COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION FUND

Sri Lanka

STRATEGIC PLAN

April – December 2003

Save the Children
Sri Lanka
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Significant steps towards nationwide collaboration on CEF in Sri Lanka have taken place since the submission of the initial proposal in September 2002. Discussions with policy level and community level groups have resulted in the emergence of an initial strategic plan that links grassroots and national advocacy with a parallel media and lobbying campaign. The collaborative process in this sense has widened to provincial level where the formulation of provincial CEF action plans are taking place.

As indicated in the initial proposal, the CEF Sri Lanka strategy will incorporate the most vulnerable groups of children and planning will focus on the following segments at Provincial, Zonal, Divisional, and finally, at school level:

- Underprivileged urban
- Underprivileged rural
- The North and East in relation to post-war reconstruction
- The Plantation Sector
- Children with special needs

A focus of the plans since September has been the linking of child rights to the EFA process in Sri Lanka through the incorporation specifically of organizations working on rights-based initiatives, particularly with children and youth.

Several activities planned for the first six months of the programme have been brought forward to the April – December 2003 period due to logistical reasons. Among them, the significant ones are the regional update of the EFA document that has been brought forward due to the fact that it was only possible to execute a regional update after consultations with the Provinces. **Field visits** were also brought forward due to the fact that the strategy of selecting provincial level participants were changed to utilize the wide experience the working group organizations have acquired in the process of their work, complemented with islandwide newspaper advertising calling for applications from competent community organizations interested in participating in CEF work.

It has been decided that it would be more strategic to hold the CEF media launch once a truly national coalition has been built up. An initial framework has been put in place through nationwide consultations and provincial focal points are in the process of being identified through an assessment of the collaborative process so far. It is believed that the CEF launch would become a nationally representative one and would have a more solid vision to be publicised to the media and other organizations once this process is finalized.
The absence of a clear-cut plan for an EFA campaign in the initial proposal, as raised by London, has also been addressed and more details will be given in the CEF Process Section.

2. CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

2.1 DEVELOPMENTS SINCE SEPTEMBER

The context of EFA in Sri Lanka remains largely as indicated in the September proposal. However, more systematic steps have been taken by the EFA Branch of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Education and Cultural Affairs (MoHRD,E&CA) since then to initiate EFA activities around the country, and to create a dialogue with civil society groups through civil society intervention in Provincial, Divisional and Zonal level EFA committees set up by the EFA Branch.

2.2 EDUCATION FOR ALL BY 2015

Sri Lanka has made significant progress in education. A crucial element of the education system has been the provision of free education from primary to tertiary levels. However, the profile of high educational attainments in this sector has been altering. The process of expansion has created a highly competitive exam-oriented system, which has undermined quality and relevance and thereby the educational experience and foundation for the future. The need for change led to education reforms being introduced in 1997 to provide children with knowledge and skills to meet future challenges and to contribute to the country’s development needs.

Implementation of the educational reforms began in 1998. Significant provisions were included in the reforms including that of compulsory education for those in the age group 5-14. The legal framework for Compulsory Education between 5-14 years has now been provided for under Regulations within the Education Ordinance. New, activity based curricula has been introduced, and initiatives taken to increase the number of children attending school through accelerated school development programmes. Special teacher training programmes as well as concerted efforts to give priority to English language teaching and IT in schools are also underway. Some significant features of the education system according to the 1997 reforms go beyond traditional learning and include total personality development and a focus on and assessment of individual children: those with learning difficulties, as well as those with specific talents.

However, past concerns have not been allayed. It is believed that approximately 12% of children in the compulsory school going age (5-14 years) do not attend

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school. Problems identified at primary level include a lack of commitment to change in the classroom, disparities in allocation of resources – teachers, textbooks, supplies and equipment, inconsistencies in teaching standards, increase in work load and the cost of education for pupils, and monitoring and evaluation. While directives have been issued to allocate funds separately for primary education, clear evidence is yet to be seen that this separation of primary school funding is taking place.

