

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

Community Education Watch

A Community Based Social Audit Initiative in Primary Education

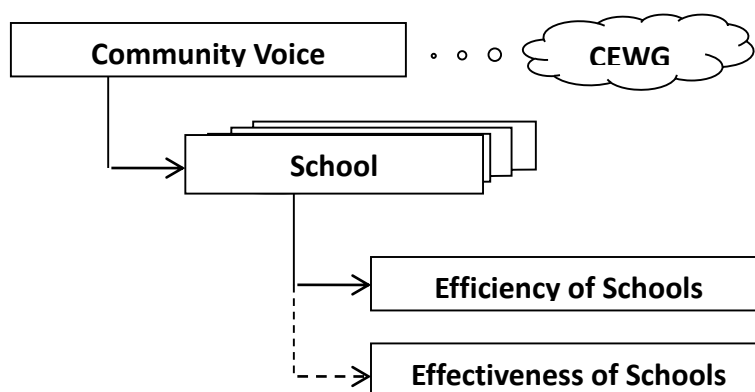
K M Enamul Hoque¹

Introduction and Background

CAMPE is a national coalition of more than one thousand NGOs, dozens of teacher unions and hundreds of researchers working in the basic education sub-sector in Bangladesh. It works very closely with the concerned government agencies, education NGOs and other interested civil society organizations. It has three major roles that include (i) policy advocacy, (ii) research and documentation, and (iii) capacity building of constituency members and stakeholders. CAMPE, through the Education Watch Initiative, has influenced the policy and practice change discourse for the last fifteen years, particularly at the national level.

In 2009, the action research was initiated by CAMPE to engage the local communities to perform a watchdog role in primary education sub-sector which have been evolved over the years and become well-known as *Community Education Watch*. The theory of change is the community voice raised by the community education watch leads to improve school governance that leads to increased efficiency of schools toward effectiveness in the long term with support from other systematic efforts.

Figure-1: Theory of change



Source: CAMPE, 2016

The *Community Education Watch Group* is a demand-driven community based social audit initiative to strengthen the accountability mechanism and to create an enrolment, retention and completion campaign for primary education with quality towards ensuring Right to Education. It is a civil society group at the local level to perform a watchdog role and monitor the progress of implementation of primary education carried out by both state and non-state service providers towards enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

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Simultaneously, efforts were made for facilitating the transition to post-primary level. The idea was evolved during the Education Watch sub-national level sharing. The stakeholders demanded to facilitate a process at the community level to mobilize civil society and developing a mechanism for knowledge transfer which would contribute to achieving EFA. CAMPE responded positively to the stakeholder's demand and took initiative to form Community Education Watch Groups as a pilot program in two areas namely Amjhupi Union of Meherpur Sadar Upazila and Muktinagar Union of Shaghata Upazila in Gaibandha in 2009. Based on the lessons learnt, the initiative was expanded to six areas in 2011. The initiative was further strengthened in 2013 onwards.

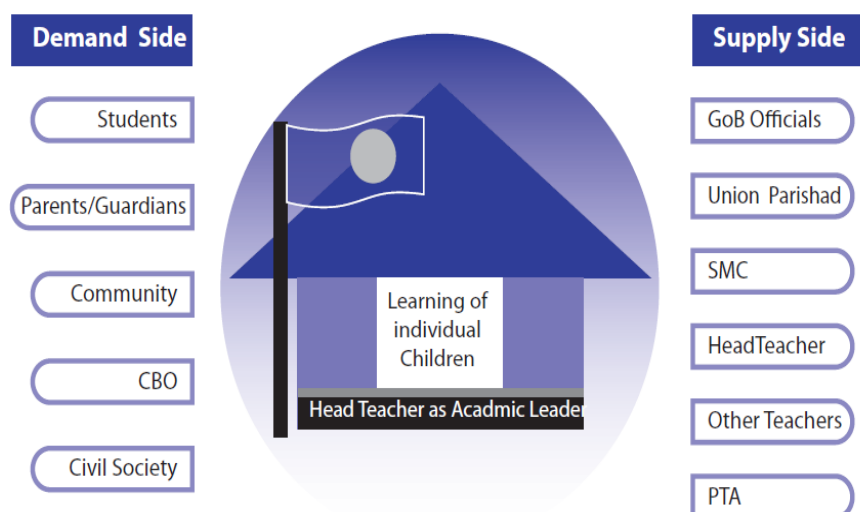
Major Objectives:

The major objective of the Community Education Watch was to inform stakeholders on the progress in various indicators, both internal and external efficiency², in basic education at the community level. Empowering the community with increased knowledge and support to engage with and improve the essential service like education through increased participation and making the school more responsive to the stakeholders' needs. In addition, helping community to carry out some citizenship role including capacity building, awareness-raising, campaign, monitoring, social audit, promoting co-curricular activities, and motivating community for ensuring enrolment of all the eligible children, reduce absenteeism and dropouts, completion of primary education cycle and transition to post-primary education.

