Reaching Educational Quality Goals in Sub Saharan Africa:

A look at Complementary Education Systems

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Introduction

Education in Sub Saharan Africa is failing to meet the basic literacy needs of children particularly in rural deprived areas of the continent (UNESCO, 2001). Public spending on education has not been pro poor and has failed to target the most needy populations and localities (Canagarajah and Xiao; 2000). Studies by Schaefer suggest that the majority of developing countries are unable to sustain basic literacy levels within their populations. Several countries across the sub continent have completed extensive educational policy reform but have fallen short in achieving the required level of equity and quality needed to transform their societies (Buchert, 1998; Moulton, Mundy, Welmond and Williams, 1999). Basic education continues to be of poor quality due to context specific factors, increasing levels of poverty, socio-cultural trends as well as inequitable patterns of educational development in rural areas (Colclough, Rose and Tembon, 1998; Casely-Hayford, 2000).

This paper will explore issues of context, poverty and cultural practice, which continue to limit the attainment of global goals for universal basic education particularly in Africa. The paper will also consider complementary educational approaches, which have improved basic literacy, access and quality standards in deprived areas in India, Bangladesh, Mali, and Ghana. The study highlights approaches for reaching "under-served children" in rural deprived areas and argues for support to complementary education systems in order to close the widening access and quality gap between rural Africa and the rest of the world.

The paper will explore the relationship between context, and educational attainment in resource poor areas of sub-Saharan Africa using empirical evidence. It will outline complementary education systems reaching under-served children and identify principles/practices, which emerged from a cross-country study on complementary education systems. Finally, it will explore approaches for generating pro poor **policy** within the education sector using case studies from Africa and South Asia.

1.0 Poor Outcomes for Poor Children

Over a decade after the Education for All Conference (EFA) in Jomtien and reaching into the mid term since the Senegal EFA Conference (2000), Governments in sub Saharan Africa are far from achieving goals set despite higher investments of GNP and the increases of donor assistance to the Education Sector. According to the IMF/World Bank, 2002 assessment on International EFA goals set for the year 2015 a large proportion of countries (88) will fall far short of achieving EFA goals within the developing world (IMF/World Bank, 2002). Several countries in sub Saharan Africa will have difficulty achieving the access, participation and equity goals in areas where there is a high incidence of poverty (Casely-Hayford, 2002).

Most disheartening are the increasing trends towards low retention and poor quality within the existing public basic education systems in rural areas. Schaefer (2000) in a global study on “Assessing Learning Achievement” suggests that there is a large variation in literacy and numeracy rates when considering mastery levels across the developing world. His study on “Assessing Learning Achievement: A Global Analysis” was carried out in 35 developing countries. Each country established a notion of minimum mastery level for testing purposes. The results indicate the following:

Table 1: Countries Achieving Literacy and Numeracy Mastery

Area of Study	Number of countries	% Achieving mastery level	Regional Results
Literacy	13 of 33 countries	Less than 50% achieving mastery	Highest in Central Europe, then East Asia, Latin America, Africa, South Asia and the Arab States
Numeracy	19 of 30 countries	Less than 50% achieving mastery	Highest in Central Europe, then the Arab States, South Asia, South America, Africa and East Asia.
Life Skills	4 of 19 countries	Less than 50% achieving Mastery	

(Based on Schaefer, 2000)

Schaefer's (2000) study concluded that a large proportion of children do not have basic functional skills to read, write and enumerate after year four of their educational experience. He also concluded that less than half of the children are reaching a basic level of numeracy in terms of number skills by year four in 19 of the 29 countries analysed. In 14 of the 18 countries assessing literacy in English, less than 50% of students achieved basic levels of mastery. More than 50% of students achieved mastery in 6 of the 8 countries testing for mother tongue literacy. The study also found that there was a significant inequality of access and provision for girls, rural and remote area locations, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups which result in very wide disparities in learning outcomes for school age children within each country (Schaefer, 2000).

Country analysis across sub Saharan Africa suggests similar trends and supports the findings that levels of mastery in literacy, numeracy and life skills are very low particularly within rural areas (Oxfam, 2002). This is particularly apparent within areas, which are experiencing a high incidence and depth of poverty and where teachers and formal education systems are not performing as their urban counterparts (Casely-Hayford, 2002b). Studies in West Africa reveal that culture and context are intimately linked to learning achievement and quality of education in Africa. Studies carried out by Pryor, and Ghartey Ampiah (2002) and Casely-Hayford (2000) suggest that formal schooling is failing to provide rural children with the basic literacy skills needed for productive adult life. Schools and teachers in rural areas are far too often failing children at basic education level depriving them of literacy and numeracy skills even after six years of schooling.

