the Education and Training budget is compiled, spent and where the major decisions on allocations are taken.
- Consider the current Medium Term Expenditure Framework and the current financial year allocations to gain a deeper understanding of current spending priorities for identifying gaps and monitoring expenditure
- Consider issues raised in the Public Expenditure Review Report for the Education Sector with the aim of understanding the current weaknesses and recommendations for remedial action.
- Agree on education budget advocacy issues (gaps, underspending and overspending) and agree on priorities for budget advocacy campaign and a framework for monitoring spending for improved efficiency
- Agree on capacity strengthening interventions to enable civil society organizations to effectively engage in budget advocacy work.

Key resource persons/co-facilitators for the intensive training workshops were the Director of Planning in the Ministry of Education (Ms. Adelheid Awases), Director of Finance (Mr. Byleveld), Deputy Director for Capital Projects, UNICEF Education Manager (Mr. Gert Maritz), Director of UNAM Human Rights Centre (Mr. John Nakuta), Lecturer at the Polytechnic of Namibia (Ms. Sima Luipert Mpoyi) and UNESCO National Commission Director (Dr Marius Kudumo). Director of Planning presented the National Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education which was later launched in May 2013. Also presented were the key performance management plan and the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

During this workshop, civil society organizations were able to understand the key goals, targets and plans in the education sector, as well as how much resource are allocated to these programs. The budget cycle was also clarified with clear indications about where civil society can influence the process.

After the training workshops, all participants were given a memory stick with all the training materials, presentations and case studies in the inventory as reference materials for their campaigns. Full reports of training workshops are available and can be availed on request.

Meanwhile, during the initial training workshop in April 2013, civil society participants aggressively lobbied for the inclusion of civil society representatives in the National Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the Ministry of Education and NECCSO was invited in May 2013 to nominate a representative to this important stakeholder structure that will monitor and evaluate all education programs and projects in Namibia, including the strategic plan and the June 2011 National Education Conference resolutions.

Participation in Annual Education Sector Review Meeting

In addition to the above mentioned training workshops, NECCSO also lobbied for additional representatives of civil society organizations during the Annual Education Sector Review. Hence, civil society organizations active in the education sector were once again invited through NECCSO to participate in the 3dayAnnual Education Sector Review Workshop held from 25th to 27th June 2013 and 3-5 June 2014. Different sectors in education presented a status report on their sectors, budget allocation, utilization of funds, as well as funding gaps. Presentations also included targets in the various sectors,

progress in achieving those targets, and key challenges related to inadequate funding. NECCSO was also invited to make a presentation during these annual education reviews.

Participation in these Annual Education Sector Review meetings provided an opportunity for civil society organizations to understand the key programs and targets in each sector, the competing challenge of resource allocation within the various sector of education and between education, and other national development priorities such as health, housing, sanitation and poverty alleviation.

During the Annual Education Sector Review sessions, the Directorate of Finance again presented a more detailed analysis of the various allocations in Vote 10 of Education, and highlighted funding gaps compared to needs and demands in the sector. These presentations provided insights into the details of budgeting in the public sector and where decisions are made in terms of budget allocations. Documentation and papers presented during these 3days provided civil society organizations with very useful information and data for policy advocacy and budget monitoring and tracking. NECCSO-Secretariat made the documentation available to its members participating in the project through memory sticks and hardcopies where appropriate.

Regional Perspectives on civil society education budget: In addition to the orientation sessions, NECCSO also organized a one day session with ANCEFA resource persons during the country visit from 23rd to 27th April 2013. The country visit in 2014 focused more on early childhood development and education.

Most of the ten selected organizations attended this session where the ANCEFA Program Officer (Matildah Mwaamba) made a presentation on budget advocacy and tracking from various regional experiences in Southern Africa.

The moderator of ANCEFA for Southern Africa (MacBain Mkandawire) shared country experiences from the Malawi education coalition, as it has been involved in budget advocacy and tracking for several years.

Collaboration with other research and academic institutions: NECCSO has also established a working relationship with the newly established Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) at the level of the Statistician General, Dr. Steytler (a former NGO activist). NECCSO can now use this channel to formally request any data and statistics related to the education sector.

Cooperation has also been established with the Multidisciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia, the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) and the National Council on High Education. These partnerships enable NECCSO to access databases of research reports, statistic and other documentation required for evidence based advocacy.