At the macro level, World Bank and IMF pressure to cut public spending has resulted in drastic reductions to education budgets and cutbacks especially in terms of human resources. The Sri Lanka report, *Education for All, the Year 2000 Assessment* states: “Sri Lanka, when compared with international standards, spends less on education. In 1999, Sri Lanka has spent 2.5% of GDP and 10% of total public expenditure on education. According to international standards, the expenditure incurred on education averages as 05% of GDP and 20% of total public expenditure”.

These policy shifts resulted in the closing down of small schools as well as exemplary multi-lingual schools around the country resulting in the wastage of infrastructure and other resources. According to a recently-released National Education Commission study on the rationalization of schools, around 400 schools have been closed down through these moves. At the same time, cutbacks on public expenditure, and privatisation initiatives have weakened public and school transport systems. In this way, children who formerly attended these small schools and now having to travel long distances to the larger schools have become doubly disadvantaged. Meanwhile, however, steps have been taken to allay transport difficulties for students through the Lanka Private Bus Owners Association having just begun to charge half the bus fare for school children.

Sri Lanka has gained the reputation of being one of the most highly literate countries in the whole of Asia. Yet, questions have been raised regarding official literacy rates and the methods for the assessment of literacy. The war has meant drastic reductions in literacy rates in certain parts of the North and East. The situation in the Plantation sector in Sri Lanka is more or less similar.

The armed conflict of the past decade and more has resulted in the closure of a large number of schools in the North and East, as well as deprived displaced and other children of equal opportunities to quality formal education. Problems faced by children in these areas include lack of trained teachers, destruction of/damage to school buildings, security concerns, shortage of textbooks, educational supplies/equipment. Financial constraints have hindered efforts of the Provincial Ministry of Education for the North-East. The effects of the war and resulting impacts on education have also extended to border areas in the North Central Province where schools have been closed down because of continuous threats.

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5 National Education Commission Study on the Rationalization of Schools, 2002 (Unpublished)
from the LTTE. While these conditions are gradually being addressed, a return to normalcy of the education system is a long-term task.

Under the education reforms, much attention has been paid to teacher training, as new approaches focusing on child-centred learning are being introduced. Putting teacher training into practice, however, remains an issue, as does the deployment of trained teachers to “hardship” areas. Language-wise, there are clear discrepancies in the number of Primary School Sinhala-Medium and Tamil-Medium trained teachers, with 65% untrained Tamil medium teachers in the school system, as opposed to 27% untrained Sinhala teachers.

In general, there is little awareness of “Education for All” among the public in Sri Lanka. An EFA Branch has been set up in the Ministry of Education to monitor education along international EFA indicators. While activity plans have been formulated up to 2004 by the Branch, their functions are still at a fledgling state.

Concerns for the plight of education in this country has not spurred interested members of civil society to come together and actively engage in working towards action to address the problems. It is not that education is not a priority or that there is no interest in this subject, but inaction may rather derive from the feeling that civil society does not have a role in this area.

Moreover, the lack of involvement in EFA is also believed to be due to the belief that education is a lesser priority that, for instance, violence (political and sexual), injustice in appointments, unemployment, and poverty.

2.3 GENDER PARITY BY 2005

Sri Lanka claims a high level of gender parity of around 98% within the primary and junior secondary education systems. The education system does not in any way discriminate against girls going to school and all efforts are made to include them in the education structure. According to Professor Swarna Jayaweera, a leading educationist in Sri Lanka, girls are achieving parity with boys in overall school enrolment in primary schools in the plantation sector where female: male ratios have been traditionally low. Moreover, dropout rates among boys are higher than those among girls island-wide.

However, many believe that prevailing social, cultural and economic factors and assumptions hinder girls’ full participation in educational activity. Save the Children’s own field work has found how young girls often have primary responsibility for taking care of the household, particularly where mothers are absent, such as in the case of mothers who have migrated for employment. Low school attendance has also been recorded among rural Muslim girls who drop out of

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8 Prof Swarna Jayaweera, discussion.
school for early marriage, as there are no minimum age stipulations for marriage specified in Muslim law\(^9\).

