**Education Support Program Portfolio Review (12th September, 2014): ESP’s Attempts to Influence Agendas for Education Change at Multilateral Levels.**

As a foundation committed to promoting the right to education at both grassroots and at global levels, OSF-ESP has a particular vantage point: while supporting global and regional civil society activism (despite our concerns that focusing at these levels often detracts from efforts to build greater accountability and participation on the ground), we are part of the global funding infrastructure that shapes and extends global education agendas in the first place. The grants under review thus reflect ESP’s efforts to balance strategically on both sides of this interface by holding an ‘insider’ as well as an ‘outsider’ engagement and perspective.

This portfolio includes grants made from 2009-2014 with the goal of strengthening the right to education within the ‘global agenda for education reform’, a notion that has become particularly prominent in the last two years with the gathering focus around the education goal in the UN Post-2015 global goals process.The grants and program work reviewed in this portfolio reflect a deeper engagement with global trends in education that goes beyond the constraints of the current Post 2015 process. At times ESP has contested the perceived ‘global agenda’, often attempting to assert alternative priorities or to highlight specific concerns. All of the grants in this portfolio form part of our support to *Field Three: Improving the Quality and Effectiveness of Public Policy Formation*, which now incorporates our previous *Concept Three*: *Securing the Right to Education in Global Development Frameworks* – following a discussion with the GEAB which helped us see that our key initial positions are now adequately held by our allies in the field. These grants reflect certain tensions at the intersection of national policy and global trends; especially where these concern international aid for education, the selection of national priorities and corresponding civil society activism at the global, regional and national levels.

Our efforts to influence agendas for education change globally and regionally often extend beyond grantmaking to include significant staff time that is committed to agenda-setting institutions and processes. Staff involvement in multilateral structures has involved: formal participation at the board level with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the Education Cluster Working Group (ECWG) and Comic Relief; active participation in the International Education Funders’ Group (IEFG); and varied engagements with other donors, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Associated operational activities reflect the use of tools other than grant making, including technical support/advice, direct participation in the governance of strategic organizations or groups, managing consultants, convening meetings and commissioning research.

The central question posed by the grants and activities in this review: How effectively has ESP influenced well-resourced and widely-supported agendas with our relatively small resources and networks? The comparison provides a reality check that begs a pragmatic redefining of objectives and a sharpening of ESP’s strategy; it does not dim our aspirations for change, rather it confirms the need for greater urgency and focus.

**Placing the Portfolio in Its Wider Context**

Over the past several decades, education in most countries has been subject to the same pressures for reform and restructuring as other parts of the public sector. This typically involves reducing government expenditure, introducing market mechanisms to spur competition for diminished resources and supposedly to drive improvements and efficiency, increasing reliance on private sector managerial ideas and administrative processes as well as managers drawn from the corporate sector, and political accountability based on select metrics. For the education sector this more specifically means a greatly increased policy emphasis on standardization across the system, often a narrow focus on a few ‘core’ subjects at the expense of others, and a singular emphasis on education outcomes featuring high stakes testing for pupils and test-based accountability for teachers and schools. Pasi Salhberg refers to this specific ‘education reform package’ as the Global Education Reform Movement or, more provocatively, ‘GERM’.

These policy trends have fierce defenders and fierce critics. Defenders point to the urgent need for reform and improvement in public education, they argue that public systems have not ended exclusion and marginalization, and that they hold ’the best and brightest’ children back. Critics point to reforms that do not deliver the improvements they promise, on how they deepen marginalization and exclusion, and on how both blame for failure and the responsibility for change tends to be shifted from central government to district authorities, schools and, ultimately, local communities, parents and pupils. ESP’s mission identifies **the commitment to education as a public good** as the core open society principle that underpins the right to education for all. This typically aligns us with civil society efforts to hold governments accountable and to ensure that policy ideas promoted globally and nationally do not serve private above public interests.