Community and Stakeholders

The Community Education Watch defined a union as the core of the local community. However, they have identified numbers of people and official as stakeholders of the education system with an extended community consist of both demand-side and supply-side as follows:

Figure 1: Stakeholders in Primary Education

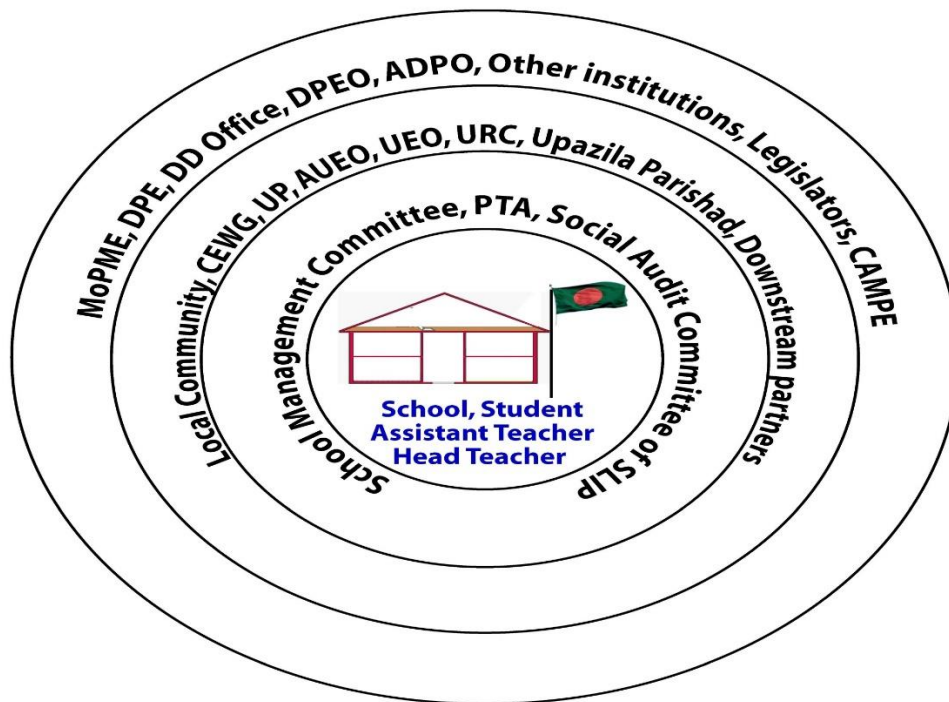


Source: *Community Engagement in Education, CAMPE 2009*

² The term efficiency describes the relationship between inputs and outputs. In education literature, two types of efficiencies are identified: external and internal. When education is seen in the context of broader societal goals such as better health, lower fertility, productive person-power for the labour market, better environment, etc, one talks about **external efficiency**. When output refers to objectives which are internal to the education system such as dropout, enrolment, achievement, etc, one talks about **internal efficiency**.

Some of the stakeholders stay at the community level, some are close to the community and others are far away from the community. The following diagram shows the level of closeness or distance from the community but they have importance in terms of taking a decision and influencing the decision-making process.

Figure 2: Stakeholders distance from the community



Source: *Groups Work of Community Education Watch Groups, CAMPE, 2009*

Major Interventions

A systematic effort was given to selected communities, particularly in 32 unions (List Annexed, Annexure 1) of 8 districts through downstream partners of CAMPE for mobilizing people to form the local community for performing citizenship role and work as a pressure group. They helped schools in improving teachers and student’s attendance, ensure timely enrolment, improve teacher-student contact hours, promote co-curriculum activities for enhancing learning and oversee the governance issue and lobby with the local government and Upazila administration for addressing the needs of the school including infrastructure development and other financing education issues.