At the school level, gender-based curricula and social conditioning reinforce gender bias at all levels and influence subject selection at secondary and tertiary levels.

2.4 Present Initiatives of Government and Civil Society in relation to the Goals.

2.4.1 Government

A special EFA Branch was set up at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in late 2001 indicating the acknowledgement of the importance of the concept at official level. The stated functions of the Branch are: monitoring, coordination and data collection pertaining to:

i. Early Childhood Care and Development  
ii. Primary Education  
iii. Skills Development  
iv. Gender disparity  
v. Adult education  
vi. Learning Achievement

Since September 2002, the wider context for Education for All in Sri Lanka saw some positive changes with the Education for All National Forum held by the Ministry of Education, indicating its new commitment to dealing with children out of school, or those not receiving a quality education. This new step also laid more clearly articulated responsibilities on the Education for All Branch of the Ministry, which, at the National Forum, pledged to work with Non-Governmental organization in the pursuit of this goal.

Other important steps taken in the recent past are:

a. A circular has been issued by the Ministry of Education against corporal punishment in schools.

b. Free text books have been distributed to all children from grades 1 to 11 since 1980 and free uniforms since 1993.

c. To facilitate enrolment in schools, heads of schools have been instructed to accept affidavits or letters from local village officials as proof of a child’s age where birth certificates are unavailable.

According to available information, the following initiatives have been planned to encourage fuller participation in schools:

a. The DSD (Development of Schools by Divisions) Programme is an accelerated programme for 134 (out of the planned 341) schools throughout

the country to enable higher rates of enrolment by 2002. A series of activities were developed together with the principals of these schools to attain the objective. Partnerships with NGOs and the private sector was an important feature of this programme.

b. Revival of 54 Central schools: The Central schools, developed soon after independence in Sri Lanka provided centres for regional students to excel. They have long been neglected in terms of physical infrastructure and the quality of education. To address this issue, the Ministry has initiated work programmes with all the principals of these schools to put in place an accelerated development programme for these schools\textsuperscript{10}.

c. North-East Schools: An Action Plan has been formulated for the Rehabilitation of Conflict Affected areas with World Bank Funding. The Action Plan includes construction and repair of school buildings, including special laboratory facilities and the construction of a National College of Teacher Education\textsuperscript{11}.

d. A new model primary school programme has been initiated in 10 schools in Colombo, and five schools each in Kandy, Galle and Kurunegala. The schools have been identified for an accelerated development plan to divert Grade 1 admissions from large popular schools in these big cities.

e. The Amity Schools Project has selected state schools to initiate a special programme to accommodate children of all three communities, studying in the medium of their choice including English from Grade 6 onwards.

f. Setting up of 8400 school attendance committees.

g. Setting up of 260 zonal-level monitoring committees.

Government commitment to education is also reflected in action prior to the 1997 Reforms and include:

a. Free education from the kindergarten to the university was introduced in 1945, nearly six decades ago. The Constitution in its chapter on the directive principles of state policy states as one of the objectives “the complete eradication of illiteracy and assurance to all persons the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels”\textsuperscript{12}.

b. The setting up of Provincial Education Units and employing Provincial Directors of Education in the late eighties resulting from devolution under the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

c. The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by Sri Lanka in 1991, which recognizes the right to education as a basic human right.

d. Endorsement of the goal of “Education for All” at the United Nations World Conference in Jomtien in 1990 and its follow-up meetings.


\textsuperscript{12} The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Chapter VI, Article 27.
Although formal requirements seem to be in place, again, questions remain regarding the implementation of these commitments.

The latest significant document that reflects Government commitment towards education is *Regaining Sri Lanka: A Vision and Strategy for Accelerated Development* completed in December 2002. Its Action Plan matrix for Education sets out objectives of equipping all students with the necessary knowledge and skills to better suit the employment market through improving basic education, modernizing secondary education, and through creating a generation of tolerant young people. Specific priority actions have been identified to fulfil these objectives, which include, among others, improved planning and management, curriculum development, provision of quality inputs for teaching/learning, education performance tracking, education programmes for children with special needs, redressing regional inequities, restructuring of education finance.