The central rallying point for civil society at a global level is the Education for All (EFA) goals. These six goals were first agreed in Jomtien in 1990 as part of the World Declaration on EFA and the related Framework for Action and reaffirmed 10 years later, in 2000, in the Dakar Framework for Action. The EFA framework sets the direction for regional and national education policy globally with the goal of meeting the learning needs of all children, youth, and adults by 2015. Its continuation after the sunset of the current MDGs in 2015 is up for discussion at the Global Education Conference on EFA to be held in Seoul, South Korea in May 2015. This portfolio review includes a grant to the Global Monitoring Report (GMR), a decade-long independent initiative based at UNESCO that provides information on the progress towards meeting the EFA goals. As a donor, we are active on the board of the GMR and have been approached to become the Chair. We are currently the only foundation on the GMR board, which is comprised of all the major multilateral donors as well as UNICEF and the World Bank.

This review includes grants to the Global Coalition for Education (GCE), and its regional affiliates *La Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación*(CLADE) and the Asia Pacific Bureau for Adult and Basic Education (ASPBAE), which focus on the rapid growth of low-fee private schools, other variants of privatization, and the civil society organizing around the post-2015 goals. While we collaborate with these civil society actors on a range of fronts related to promoting the EFA agenda, we found no funders were willing to support their monitoring of the effects of the growth of low-fee private schools on public systems and its consequences for right to education. There is barely any support for civil-society activism around this issue.

Several grants in this portfolio focus on furthering the right to education for marginalized and vulnerable children at the global level. These include the Right to Education Project (Action Aid), which centers around a website to promote and disseminate information on the right to education; the Global Coalition to Prevent Education from Attack (GCPEA), which advocates on behalf of children and schools caught up in conflict; the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), whose steering committee we sit on, which represents a broad coalition of organizations that coordinate their work to mount emergency responses that aim ultimately to rebuild or strengthen public systems. We also provided non-grant support in June 2014 for a submission by the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) to CEDAW on the discriminatory effects of low-fee private schools on girls’ education.

The Post 2015 global goals process, likely to result in what will be known as the Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2015-2030, casts the recent struggle for education policy priorities. While this portfolio only contains one relatively large grant to Education International (EI), the international confederation of teachers unions, this by no means describes the scope of our activities. We work in a close collaborative partnership primarily with EI, but also with the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the International Consortium for Adult Education (ICAE). Our strategy to influence the Global Goals process has focused on trying to get organizations that have a solid constituency base more actively involved, with the aim of improving democratic participation in the global goals process. Accordingly, we have also made significant efforts to catalyze the latent potential in structures such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, particularly with respect to their abilities to convene ministers of education globally. The key challenge we identify in the Post 2015 process lies in the ability of global goals to shape global priorities and particularly funding for development aid despite their remoteness from on-the-ground and in-country realities. Thus, the strong influence of the austerity driven mind-set of traditional donor governments at the start of the global goals process was a concern us as it threatened to deliver a highly restrictive global agenda, narrowly focused on learning outcomes for numeracy and literacy and to discontinue the EFA agenda beyond 2015.

However, within this context the education policy direction of other foundations is wide and varied. Through active engagement with the International Education Funders Group (IEFG), the International Working Group on Education (IWGE), convened by UNESCO, and our leadership in the Private Sector and Private Foundations constituency of the GPE board, we have observed the growing interest and influence in the education sector of the funding arms of private sector for-profit actors. These include corporations such as Pearson and Microsoft as well as social impact funds such as the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF). These funders and like-minded foundations such as Gates, tend to emphasize the importance of narrow metrics for determining impact and privatized solutions for improving education delivery.

The growing reliance on metrics for monitoring performance and driving competition within and between education systems is a key feature of global education governance, not only in relation to the selection of indicators within the global goals process, but through the education division at the OECD, which through its studies, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) has compiled the largest and most significant data-bases the world has seen for education. This portfolio includes a significant, six-year grant to the OECD for the Thomas J. Alexander Fellowships (TJAF) designed to unlock this data for civil society advocacy and to explore authoritative evidence to support the right to education.

It is in this wider global policy milieu that ESP advances its mission.

**Grants under Review in this Portfolio**

**ActionAid / Right to Education Project (RtE)**

RTE was established in 2000 by the first UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomaševski. In 2008, with support from ESP, it was re-launched as a collaborative initiative supported by ActionAid, Amnesty International, GCE, Save the Children and Human Rights Watch, which together comprise its steering committee. The project aims to support mobilization and accountability on the right to education and to build bridges between the disciplines of human rights, education, and development via three primary mechanisms: the development and dissemination of tools that decode the right to education in human rights frameworks for use by education activists, capacity development with national organizations, and public sensitization work. Significantly, the project uses Tomaševski’s ‘4 A’s approach’ (availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability) to deconstruct the right to education and to provide a framework for its operationalization.