Studies in Ghana suggest that there are tremendous inequalities between students attending rural schools compared to their urban counterparts (Casely-Hayford, 2002) (see table 1a) and between regions where there is a high incidence of poverty. Results from the last Criteria Reference Test (CRT) scores across Ghana reveal that 36.4% of pupils attain mastery in English and 31.2 % of pupils attain mastery in Mathematics (Ministry of Education, 1999). There are significant regional differences in educational quality and performance within the public education system. For instance, the mastery level in English in public schools in an urban capital city (Accra) is 20.3% while only 3.1% for rural public schools in northern Ghana attain mastery (Casely-Hayford, 2002: 20) (see table 1b).

The socio-economic context and location of schooling in sub Saharan Africa is becoming one of the key factors, which restrict children from attaining, and progressing through the public school system often leading to drop out and illiteracy in later age. Families in rural Africa, dependant on subsistence seasonal farming are making tremendous investments in basic education particularly due to loss of child labour on the farm and direct costs of schooling when they send a child to school. Studies point to the sub standard education systems in rural areas due to teacher indiscipline, lack of supervision by educational authorities, lack of schoolbooks and basic materials and socio-cultural factors, which prevent children from achieving a basic level of literacy (Pryor, 2002).

A study carried out in Northern Ghana where there is high incidence of poverty suggest that poor quality education results in poor learning outcomes for children often further impoverishing the family and the child in later life (Casely-Hayford, 2000). The study also found that process of rural schooling is affected by poor teaching performance, lack of teacher commitment and indiscipline exemplified in poor teacher attendance in many of the rural schools studied. Home factors such as high levels of parental illiteracy, labour demand and lack of parental support for children are the main causes of high drop out and low retention particularly among girls (Sutherland Addy, 2002; Boakye, J. K. A, S. Agyeman-Duah, J. Osei, and M. Brew-Ward, (1997)).

The intimate patterns of behaviour and the communities way of life is inextricably linked to its survival as a community and in the midst of harsh environmental contexts, families are focussed on basic survival and ensuring household food security. The child's role in the subsistence-farming context is essential and can often have a direct impact on the nuclear and extended families ability to attain a basic quality of life. Educating children during the day when they could be on the farm helping family members is a high price to pay for a poor quality of education.

Most African Countries have established policies and programmes to reach EFA goals. Poverty reduction strategies have been developed to improve the underlying context in which education is taking place. Unfortunately reaching children in deprived rural areas takes a much more strategic mix of approaches to ensure that educational provision is effective in helping children from poor families attain basic literacy and numeracy skills (Casely-Hayford, 2002b; CARE, 2002a). The following section will explore several programmes and educational principles, which emerged, from the cross-country case study on complementary education systems across the developing world.

2.0 The Study Focus and Methodology

A study to investigate complementary education approaches that improve access and increase educational quality for underserved populations in Africa was conducted by a team of researchers from October 2002 to January 2003[1]. The study was focused on two key questions:

- What types of complimentary education services have been effective in reaching the under served, especially female populations in rural deprived areas?
- What complimentary education mechanisms/ processes have been the most successful and why?

[1] The author was the lead researcher on a study called Reaching Underserved Populations with Basic Education in Deprived Areas of Ghana: Emerging Good Practices, Section 1, Accra, Ghana

Complementary education programmes refer to programmes which provide learners with basic literacy, numeracy and other essential life skills involving flexible approaches to educational programming taking into consideration the contextual circumstances, life goals and socio-economic demands of families from the areas they serve.

The study used primarily a qualitative design and case study approach that was supported by documentary analysis and profiling of complementary education programmes around the world. A team of seven researchers were involved in the study, bringing together global and Africa based researchers from the NGO, Government and Private Sector. There were two main components to the study: an international literature review of complementary education programmes and an intensive field work component to study complementary education programmes based in remote rural areas of northern Ghana[2].

The team surveyed over 30 complementary education programmes around the world and selected 13 programmes, which had indicators of success and scale within Asia and Africa for in-depth analysis. The case study selection was based on the following parameters.

- Contextual fit of the programme to the local environmental needs
- Programme objectives, principles and modes of operation
- Impact on children and indications of effectiveness
- Educational Effectiveness of programming
- Scale of the programme

All complementary educational programmes selected had achieved a level of scale and recognition within their national and/or international community. Three of the 13 projects were investigated within northern Ghana and were seen as key models of complementary education by the implementing NGO's and wider educational community. Three main types of complementary education programmes emerged from the study: community schools, literacy and numeracy programmes and supplementary education programmes (see annex 2 for examples of different types)[3]. For the purposes of this paper we have focussed on the first two categories of complementary education systems.