An initiative has been taken, in the Regaining Sri Lanka policy document, to promote community participation in education through the creation of school development boards on a pilot basis to involve parents and past pupils in school development\(^3\).

### 2.4.2. CIVIL SOCIETY

It is incumbent upon civil society that it work closely with the National Education Structures if any contributions are to be made to the provision of primary education in Sri Lanka. Unlike in certain other CEF countries, Sri Lanka provides no parallel NGO-run education systems and any civil society involvement in primary and lower secondary education would first require the identification of concerns in government provision of EFA and a decision on how civil society would engage with government on these issues.

As yet, there is no systematic engagement of civil society with Education for All issues pertaining to the 5-14 age group. Exceptions to the rule are several pockets of activity including successful collaborative programmes such as by the Women’s Development Centre in the Central Province which, together with the Non-Formal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education helps upgrade small schools that are under threat of closure so that they meet the criteria to remain open, including satisfactory attendance levels. There are also isolated education monitoring activities where resource allocation to small schools are monitored by small organizations.

On the whole however, there is no significant presence of civil society advocating Education for All or actively engaging with government on educational issues. However, last year the National Education Commission called for public views on

the education reforms and for inputs through innovative ideas in policy and implementation.

The corporate sector, faced with a system that does not produce the human resources required for the business economy, has taken steps, through the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, to call for change. A conference on education was organised in May 2002 by the Chamber. At the Conference, a National Education Task Force was recommended which would be “a politically independent body comprising about 20 administrators, educators, managers and experts. The task force’s brief would be to not just formulate, but to implement a national education policy. It would target people who would act, not debate…”14. Progress on this is yet to be seen.

2.4.3 The State of Collaboration in Civil Society on Education

While individuals from civil society have contributed significantly to policy formulation and implementation, and a certain amount of material exchange has occurred between the two parties, there has, up to the new initiative, been no significant civil society collaboration on education.

A stated goal of the EFA Branch at the MoHRD.E&CA is to incorporate civil society into its activities. While plans are on the boards for such incorporation, they have been implemented only at the level of one or two provinces. However, at national level, several forums and workshops have been held to initiate dialogue with civil society.

As a means of formalizing its pledge to work with NGOs, the EFA Branch has formulated an EFA plan up to 2004 and also recommended EFA Committees at Provincial, Zonal, Divisional and school levels in which a minimum of three NGOs are required to participate. In all, government, semi-government, NGO and private sector organizations are urged to participate in this endeavour. However, even though provincial EFA Coordinators have been set in place for this purpose the Committees are only active in the Southern and Wayamba (North-Western) Provinces of the country out of a total of eight provinces.

NGOs have also been advised to participate in the Non-Formal Education Sector through the setting up of Community Learning Centres, a new initiative launched by the Ministry of Education.

CEF hopes to act as a new catalyst in strengthening the links between the Ministry and NGOs and also in creating independent monitoring mechanisms that ensure quality education for all children in the least privileged communities of the country. These partnerships will attempt to address EFA issues that have emerged both in government and CEF workshops. Voices have also been heard at these forums that are willing to work at policy level for addressing more localized concerns in education, including flexible teaching hours and curriculum development.

14 The Sunday Times Business – Sunday, May 12, 2002
New attempts to incorporate civil society into education reforms are also reflected in a National Education Commission advertisement in national newspapers in August 2002. NEC has invited “views and submissions from the general public, institutions and organizations regarding the current education system”, which should reflect “the changes necessary and new proposals with a view to formulate policies and plans for the improvement of the general education system in Sri Lanka”. Outcomes of these submissions will soon be available from the NEC.