RtE at a glance:

Total (2010-2013): $361,000

Currently Open: $80,000

Planned for 2014: $35,000

Between 2008 and 2011 ESP provided decreasing annual grants to develop and maintain the project website, including its translation into French, Spanish and Arabic, to support core costs, and to develop and then translate new materials into different languages. Our objective was to support RTE’s ability to strengthen the capacity of national actors to deploy human rights arguments for more effective advocacy, leading to more appropriate policies and better financing and provision by governments. In 2012, ESP granted RTE to undertake a human rights review of 18 ESP-supported research projects on privatization, a tool kit for coalitions on the impact of privatization on the right to education and a training module to deliver it. The work was challenging, largely because of differences between ESP and RTE on the density of technical language used in the outputs. It was also delivered late and of a lower standard than we expected.

Nonetheless, we remain committed to RTE as one of the only organizations in the education field that provides information on the right to education to support advocacy. Furthermore, recent staff changes have reopened possibilities for development and growth. In an alliance with Wellspring Advisors, over 2014-2015 ESP plans to strengthen RtE’s web presence and to support the development of a set of indicators on the right to education for use by national civil society actors. Wellspring Advisors will provide core funding for an additional staff post. Our collaboration with Wellspring, based on shared interests and a common foundation on the right-based approach to education, not only shares risk through co-funding and increases technical support but tills the soil in ways that can attract other potential donors to the initiative.

**Global Campaign for Education (GCE)**

GCE at a glance:

Total (2010-2013): $128,265

Currently Open: $128,265

Planned for 2014: nil

GCE was established in 1999 in the lead up to the Dakar World Education Forum by four large NGOs (ActionAid, Oxfam, Education International and the Global March against Child Labor). It significantly shaped Education for All (EFA) and seeded the idea of the Education For All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) pooled funding mechanism, which was reformed as the Global Partnership for Education in 2011. Its mission has been to combine support to coalitions of civil society actors working at national level with international level advocacy on the right to education. GCE has held seats in numerous global forums including the board of the EFA-FTI / GPE and various UN-led processes, including the post-2015 goals. Today it is the world’s largest transnational civil society education network, comprised of over 100 national coalition members and three regional networks: ASPBAE in Asia Pacific, CLADE in Latin America and ANCEFA in Africa.

In 2008 and 2009 ESP provided supported its annual *School Reports* wherein heads of state were graded according to progress made against the EFA agenda. Yet we assessed that what began as an innovative approach to advocacy had become a blunt instrument of naming-and-shaming approach that was unproductive and antagonistic. In 2010 GCE secured significant funding ($17million) from the EFA-FTI for support to its structures and the work of the national education coalitions in the form of the Civil Society Education Funds (CSEF). This greater global visibility and increased funding were accompanied, in our view, by an unfortunate loss of technical and political credibility in international fora and a shift in mandate from civil society advocate to funder of national coalitions.

After a hiatus of two years, in 2012 ESP provided support to influence national debates around private education provision in low-income and middle-income countries. ESP supported the production of resources and tools by GCE as well as capacity building workshops in Asia and Africa on research and the development of national campaigns for civil society coalitions.

**Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult and Basic Education (ASPBAE)**

Our engagement with ASPBAE, a long established regional civil society network in the Asia-Pacific region and regional member of GCE, began at the same time as our support for GCE. In contrast however, ASPBAE has consistently demonstrated a strong orientation to its base and provided regular, high-quality support to its member coalitions, using this work to inform its regional engagement and, as a member of the GCE board, advocacy at the international level.

ASPBAE at a glance:

Total (2010-2013): $349,600

Currently Open: $100,500

Planned for 2014: $65,000

From 2008 to 2011 ESP provided annual support for ASPBAE’s capacity building work with national coalitions in Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, involving the production of resources, tools, and facilitated policy workshops. We consider their political understanding of advocacy to be sharp and sophisticated, and we have consistently engaged ASPBAE on technical issues affecting education in the region.