Selection of sectors and lead organizations for budget advocacy and monitoring
At least 10 organizations were selected after having expressed interest and commitment in working on budget advocacy and monitoring issues. They represent various sectors including early childhood development, basic and tertiary education, vocational, adult and youth training and skills development and social issues (HIV and AIDS, community involvement, governance leadership training and motivation of key stakeholders).

These organizations participated in the above mentioned training and orientation sessions and are key drivers in the budget advocacy and monitoring activities of the project.

Selection of regions for budget advocacy and monitoring

Undertaking budget advocacy and monitoring at regional level is critical as almost sixty percent (60%) of the budget of Ministry of Education is transferred to regional education directorates as part of the decentralization process. The Ministry of Education is one of the few Ministries that have decentralized its services and functions in Namibia, as required by the Decentralization Policy and Program.

In this regard, regional outreach trips were undertaken to the seven (7) regions identified for project implementation. Regional visits included consultations with regional education authorities as well as civil society organizations. The main purpose of the visits was to raise awareness about the project objectives, seek for partnership and collaboration with and between government (regional education directorates) and civil society organizations on the project.

Initial contacts were made in each of the selected regions during the outreach and mobilization program with Ministry of Education as well as civil society organizations active in the regions.

In the project proposal it was initially recommended to undertake budget advocacy and monitoring in 7 regions. However after the initial regional outreach visits, it was agreed to limit the target regions to 4 instead of 7. Limited resources and capacity of civil society organization at the regional levels influenced this decision. The regions finally selected were Hardap, Erongo, Oshana and Omaheke.

Objectives Two:

- To advocate for transparency and accountability in the use and management of education resources through a budget tracking exercise.

- **Objective Two: To advocate for transparency and accountability in use and management of education resources through a budget tracking exercise.**

The public budgeting process in Namibia has improved over the past few years in terms of transparency and access. The Ministry of Finance has undertaken some efforts to simplify the budget and make information accessible to the public and stakeholders interested in the budget formulation process.

However, key challenges remains, including

- The fact that some elements of the budget are still treated as “state secrets”,
- Delays in budget approval results in less than six months to spend resources
- Wastage of scarce resource being allocated due to mismanagement and corruption
- Executive branch of government has final say over budget and no mechanisms exist for Parliament to amend or influence the budget.

It is against this background that NECCSO proposed as part of the activities in this project to engage policy makers to address the above mentioned and other issues in the budgeting process.

In this regard, NECCSO sought an audience with the Parliamentary Committee on Human Resources and Social and Community Development. During these briefing sessions, on 16th May 2013, NECCSO made a presentations on its program and activities with special reference to the budget advocacy and monitoring project. NECCSO pointed out a number of weaknesses and challenges in Vote 10 for Education and sought collaboration with Parliament to address those issues within its oversight mandate.

In principle agreement was reached that Parliament and civil society will collaborate to address weaknesses in the formulation and implementation of Vote 10 on education. As a result of our continuous lobbying on this and inputs from other stakeholders, we have witness major improvements in the transparency of the budget process. Information that was initially treated as "state secrets" is now readily available. Budget approval process within Parliament is also much quicker with the budget being tabled a bid earlier and approved and funds available much earlier than previously.

NECCSO in collaboration with other civil society actors (including the NGO umbrella body NANGOF Trust, Council of Churches and progressive trade unions) is in the process of developing a position paper on how the budgeting process can be enhanced to be more participatory, transparent and accountable.

NECCSO has also sought collaboration with the Institute for Public Policy Research that is currently undertaking ground breaking work in the area of budget advocacy in Namibia, especially through engaging Parliament.

Integration of budget advocacy work in the Social Accountability in Education Project

The Social Accountability in Education project aims to empower ordinary citizens as part of school community to access information about how a public service provider (e.g. school) is performing; monitor and evaluate monitor and evaluate the delivery of public services (education) and hold the public service provider (Ministry of Education), to account for its performance.

School budgets has become a focus of this project work and inputs from grassroots school communities have identified budget advocacy issues to be raised at regional and national levels. Therefore this initiative and budget advocacy and monitoring project have been collaborating to ensure synergies and cross fertilization of approaches for maximum impact.

In 2013, Ministry of Education introduced a universal primary education grant to replace the compulsory school fees that was payable in public schools. Hence the budget work at school level become very critical and a key focus of this project, especially in the 48 schools where NECCSO is piloting the Social Accountability Project. NECCSO has worked with the responsible officers in the Ministry of Education (Ms. Tsumis-Garises and Mr. Byleveld) to better understand the utilization of the universal primary education grant to assess progress at schools and provide capacity strengthening as required.