2.5 MAJOR GAPS

In spite of commendable reforms in the education system and initiatives planned, vast gaps exist between what is put down on paper and the way in which it is translated to practice. At the recent workshops, participants noted the lack of delegation of power along the lines in EFA work, and the high level of politicisation of the education system where civil society feels unable to act. The consultations confirmed and underlined the issues identified as the major gaps in the initial CEF Sri Lanka proposal. The major issues of concern are:

2.5.1 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Child-focused methodologies within the classroom are a significant element of the reforms. While progressive teacher training methodology has been formulated by the National Institute of Education/MoHRD, E&CA, there is a clear lack of a translation of concepts into practice in this area. This reflects inadequacies in follow-up on training and in supervision of teachers to support and encourage teachers as new child-centred learning practices are being implemented by them in the classroom, and to obtain children’s responses to these activities.

Often, curricula are not covered in the classroom. A study by the Ministry of Education has found that teacher absenteeism is high with around 20 per cent of teachers not reporting to work on any given day. This results in student absenteeism and low motivation for learning. In urban areas, teacher absenteeism is one of the underlying reasons for over-reliance on private tuition.

2.5.2 RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Government allocations to the education sector have been drastically reduced due to pressure from international monetary organizations for cuts in public spending, and due to the cost of war. While accelerated school projects such as the DSD project and the Central Schools project are underway, this progress has been undermined by the closing down of small schools due to the rationalization of schools.

15 National Education Commission Advertisement in national newspapers, August 2002.
It remains to be seen whether directives for separate allocations to primary education are implemented at the field level. In the event that this separation is not practiced, funds will continue to be siphoned to secondary level education needs with no accountability falling on officials and school principals for specific allocations to primary education.

Gaps exist in the amount of funds transferred from National to Provincial to Zonal to Divisional level and the actual use of such funds. Of concern also are the inefficient use of funds and the lack of monitoring and accountability.

Significantly, disproportionate allocations of funds are apparent between big urban schools and the smaller rural and urban schools in the country.

2.5.3 COST OF EDUCATION TO PARENTS/CHILDREN

Children have pointed out in consultations that the education reforms have increased the cost of education to their families, particularly since the family is expected to bear the cost of material for school projects\(^\text{17}\).

For students from low-income families, education is an opportunity cost that competes with agricultural or other forms of labour.

2.5.4 LITERACY LEVELS

There appears to be discrepancy between official literacy rates and actual literacy rates. A crucial question remains on how literacy is assessed, as literacy rates are often calculated on claims of literacy/illiteracy made by individual citizens\(^\text{18}\).

2.5.5 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The 1997 educational reforms have included provisions for children with special needs. However, reluctance within the mainstream school system to integrate children with special needs into the system is demonstrated by education provisions reaching a limited number of children. In addressing issues of access and provision, infrastructure facilities and teaching/learning methodologies for children with special needs are key factors to be considered.

2.5.6 CURRICULUM

Considering the ethnic conflict in the country, there is inadequate focus on issues of peace and reconciliation in school curricula.

In spite of regular recommendations by civil society groups, school textbooks still portray gender stereotypes that demarcate specific roles for girls and boys that have long-term consequences on the lives and careers of students, specially girls.

\(^{17}\) *The Sri Lankan Children's Challenge*, Save the Children, Sri Lanka Programme, 2002, p.24 

2.5.7 CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

Plans have been drawn up with local rehabilitation authorities for the rehabilitation of schools in war-affected areas.

There is a shortage of teachers in war-affected areas of the country, especially because of the migration of educated persons from these areas due to the war\textsuperscript{19}. Volunteer teachers have been taken on but training was denied to these teachers as they were not permanent cadre.

The absence of an elected body in the North-East Province has meant that the region is unable to raise its own funds, and is entirely dependent on the central government for funding and resources, and on donor funding. Therefore, unless additional funding is provided by the central government to support provincial educational authorities’ efforts to strengthen education provision, their initiatives would be undermined.

3. NATIONAL LEVEL CEF PROCESS

3.1 AGENCIES/STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

A preliminary plan for taking forward the national CEF process was created through consultations held with around 35 national policy makers and later, with around 65 community organizations that gathered in Colombo to address more local issues in education.

Based on the findings of these collaborations, an initial plan that clearly links policy-level advocacy with changes at the field level, and a parallel campaign focussing on media and government lobbying have been formulated.