As a result of our ongoing collaboration, in 2012 we supported ASPBAE to work closely with six national coalitions on issues of education financing and privatization, building on ESP-supported research in Cambodia, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nepal, and Vietnam. This continued in 2013 with a two-year grant to deepen the work in existing countries and extended to include Indonesia and Mongolia. Our funds have supported regional capacity building workshops (OSF has participated in two), national level research, and policy roundtables involving government representatives in those countries where the research has concluded. These outputs contributed to UNESCO requesting ASPBAE in spring 2014 that its members conduct national EFA reviews, and for ASPBAE to feed the consolidated information to the post-2015 debates in the region, including the World Education Summit in Seoul in May 2015.

To capitalize on the space opened by UNESCO, in August 2014 we provided ASPBAE a grant of $65,000 to catalyze Korean CSO participation in post-2015 processes ahead of the World Education Summit in Seoul where the next horizon of education targets will be set, as well as to undertake regional work on the post-2015 development goal processes.

***Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación* (CLADE)**

CLADE is the regional civil society network for Latin America and regional member of GCE. As with ASPBAE and GCE, it is oriented to realizing the right to education, working with national member coalitions on technical analysis and political advocacy work. ESP’s engagement in the region has been limited in comparison to Africa and Asia. Our first grant to CLADE was in late 2012.

CLADE at a glance:

Total (2012-2014): $91,336

Currently Open: $80,000

Planned for 2014: $50,000

In line with our evolving assessment of the limitations of GCE and its constituent networks, the grant sought to build capability in the field on issues that resonated with ESP priorities. Specifically, it sought to deepen the knowledge and understanding of privatization in Latin America and the Caribbean, to drive a public debate regarding privatization, and to strengthen capacities in public policy advocacy for the consolidation of public education systems. Our funds supported a project that established a website, undertook a regional scoping study, and convened two capacity building events on privatization, education financing, and the post-2015 agenda.

CLADE demonstrates a tenacious commitment to the right to education, significant analytical capacity, and a resolve to hold governments accountable. Yet this passion can risk obfuscating more nuanced ways of engaging governments, private actors, and regional policy shapers. Thus, while we are supportive of CLADE, we intend to provide modest funding to develop their website, deepen their evidence base on privatization, and support national members to undertake EFA reviews as part of the post-2015 process where CLADE is engaged.

**Education Post-2015: Education International & The Commonwealth**

ESP’s engagement in the Post-2015 education development process aims to reduce the risk from global actors advocating a narrow education development goal that fails to capture a broad and bold rights-based vision of education. As a corollary to this broader aim, our work in this area aims to catalyze support for a renewed EFA (or EFA-like) framework. Our approach to achieving these outcomes has been to amplify the voices of important constituencies which have a legitimate stake in the process. In this regard, we have focused primarily on three organizations: The Commonwealth: a voluntary association of 53 member states; Education International: a global federation of teacher unions representing 30 million educators from more than 400 organizations in 170 countries and territories; and Global Campaign for Education: representing civil society organizations from around the world concerned with education. Between 2012 and 2013, we extended three grantsto Education International which have supported advocacy efforts, strengthening the evidence base, and developing communication and assessment tools relating to the Post-2015 education process. ESP funding has also supported a series of meetings to bring together well-placed individuals from the Global North and the Global South to develop and propose strategies for aligning top level advocacy efforts of the global goals process with grassroots civil society interests. We also supported the development of 12 principles, including related targets, goals and indicators, to guide a Post-2015 development framework for education. These were generated through the series of meetings co-convened with EI and refined through a consultancy.

Post 2015 at a glance:

Total (2012-2014): Education International $310,888

Our support to and engagement with the Commonwealth has primarily been in the form of technical assistance to the Commonwealth Secretariat. In particular, our work included prompting and supporting the Commonwealth Secretariat to convene a Technical Working Group of Ministers of Education in September 2013, comprised of representatives from 7 of the 11 Commonwealth governments that drafted the original recommendations for the Post-2015 Development Framework for Education, and other stakeholders, including UNESCO, Education International, and the Global Campaign for Education. This has resulted in the re-affirmation of the Commonwealth’s commitment to the recommendations and a draft advocacy strategy. OSF was subsequently invited to join a small sub-committee that continued to develop the strategy and produce supporting materials and policy briefs. Within this role, we developed briefing materials for Commonwealth representatives on the UNESCO EFA steering committee.

**Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)**

GCPEA was established in 2010 by organizations from the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected fragile states, higher education, protection, international human rights, and international humanitarian law who were concerned about on-going attacks on educational institutions, their students, and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity. GCPEA’s goal is to advocate for the protection of students, teachers, schools, and universities from attack. Their activities focus on the priorities indicated in their most recent publications: *Strengthening Monitoring and Reporting of Attacks on Education, Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Conflict, Promoting Effective Field-based Programmatic Responses to Attacks on Education, and Protecting Higher Education from Attack.*

GCPEA at a glance:

Total (2013-2014): $200,000

Currently Open: $200,000

After approaching ESP to discuss a grant to support specific activities, we recognized that OSF funds could be better used to address a one of GCPEA’s main bottlenecks. As a fiscal sponsor for GCPEA and numerous other small organizations, Tides can only pass through funds received from a donor, rather than release funds based on commitments. Delayed disbursements from donors would therefore cause significant disruption in activities and lack of payment to staff. To address this, GCPEA requested a core grant of $200,000 from OSF to establish a revolving fund. This fund allows them to draw down monies against future commitments which are later replenished once donor disbursements are received. This instrument has prevented the significant disruption in activities that had been previously experienced.

**Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)**

GI-ESCR is a non-governmental organization working to combat poverty and exclusion by strengthening the international human rights framework through creative Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) rights standard setting, as well as by forging new collaborations with development actors.

GI-ESCR at a glance:

Total (2013-2014): $41,999

Currently Open: $24,994

Planned for 2014: $118,480

Thus far we have worked with GI-ESCR to undertake an action research project on the implications of the privatization of primary education on the right to education in Morocco. This project is ongoing and includes the production of an alternative report for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This has already led the CRC to formally ask the Moroccan Government to explain the measures it has taken to ensure that all children have access, without any discrimination, to quality education. The Committee specifically requested that Morocco explain the measures taken to ensure that the development of private education does not come at the expense of public schools.

We also worked with GI-ESCR to coordinate a side event at the June 2014 session of the UN Human Rights Council to build awareness of the potential impacts of privatization in education on the right to education. The event brought together targeted coalitions, organizations, and other stakeholders, and included a strategy meeting to explore the approach with selected ESP core partners. The event successfully engaged the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education project and contributed to the development of an action plan for work focused on civil society action research projects using national and international human rights frameworks and strategic litigation in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Brazil, Chile, and Nepal.

GI-ESCR occupies a distinctive role within the field of international human rights organizations catalyzing cross sector partnerships on key issues where it can engage international human rights mechanisms for local impact.  The work we are advancing with them is unprecedented in the field of education and holds significant potential to influence policy at national level as well as international norms and standards on privatization in education.

**Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)**

INEE was established in 2002 to consolidate lessons from organizations working in conflict affected contexts. Its first working group was established in 2003 to develop the first edition of the *INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response,* *Recovery*. Today INEE is a global network of 11,000 members from more than 170 countries. Members are practitioners working for national and international NGOs and UN agencies, ministry of education and other government personnel, donors, students, teachers, and researchers. All major education and development organizations, including the UN family and bi-lateral donors, are members of INEE. Its steering group is comprised of representatives from UN, World Bank, Bilaterals and CSOs. ESP sat on the steering group from 2009, co-chairing with the IRC from 2010-2012.

INEE at a glance:

Total (2013-2014): $192,870

Currently Open: $70,620

In addition to steering group membership fees, our funding to INEE since 2010 has supported its communications and outreach through multi-lingual website capability as well as salary support for the language community coordinators. INEE is a competent organization comprised of heavyweight organizations that afford it political weight, impressive technical capacity and, due to its notable coordination and communications work, a network of considerable reach. In fact, it has potential to be operationally effective if it were able to navigate the politics with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Education Cluster, the UN-supported education response mechanism for emergency settings.