Process of Formation of Community Education Watch

Community Education Watch is an innovative idea which is coordinated by the Research Monitoring Evaluation (RMED) Unit of CAMPE. Emphasis has been given of collective learning and values the local knowledge and voluntarism. It is a process-oriented collective action and joint learning interventions with shared responsibility, reward and risk. The process includes an exploratory visit, selecting downstream partners and community, interaction with wider community members and formation of Community Education Watch Group, and assess performance as summarised below:

Step 1: Exploratory Visit Selecting Location or Community

Union has been considered as a unit for the formation of Community Education Watch. While selecting the location importance has been given to most excluded areas in terms of enrolment, dropouts, primary completion and literacy status of the location. In the identification of such areas emphasis has been given to available statistics of BBS, Education Watch, BANBEIS, UNESCO, etc.

A team of CAMPE concerned officials and a local member NGOs of CAMPE has initiated the process. Most of the Community Education Watch Group are located in the most deprived areas; 28 out of 32 are located in UNDAF districts as identified by UNDP. The second preference has been given to willingness of the community to volunteering raising voice for the right to education and willing to perform a watchdog role. The third preference has been given to voluntary attitude of a local member organisation of CAMPE.

Step 2: Selection of Partners

CAMPE partners from the identified areas were selected based on their relationship with CAMPE and experience of working with education activities within the community. Previous experience of the selected NGOs in involving community awareness activities was scrutinised. An advisory committee was formed to identify the areas and potential partners based on selected criteria. A due diligence process has been carried out prior to engagement of the partner organisation.

Step 3: Formal Engagement of Partners

Identified NGOs were requested to provide required services in forming community watch group at the local level in participation with different stakeholders at the community level considering the local NGO as its secretariat. An MoU was signed between CAMPE and the local NGO to provide the required support.

Step 4: Formation of Community Education Watch Groups

NGOs those who signed MoU with CAMPE, have been requested to organize a knowledge sharing meeting in the selected community ensuring the participation of all segments of the community like, local government representatives, elites, retired teachers, parents, Imam, block supervisor, educationists, local leaders, local journalists, etc. to identify the working area and process. Here we can assume that the group preliminary worked on targeting the schools within a ward or a union.

They have talked about the local education-related issues and tried to identify which can be resolved at the school or union level, which needs interventions from Upazila or district level interventions and which issues needs to address at the central level. It helped in empowering communities and creating broad-based ownership of the issue and agree on providing local solutions as much as possible.

The Community Education Watch Groups have been formed through consensus among the participants and communities. They have identified stakeholders and their needs at the community level in education and prepared a potential list of people to form the Community Education Watch group. Although in most cases this consultation come-up

with agreed committee however, in some cases it took more than two meetings, and informal discussions among the potential people, to agree on the combination of the group based on the local context. Considering gender dimensions, women participation has been emphasised. Some communities could include people from ethnic communities and persons with disability to facilitate inclusive decision. The Groups consist of 21-29 people representing each ward of the selected union. They have also agreed on the role of individual responsibility and collective responsibility of the Community Education Watch Group.

Step 5: Consolidation of the issues and develop an action plan

Based on the issues discussed in the community consultations, the Community Education Watch and the Local partner organisation has developed a consolidated list of issues and prioritised actions along with some timeline and indicative resource required. CAMPE has reviewed the plan and helped in sharpening the Result Framework focused on community engagement and voice raising to make the school and local authority more responsive to the stakeholders' needs. Involvement of local NGOs considered critical in coordinating and facilitating the process.

Step 6: Action Plan and Reporting

The Community Education Watch Groups have been trained jointly by CAMPE and local NGO to deliver their responsibilities in a systematic manner keeping the noble view to change the education status of the community positively. Considering the distance and convenience of work, some of the community education watch groups have divided them into small groups consist of 3-5 or 7-9 people with specific responsibilities e.g. collecting information, perform watchdog role, and mentoring parents and communities on a regular basis. They have also conducted the social audit and use other accountability mechanisms including citizens report card and community scorecards to make the school and local government more accountable to the community needs by ensuring transparency. The small groups usually sit twice in a month, review the progress and identify next steps in consultation with the chairperson or member secretary.

All issues are discussed in the Community Education Watch groups meeting and communicated with CAMPE periodically. The general information is communicated on a quarterly basis. However, any urgent issues, if arises, were communicated immediately. CAMPE has used that information at the national level advocacy in terms of communication and coordination, media reporting, sharing in the meeting and developing position papers and charter of demands including the national level budget advocacy and education sector plans.

On review, it was observed that the activities carried out by Community Education Watch Groups can be clustered into five major categories namely (a) preparedness interventions, (b) capacity enhancement of the community and the schools, (c) issue-based campaign, (d) dialogues and consultation, and (e) reporting, dissemination and follow-up.