At the field level, the national CEF process will be managed by three focal points per province in the eight provinces in Sri Lanka (divided into nine regions for practical considerations). These focal points are being identified based on institutional capacity, inclusion of child rights and human rights in their programmes, and on demonstrated interest in continuing and managing CEF work at Provincial level. While finer divisions would be made at Provincial level where vast differences in needs exist in different Districts/Regions within a Province, this will be left to the judgement of the Provincial consultations.

The Provincial focal points are in the process of taking the outcomes of the national level consultations to more widespread provincial level consultations where other community organizations, provincial, zonal and divisional education authorities, children, teachers and any other groups will be incorporated into the process.

Meanwhile, at national level, the CEF Working Group and civil society will be pushing for policy changes pertaining to the work done at field level.

Crucial to working in primary education in Sri Lanka, as mentioned above, is maintaining effective and trusted links with the line Ministry and Provincial, Zonal and Divisional education authorities. This relationship will be continually built as the work progresses. Already, links have been established with the EFA Branch, the Non-Formal Education branch and the Planning Unit of the Ministry.

3.2 **LINKS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR / BUSINESSES**

Standard Chartered Sri Lanka branch under a directive of Standard Chartered London has approached CEF Sri Lanka about contributing to CEF funds locally. They have been given a report of planned CEF activities and have indicated that a separate allocation will be made by them to a project of their choice.

Efforts are being made to bring into the process the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, the largest network of business organisations in Sri Lanka. They will be incorporated into CEF work once Provincial level activities take off the ground and specific tasks are identified.

3.3 **GOVERNANCE / MANAGEMENT OF CEF**

The tentative structures identified are as follows. However, changes may occur to these initial mechanisms once provincial level plans are consolidated.
4. CEF NATIONAL STRATEGY

4.1 CEF SRI LANKA GOALS

By December 2005

Ensure that government and relevant stakeholders have put in place policy and practice so that all Sri Lankan children between the ages of 5-14 receive quality education with equity.

4.2 CEF SRI LANKA OBJECTIVES

4.2.1 Civil society participation in reaching EFA goals will be strengthened in regions targeted for CEF activity.

4.2.2 Equity in resource allocation in public spending on education, funding of provincial education, resource allocation within provinces, and resource distribution between primary and secondary education will be demonstrated within regions targeted for CEF activity.

4.2.3 Policy and practice will reflect quality education for all children between 5-14, particularly for those belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups.

4.2.4 Reduced gender imbalances in primary and secondary education.

Indicators will be fine-tuned to help monitor progress towards objectives and assess achievements as the programme is developed.

In a general context where education activism is new in Sri Lanka, and where primary education has been largely considered the responsibility of the state, involving civil society in education advocacy would require building certain conceptual foundations. The CEF national strategy is based on the observation that perceptions on citizen’s rights and holding governments accountable are rarely perceived as a rudimentary component of successful governance. This fact requires that, within zones selected for CEF activity, the building blocks of CEF work will have to rest on creating awareness and mobilizing communities through concepts of democracy, and citizen participation in governance.

The process of building civil society action and activism would require looking at the context of Sri Lanka’s history of civic action, and the highly party-politicised contexts within which historically, civil society action has taken place. How can these energies be diverted to citizen participation in issues such as rights to education?

Other issues which are preventing the delivery of Education for All, such as a common vision based on awareness of child rights and child participation, poverty, gender equity, ethnic harmony have also to become an essential component of CEF’s foundation.
4.3 ACTIVITIES

Considering the above, once issues and processes are confirmed at provincial level, the launch of provincial work will necessarily have to be based on systematic training that will take forward the opportunities that CEF offers.