Related to this area of work, ESP has maintained a seat on the Working Group of the IASC Education Cluster since 2010 with the goal of advocating for increased accountability of national clusters to the communities where they work. This has included opening discussions about evaluation of cluster performance, competition among cluster members and implementing agencies, and emphasizing the connection between emergency response and sustainable development. Ultimately, the Cluster has taken these recommendations on board to the greatest extent possible in the current aid environment and has made significant improvements in capacity building for national clusters and knowledge management. However, further progress is unlikely, and the cluster is still somewhat clunky and ineffective operationally. Many INEE members, and some steering group members including ESP, would like to see a more optimal division of labor based on value added. Thus, we will continue our engagement with INEE but will not renew our membership in the Education Cluster Working Group.

**The OECD Thomas J. Alexander Fellowships (TJAF)**

The TJAF was launched after the death of the previous GEAB chairman and named after him. Tom Alexander was the former head of education the OECD, where he was instrumental in devising and starting PISA. The TJAF is a significant $1,260,000 grant over six years. Its unique character is that it enhances the scope and transparency of OECD educational data used in global education governance debates. The OECD PISA team is comprised of only 6 fulltime permanent staff who are fully dedicated to administering the 3-year PISA data collection cycle. They do not have the resources to undertake comprehensive research.

To address this, the TJAF creates to the opportunity for top level academics globally to work directly with the raw PISA data under the guidance and support of education experts from the OECD. This way our partnership with the OECD develops and supports quality and equity in education, particularly in emerging economies, by helping to develop or reinforce capacity for quantitative research and analysis in response to the growing need for evidence-based analysis related to education policy and practice; strengthening the use of such evidence in policy making; and supporting education leaders in altering their practice to improve student learning. Also, our team has collaborated with the OECD to create further opportunities to strengthen global debates in education. For instance, earlier this year our team has convened a well-attended workshop jointly with OECD and the Large-Scale Cross-National Studies in Education Group at the Comparative International Education Society (CIES) Conference.

**Related ESP Grants**

The related grants included in this portfolio provide a nuanced perspective ESP’s attempts to influence global and regional agendas and the lessons that we have learned that are instructing our way forward. One of our first attempts to support and leverage education civil society in Africa was through the **African Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA)**, a regional member of the Global Coalition for Education. Our financial support to ANCEFA between 2007 and 2009 totaled $314,250 and covered the development of advocacy materials, country support visits, strengthening of coalitions in conflict-affected states and Lusophone countries. Resources and staff time were also committed to institutional support to strengthen institutional systems and capacity development of senior staff.

The **Network of Education Policy Centres (NEPC)** is comprised of 21 independent education think tanks and policy centers, most of which have developed out of OSF national foundations across Eurasia. The Network's mission is to strengthen the capacity of its members to provide policy expertise to national governments and international education organizations that advocates for open society values in education. NEPC provides strategic and technical support that enables its members to expand their research and advocacy activities and to develop joint regional initiatives that further OSF's education justice mission. ESP has provided over $800,000 to NEPC between 2010 and 2014. In addition to financial support, ESP committed significant staff time to ensure its growth as an independent entity, including holding an ex-officio board seat between 2007 and 2010.

The **Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training (NORRAG)** is an internationally recognised, multi-stakeholder network aimed at informing, challenging and influencing policy making and dialogue on international education and training policies (IETPs) at the national, regional and international levels. The NORRAG network and its communications products, NORRAG News and the NORRAG Blog, are considered a critical provider of educational and policy resources for its broad-based network of researchers, policymakers, NGOs and consultants. NORRAG’s ability to mobilise both practitioners and academics around a critical analysis of international education policy issues distinguishes NORRAG from other academic networks and journals in the education field. Given their platform for critical dialogue around the global education agenda, ESP established a partnership with NORRAG and provided $95,000 for institutional support in 2014.

Our work with **UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)** has been extensive over the years. Within the parameters of this portfolio, ESP provided a grant of $30,000 in 2012 to enable the participation of youth from the global south in the activities surrounding the launch of the 2012 GMR, which focused on youth and skills development.

**Relevant Grants by other OSF Programs**

The Early Childhood Program provides funding for initiatives related to this portfolio through its concept, “Making Early Childhood a Priority: Leveraging Knowledge, Funds, People and Power,”which aims to intensify advocacy to leverage knowledge, funding, human capacity and political will to prioritize young children and their families in national, regional, and international agendas, including and especially the Post-2015 Development Goals. This includes a combination of engagements with research organizations, professional development and outreach in the field, and regional or global networks. Funding from the Public Health Program to advance global agendas operates at several levels ranging from capacity building of actors engaged in advocacy, commissioning papers/reports, outreach strategy development, and engagement of civil society to ensure that advocacy platforms are responsive to their concerns.