Figure -3: Major interventions by the Community Education Watch

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preparatory Work – Identification of excluded areas – Identification of local partners – Selection of community – Formation of CEW Groups – Baseline development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Joyful Learning – Popular Sports and Cultural Programs – Good governance (basic course and refreshers) – School Level Annual Accountability Plan (focused on SLIP and learners performance) – Social Audit focused on SLIP along with follow-up interventions – Visit good performing schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue Based Campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cultural program, rally, sharing meeting, Book fair, enrolment campaign, etc.) – School based sports and cultural campaign – Books we want to read Campaign – Observance of Global Action Week for Education (GAWE), International Literacy Day, and World Teacher's Day – Budget Campaign, tax justice and tax power Campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogues and consultations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sharing session/orientation of SMC, PTA and UP standing committee – Meeting with local authority – Consultation on Teaching-learning Process – Sharing of Good Practices on learning achievements – Community level and national level Dialogue – Bi-monthly coordination meeting – Review and Reflection of Community Education Watch
<p>Reporting, dissemination and Follow-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community Report Card – Social audit of SLIP – Bi-monthly Community Newsletter – Follow-up interventions – series of interventions 	

Source: Quarterly Reports of the Community Education Watch Groups

Additional Learning Initiatives

As part of the mandate, CAMPE tried to document some lessons learnt from the Shibram Model Government Primary School along with facilitating replication of good practices towards the improvement of school-level governance. CAMPE has facilitated about 20 learning visit to Shibram Model Government Primary School during 2009 to 2014 where a total of 387 people including head teacher/principal, assistant teacher, SMC member, Community Education Watch Group Member, Union Parishad representatives (both chairman and members), sub-national level education officials, representatives from downstream partner & member NGOs and representatives of development partners among others.

Later on, a systematic effort was developed to visit good schools in different parts of the countries including good performing schools in Kaliakair, (Gazipur), Dupchacia (Bogra), Arpara (Magura), Bhola Sadar, and Mujibnagar (Meherpur) among others.

Conclusion

This effort is completely a new step for CAMPE and also a very new national effort that might help the country to bring its children to school. As a result of the initiative, the community become more aware and proactively engaged in a watchdog role, the local ownership leads to increased enrolment, decreased absenteeism and dropouts, child marriage, access to school for the persons with disabilities, and more functional SMC. Many of the lessons have linkage with the national level planning process including a revisit of the SLIP increased community engagement and promotion of sports and cultural activists in schools.

Annexure -1: List of Community Education Watch Groups

Sl.	Union	Upazila (Sub-district)	District	Partner Organization
1	Amjhupi	Meherpur	Meherpur	MUK
2	Muktinagar	Saghata	Gaibandha	USS
3	Tegoria	Hobijong Sadar	Hobijang	ASED
4	Sedhuli	Madarjong	Jamalpur	APUS
5	Chansra	Tujumuddin	Bhola	GJUS
6	Brishri	Durgapur	Netrokona	SERAA
7	Monakhali,	Mujibnagar	Meherpur	MUK
8	Amdoh	Meherpur Sadar	Meherpur	MUK
9	Dariapur	Mujibnagar	Meherpur	MUK
10	Charsamaya	Bhola Sadar	Bhola	GJUS
11	Veduria	Bhola Sadar	Bhola	GJUS
12	Dhulighar Nagar	Lalmohon	Bhola	GJUS
13	Dhangora	Rayganj	Sirajganj	NDP
14	Panghashi	Raiganj	Sirajganj	NDP
15	Jhawail	Kamarkhand	Sirajganj	NDP
16	Bhadrohat	Kamarkhand	Sirajganj	NDP
17	Sahosh	Dhumuria	Khulna	Asroy Foundation
18	Sarabpur	Dhumuria	Khulna	Asroy Foundation
19	Batiadanga	Amirpur	Khulna	Asroy Foundation
20	Batiadanga	Baliadanga	Khulna	Asroy Foundation
21	Fulchari	Fulchari	Gaibandha	USS
22	Gazoria	Fulchari	Gaibandha	USS
23	Shaghata	Shaghata	Gaibandha	USS
24	Durgapur	Durgapur	Netrokona	SERRA
25	Agia	Purbodhala	Netrokona	SERRA
26	Hogla	Purbodhala	Netrokona	SERRA
27	Gopaiya	Sadar	Habiganj	ASED
28	Laskarpur	Sadar	Habiganj	ASED
29	Nizampur	Sadar	Habiganj	ASED
30	Jorkhali	Madarganj	Jamalpur	APUS
31	Ghoserpara	Malendha	Jamalpur	APUS
32	Fulchochha	Malendha	Jamalpur	APUS