4.3.1 ACTIVITIES UNDER THE 3 CRITERIA

The 3 CEF Criteria:

1. Strengthening civil society participation in the design and implementation of national level education plans
2. Monitoring government expenditure on education
3. Supporting innovative ways for communities to ensure that all children (especially girls and the most vulnerable are able to access quality education within a framework of national education plans)

Of the three criteria, only criteria 1 (strengthening civil society participation …) and criteria 3 (supporting innovative ways to ensure EFA … will be addressed in the national strategy up to December 2003. The CEF Working Group believes that the links that will be formed during this process with governments and with Zonal and Divisional level groups could be used in 2004 to monitor government spending and resource allocation on education which is a highly politicised and sensitive issue that has to be handled with care so as not to hamper the other collaborative work CEF/civil society will undertake with government in getting children to school.

CEF activities will support, as far as possible, government EFA initiatives and hope to involve civil society at all levels in education planning and addressing the issue of children out of school.

4.3.2 THE CAMPAIGN

A unique campaign involving media and parallel national level lobbying has been formulated by the CEF Working Group. The campaign will involve documentation of best practices by civil society in providing access and quality education (within and outside the CEF programme) by a media professional, which will be used as advocacy material in electronic and print media to persuade government and other influential groups to replicate these best practices, with the involvement of NGOs, in other parts of the country.
4.3.3 **ACTION PLAN**

The action plan allows for flexibility in the identification of specific Provincial/Zonal/Divisional/School-level activities which will be confirmed only after the initial provincial meetings are held.

Information gathered for the Provincial Updates will be simultaneously fed into the EFA Committees and to individual NGO activities through regular meetings with relevant persons.

Activities will mainly focus on a region per District identified as the least privileged in each District – and work will be undertaken at the relevant Divisional/school level of the selected localities.

Criteria for the identification of regions will be drawn up in consultation with provincial focal points.
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<th>Time Scale</th>
<th>By Whom</th>
<th>Expected Outcome</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<td><strong>Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the Design and Implementation of National-Level Education Plans</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Forming links with Provincial, Zonal and Divisional EFA Committees where operating, and promoting the formation of these committees where they do not operate.</td>
<td>April – December 2003</td>
<td>Provincial Networks</td>
<td>Input into Provincial, Zonal and Divisional Level education plans, policy and implementation.</td>
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<td>4. Monthly Provincial Level Meetings</td>
<td>April – December 2003</td>
<td>Provincial Focal Points</td>
<td>Consolidate and evaluate CEF provincial activities</td>
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<td>5. National Level lobbying</td>
<td>Aug – December 2003</td>
<td>CEF Working Group and Identified Policy Experts</td>
<td>Input into national activity plans, policy making and budgeting and implementation of EFA activities.</td>
<td>Will be based on inputs at Provincial etc. levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Time Scale</td>
<td>By Whom</td>
<td>Expected Outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Innovative Ways to Ensure that All Children are able to Access Quality Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Provincial Updates in selected least privileged areas in provinces to determine why children are out of school – using child focussed methodologies.</td>
<td>May – September 2003</td>
<td>Key Researchers + Provincial Networks</td>
<td>Sample information on why children are out of school so that issue can be addressed based on children's needs.</td>
<td>The survey will be fine-tuned to suit Provincial needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Regularizing the Companion school system where privileged schools are linked with less privileged schools.</td>
<td>May – December 2003</td>
<td>Provincial/Zonal/ Div.I networks with Working Group support</td>
<td>Transfer of resources to ensure better educational opportunities for the less privileged children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Media Campaign based on recorded best practices</td>
<td>July – September 2003</td>
<td>Consultant with support of Working Group</td>
<td>Government and other influential groups replicate best practices and create wider public awareness on EFA.</td>
<td>The campaign will be closely linked to the priority concerns of provincial groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.4 Expected Results

By January 2004

Progress towards objectives:

a) CEF structures and coalitions in place.

b) CEF Sri Lanka will hope to see significant engagement of trained NGO personnel in EFA committees throughout the country lobbying for policies and practices to ensure Education for All.

c) Initiatives launched by community groups.

d) Changes in access to schools at micro-level. At least 50% reduction in the number of children out of school in the localities identified for CEF activities.

e) Replication of best practices in EFA through CEF support in terms of quality and access.