Concluding summary of Education Budget Advocacy Project:

This budget advocacy and monitoring project results from years of advocacy and lobbying for increase in education budget and free universal primary education. The small grant provided by OSISA through ANCEFA during 2011 has enabled NECCSO to intensify the campaign for free universal primary education, especially around the National Education Conference in June 2011.

Therefore civil society organizations celebrated early in January 2013, when eventually the late Minister of Education, Dr. Abraham Iyambo, announced that Universal Primary Education will be free and compulsory as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. There is clear evidence that the civil society campaign has had a direct impact on the decision by Government to implement free universal primary education. A written case study is available on this campaign.

We have reached some milestones with the implementation of project activities. Although it's too early to assess impact and outcomes, the activities implemented so far have laid the foundation for effective and tangible budget advocacy and monitoring campaigns for civil society organizations in Namibia.

Unfortunately we had delays with kick starting the project due to NECCSO being a new coalition and only managed to open a separate bank account for the project in November 2012. Thus we lost more than six months of project activity implementation. We had to modify and revise some targets, especially reducing the number of regions for project implementation due to limited resources and capacity on the ground.

2.3. Institutional Capacity Building for NECCSO to Monitoring the implementation of the June 2011 National Education Conference Resolutions and Recommendations and other education policy advocacy issues

There is an increased demand for a collective civil society voice in the education as well as representation on critical platforms, especially in the area of policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation and advocating for quality service delivery. Initial support from OSISA, recently complimented by UNICEF has enabled NECCSO to effectively strengthen its capacity and represent civil society voice on key policy forums and structures.

Institutional strengthening

- ✓ **Strategic Plan:** Two consultative workshops with NECCSO Board members and member organizations to discuss and finalize the 3year NECCSO strategic plan – 2015 to 2017. The strategic plan has now been formally approved by the Board at its last meeting of 17th April 2014. The next step is to finalize a program proposal with detailed work plan and costing and to engage potential partners for resource mobilization for implementation of the strategic plan.
- ✓ **Organizational Policy Documents:** Human Resource Management and Financial Administration policies were drafted and discussed at NECCSO Board meeting of 24th January 2014 meeting and finally approved at meeting of 17th April 2014. Until now NECCSO has used the Urban Trust of Namibia policy documents for its operations.
- ✓ **Sectoral Working Groups:** NECCSO has reactivated and operationalised its sectoral working groups through which member organizations in particular sub-sectors of education meets and identifies common advocacy issues and design advocacy campaigns with the support of the Secretariat and Board members.

The first intervention was with the Early Childhood Education and Development Sectoral working Group.

In this regard, NECCSO in collaboration with NECD-NGO Association hosted a half-day sector working group meeting at the Oponganda Centre on 28th May, 2014.

Key advocacy issues were identified mainly emanating from the Civil Society ECD Conference of June 2013, organized by the NECD-NGO Association in collaboration with NECCSO and the March 2014 National Workshop on ECD organised by the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Based on the recommendations from the above mentioned two forums in 2013 and 2014 organized by Government and Civil Society respectively, the workshop

developed a framework for a national civil society advocacy campaign for the implementation of those plan of actions.

NECCSO also on request of UNICEF assisted with the high profile visit from UNICEF representatives in Canada, by identifying ECD centres to be visited, assisting the centres to prepare and accompanying the visitors with local UNICEF staff members.

Lead organization for the various sectors are in the process of organizing sectoral working groups including Basic Education; 2.Higher Education, Science and Technology and 3.Adult and Youth Education and Vocational Training and 4.Languages in Education)

Advocacy on the amendments to the Education Act 16 of 2001:

NECCSO lobbied for review of Education Act at the June 2011 National Education Conference. Once this recommendation was accepted and become a Conference Resolution approved by Cabinet in August 2011, NECCSO organized an initial Consultative Workshop with civil society organizations on the amendments to the Education Act of 2002. This one day workshop was held on 29th November 2012 at the NANGOF Offices and attended by close to 30 civil society organizations active in the education sector. Recommendations were formulated and a working group formed to finalize proposal and coordinate an advocacy campaign.

However, there has been an unfortunate delay from the side of the Ministry of Education to convene the Working Group that was mandated to coordinate inputs from various stakeholders and finalise the amendments.