**Lessons the program is learning**

Being engaged effectively in shaping agendas and policy frameworks at the global level requires a mix of instruments and commitments that include grantmaking, board and advisory committee service, program development, writing and publishing, commissioning strategic research, and convening.

As a global actor in the education sector, we have learned that having **a seat at the international education policy table is greatly assisted by substantial and focused resource allocations but is not dependent on it. More fundamental is the capacity to convene and lead on difficult and often-neglected topics**; this requires substantial strategic engagement and well-articulated relationships with actors at the national and sub-national levels. It is these closer-to-ground relationships that ensure our higher level engagement is informed by experiences from the field. Working with these partners on the ground is one of the most effective ways of raising awareness of people in the field to the ways in which their views and experiences can inform global agendas.

Reflection on this portfolio reveals that **grantmaking alone is not an effective tool to influence global agendas**. Our impact on global organizations and processes has been based largely on developing a reputation as a foundation that is at once operational, research-oriented and political. For instance, the staff time that has been committed to servicing relationships and board memberships in influential organizations is a significant tool for our operation in global agenda-setting spaces. This is certainly the case with the OECD, which is both a grantee and the focus of considered staff time; the GPE, to which ESP committed considerable staff time during its reform process; and INEE, to which considerable staff time has also been committed. We recognize though, that using a range of tools to influence global agendas requires us to be more reflective and critical of the ways we engage in these processes, particularly when we hold multiple roles and when the agendas we are seeking to inform are fast moving.

With respect to our grantmaking, the main lessons from this portfolio are the importance of remaining flexible and open to different arguments and debates. Our relationships with key global institutions are strengthened by our ability to fill gaps that other organizations are not able to address. We’ve seen how our ability to quickly issue a contract to develop evidence or address a specific issue has been just as critical as the more significant funding donors may provide in those spaces. We’ve also noted that **our ability direct resources to activities that will institutionally strengthen a grantee, rather than fund specific activities, may be more effective in the long-term** by ensuring that like-minded organizations remain viable.

Additionally, we have learned that **regional and global coalitions whose legitimacy is based on their membership have varied capacity and may not always align with our values**. This lesson is rooted in one of the earliest grants in this portfolio. We were initially interested in developing a relationship with ANCEFA because we believed that it could represent and amplify the concerns and perspectives of the national civil society coalitions that they coordinate at the Africa regional level. However, we soon understood that ANCEFA had not remained directly engaged with national level actors. Instead, it had been more focused on maintaining a global profile than supporting the work and capacity of its constituents at the national level.

We have also learned that **we cannot position ourselves as a neutral actor in the education space.** We have a clear position on the right to education and its threats, and we often end up championing views and agendas for progressive change that are not neutral. The education space is becoming increasingly contested, and disagreement on how education systems should be organized and financed is both unavoidable and requires a clear, evidence-based position. This is particularly the case in our efforts to protect education as a public good and advocate for equal access to quality education for marginalized communities.

**The way forward**

Drawing form the lessons learned, our initial ideas about strategy going forward.

1. We will acknowledge the potential dislocation of partner networks at the regional and international levels from the national level realities of their constituent members. This also requires us to deepen our commitment to building the capacity of these partner networks to utilize evidence from their constituents in the field to strengthen their regional and international advocacy. For the same reason, we must ensure that our own work at international level is grounded in evidence that is verified by our own engagement with national level actors.
2. We will benefit from a sharper sense of how to best capitalise on the narrow but deep political space that OSF occupies allowing us to be more nimble and responsive than donors, INGOs or state actors. Aligned with this ESP will benefit from creating a program environment that provides internal triggers of when it needs to consider changing roles from grantmaker, to player, to researcher, to leader that is strategic rather than solely opportunistic.
3. We will need to be more aware that advancing specific agendas may require uncomfortable alliances with institutions with which we do not outwardly share the same values.

**Annex A: List of Grants in this Portfolio Review, Related Grants and Non Grantees**

**Annex B: Media Coverage by Grants in the Portfolio Review and Related ESP Grants**