By December 2005

a. Coalition groups effectively engaged on education issues.

b. Changes in teaching methodology in the classroom including in gender and ethnicity.

c. Changes in subject selection trends in boys and girls.

d. Demonstrated inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream school system and implementation of policy ensuring “education for all” includes differently abled children.

e. More meaningful yardsticks in place for the measurement of literacy.

f. Significant changes in provincial and national education plans and practices pertaining to quality and access resulting from CEF activities.

At least 90% reduction in the number of children out of school in the localities identified for CEF activities.
5. **Links Between National, Regional and International Work**

While informal links have been established with CEF colleagues in the region, and a regional meeting is on the boards, such plans have not yet been consolidated.

**Issues on which CEF Sri Lanka would Like to Make Links**

- Sharing of best practices
- Transfer of training skills including in citizenship and democracy issues.
- EFA and working children.
- Regional lobbying of South Asian governments on education budgeting
- Inclusive education for children with special needs.

**Plan and Timeframe for Linking Up with Regional Networks' CEF Activities**

None yet.

6. **Gender Issues**

As indicated above in the Contextual Analysis, gender parity has more or less been reached in the Sri Lankan context in education. However, other issues pertaining to subject selection and gender portrayals in school textbooks still hamper the equal development of girls and boys within the school system. It is planned that these issues will be handled at national curriculum level by the CEF Working Group and other relevant individuals. It is hoped that the issue of subject selection will be handled at provincial level through awareness programmes among both boys and girls.
### 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The indicators given below are tentative. Specific indicators, for example on quality inputs mentioned below, will have to be developed as engagement at field level progresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEF Sri Lanka Objective</th>
<th>Objective Verifiable Indicator</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil society participation in reaching EFA goals will be strengthened.</td>
<td>1. Identified activities in which stakeholders, including children, engage at provincial, zonal and divisional level EFA Committees of the Ministry. 2. Intervention made by CEF Working Group and Policy level partners at national and Provincial policy level. 3. Demonstrated use of the knowledge gained in training workshops of C-EMIS, budget-tracking, and other advocacy tools.</td>
<td>1. Reports of Provincial Focal Points and children. 2. Reports of CEF Working Group 3. CEF Monitoring and Evaluation reports 4. Community involvement in EFA activities 5. Partner organization/school children/community satisfaction in the way issues are being addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy and Practice will reflect quality education for all children between 5-14, particularly for those belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups.</td>
<td>1. Changes in policy relating to CEF’s priority lobby issues. 2. Changes at the field level relating to these policy changes including improvements in the school system.</td>
<td>1. Policy documents and implementation reports of key stakeholders 2. CEF Monitoring and Evaluation reports 3. Children report changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced gender imbalances in primary and secondary education.</td>
<td>3. Percentage increases in children out of school returning to school and continuing to remain in school.</td>
<td>4. Observation of schools in localities identified for CEF activity.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Quality changes in the classroom (Quality indicators to be identified)</td>
<td>5. Follow-up work on original Provincial Update</td>
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<td>2. Higher attendance of girl children in schools in localities with low girls’ attendance.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
8. **Risks and Assumptions**

The successful implementation of national and regional plans rests on the assumption that civil society groups would have the time and the commitment to act in a sustained manner on Education for All issues in Sri Lanka. No education coalitions are in place in Sri Lanka, and the CEF initiative will be the first of its kind in the country. So, rather than strengthening existing coalitions, the CEF process in Sri Lanka will be actually initiating the process of civil society involvement in the goal of EFA by 2015. The very nature of this venture thus brings with it questions of continuity and sustainability that will have to be addressed as they occur.

The high level of politicisation of education also often poses a threat to the smooth functioning of programmes, and CEF activities will be planned with the assumption that political interference will be minimal.

It is assumed that the prevailing cessation of hostilities in the North and East will continue so that CEF plans will go ahead as planned in the North and East and bordering regions. The continuation of the cessation of hostilities will also be necessary for realistic expectations on national budget increases for education.

9. **Budget and Cashflow:**

Please see Appendix 1