In 2012, as part of civil society organizations contribution to the current process of reviewing the Education Act, NECCSO is undertaking countrywide consultations with parents, learners, teachers, community leaders and other key education stakeholders. NECCSO with the financial support from NAMPOWER and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) is also undertaking a desk stop review of best practice education policies and legislation in the Southern Africa region. In addition, focus group discussions with selected School Boards and Regional Education Forums is being undertaken to assess their effectiveness within the current Education Act and to formulate recommendations for improvement through amendments. NECCSO serves on the *Multi Stakeholder Working Group on Amendments to the Education Act*.

Consultative meetings with parent representatives on school boards to consider the formation of a parents association in Namibia. Workshop convened with about 25 schools in Khomas region on 4th December 2012 to kick-start the discussions and during outreach to other regions similar consultative meetings were held. All the regional consultations will culminate in a national consultative workshop to agree on the formation of a national body for parents. Such a structure will compliment current efforts to mobilize and strengthen parental and community involvement in education.

School Safety Project: NECCSO collaborated with the Urban Trust of Namibia for the implementation of a UNICEF supported project aimed at developing an advocacy issues paper for safer and violence free schools in Namibia. Two

consultative meetings were held in December 2013 and February 2014 with key stakeholders to discuss and validate the draft advocacy issues paper developed with technical assistance from the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) based in Cape Town, South Africa. Advocacy Issues Paper has been finalized and formally printed and distributed by UNICEF and serves as the basis for the Schools Safety Working Group being chaired by the Ministry of Education and consisting of various stakeholders. NECCSO is active member of this working group.

Recent interventions around Policy advocacy and monitoring of policy implementation and enforcement -

In 2014, NECCSO was able to participate in a number of policy forums organised by the Ministry of Education and other Ministries dealing with education and skills training, representing the voice of civil society.

Examples of these policy forums included the following:

- Two national consultative workshops on the formulation of policy on educators/teachers. NECCSO is also representing civil society on the Technical Reference Group mandated with drafting the policy, organizing the consultations and finalizing the policy for final submission.
- National Stakeholder Workshop for the Validation of the NDP4 - Five year sectoral execution plan 2013-2017.
- Meeting of the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisory Working Group (MAG) of the Ministry of Education – set up to review various education programs of the Ministry of Education. NECCSO is representing civil society on this important structure.
- Meeting between UNICEF, Ministry of Education and other stakeholders on the implementation of UNPAF, in particular the education goals. Purpose of the forum was to agree on specific priority areas for implementation for 2014 and beyond.
- Participation in the education planning capacity building workshop organised by UNESCO in collaboration with NIPAM for education planners from the Ministry of Education and stakeholders
- NECCSO has participated in various meetings and activities of the Steering Committee: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) initiatives in Schools (WinS) Project and represents civil society on this committee. As part of its contributions to the work of this Committee, NECCSO is integrating sanitation in schools as part of the Social Accountability Pilot Project with the 48 pilot schools within the framework of monitoring the implementation of the school health policy.

- March 2014 National Workshop on ECD organised by the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare in collaboration with other stakeholders.
- Meeting with the UNESCO Deputy Secretary General for Education whiles on a high level country visit to Namibia in addition to participating in various other events organised for his visit to Namibia.
- General Assembly of NECCSO scheduled middle of 2015 will focus on a review of the resolutions of the National Conference on Education organized by the Ministry of Education held in June 2011.

6. FINANCIAL REPORTS

NECCSO has as a nascent education coalition; outsource its financial accounting function to the Urban Trust of Namibia (UTN). Initial financial support from OSISA through ANCEFA and the cooperative agreement with UNICEF were done through the UTN as NECCSO was considered not having a track record at that time, even only securing its own bank account in November 2012. However the various detailed project financial reports has been finalized according to the format of the different donor partners and available. Summary of these reports are attached.

In preparation for the next General Assembly scheduled for end of June 2015, NECCSO is now in the process of finalizing audited financial statements which will be the first under the name of NECCSO.

7. CONCLUSION:

The above mentioned General Assembly of NECCSO will revise the Strategic Plan of NECCSO and agree on priority actions plans and projects for 2015 and 2016.

Our thanks and appreciation goes to the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and the European Union through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNESCO and UNESCO National Commission for their financial and technical assistance. ANCEFA has provided valuable inputs and provided linkages with other coalitions and GCE and we are grateful for that support. In addition, we are thankful to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders we are collaborating with in this project.

The above mentioned programs and projects couldn't have succeeded without the active involvement and support of the civil society organization in the education sector. We therefore highly appreciate in particular those member organizations that are working with NECCSO on the above mentioned projects.