The projects within the Ghanaian context were reviewed using access/ retention, achievement and performance data, and sustainability (district financial commitment). A multiplicity of approaches was used to examine these issues including semi-structured interviews with stakeholders at the district (e.g., District Education officials) and local community level (e.g., teachers, student, community members), and a review of indicators relating to access, retention and quality.

[2] The initial design for the research did include field trips to Mali and Togo but lack of time resulted in the research team focusing on a few case studies within Northern Ghana.

[3] Community School programmes involve a systematic more locally appropriate system whereby the community defines and manages the education system. Literacy and numeracy programmes are more flexible systems of education often accelerated and flexible for a shorter period of time. Supplementary education systems tend to be NGO driven interventions within the formal school system, which attempt to improve quality. (See annex 2)

2.1 Cross country educational contexts

Before turning to the findings from the study it is important to situate complementary educational programmes within the context of the five countries.

India experiences very low levels of female literacy particularly in Rajasthan where female literacy is at 12% and 19% in Uttar Pradesh where the complementary education programmes are located. The national literacy average is 41% (2000). It will take more than 9 decades for females to reach universal literacy. These two states are among the lowest literacy rates in India.

The current literacy rate in Bangladesh is 35 percent. This is low compared to other low-income countries where the literacy rate is about 60 percent. Bangladesh spends only 2 percent of its GNP on education where as an average income country spends about 3.2 percent on education and high-income countries spend 6 percent on education. Children's school performance in rural Bangladesh is extremely poor. About 40 percent of children never enroll in school. Among those who enter primary school, only 40 percent complete and only 7% complete secondary school.

In 1988, Mali had a national net enrolment rate of 18 percent, (23 percent for boys and 14 percent for girls). The community school programme was initiated in the district, Kolondieba, by Save the Children (USA) with a school attendance rate of 14 percent in the 1988. Adult literacy was so low that it was proving a major obstacle to development projects in the areas of water, health, credit and agriculture. The initiation of the village school idea was started in 1992 and emerged from three years of experimentation with other models of expanding educational access, such as school infrastructure and the provision of adult literacy classes (Hyde, 1999).

National statistics indicate that the literacy rate among adults in Ghana is less than 65% and less than 40% of the children (up to 14 years) complete basic education. This means that the vast majority of children do not complete the compulsory nine years of basic education nor do they attain a basic level of literacy. The northern region of the country has the lowest enrolment rates and highest child drop out rates across the country

Girls' primary enrollment rate in Egypt is 64% of the national average and boy's primary enrolment rate is 20% below Egypt's national average (81.7%). Girls' primary completion rate is (58%) as a % of boy's primary completion rate, which is more than 25% Egypt's average (82%). Average household sizes are 6-7 persons with 90% illiteracy rate among mothers.

2.2 International Findings on Complementary Education Systems

The international survey of complementary education systems suggests that complementary education systems function primarily through the efforts of non-governmental agencies and civil society partnerships (see Table 2 below). There are several different factors, which characterise the nature of their systems such as: the curriculum and content, the target groups, modes of implementation, community and district involvement, child outcomes and sustainability factors. The findings from the international review of complementary education systems suggested that:

The Nature of Complementary Education Systems

Complementary education systems provide a structured learning programme in a non-institutional environment. They are often based on a learner centred curriculum and use a flexible more contextually suited schedule, which is defined in consultation with community members, parents and sometimes the children themselves. The socio economic context and family survival demands define the goals and sometimes the approach to complementary education (i.e. costs to parents, timing of the school and preparation for the child).

Learner driven and competency based curriculum

Programmes reviewed were found to reflect the local cultural traditions, customs and experiences of the people. They also developed materials, which reflected the needs of the community integrating local stories directly into the learner's books. Most of the programmes begin by providing local language training to the students within a short time frame before moving to the English language. Often a simple yet well-tested methodology was used based on the local language or a "Freirian" approaches to adult literacy adapted to the child learner (School for Life, Ghana). Other programmes were using a more focussed curriculum based on the Governments basic curriculum targets (BRAC, UDAAN).

Most of the curriculum integrated local priorities such as the learner's needs in order to become a functioning member of the community. For instance in Egypt there are several religious and secular subjects integrated into the curriculum in community schools in order to make the education programme acceptable to the local religious and community leaders. Curriculum goals were mainly focussed on literacy numeracy and general life skills such as problem solving and decision-making. In Egypt, India, Mali and Ghana programmes targeted competencies in literacy and numeracy, which were immediately practical for the students. The teaching and learning materials were based on local language and culture bridging the gap between home and school. These also helped to facilitate learning in the community by laying the foundation for activities, which promote participation, exploration and inquiry by the learner.

Instruction: Teachers / facilitators were often from the locality or at least the district in which they were serving. All teachers were familiar with the language, educational and community context in which they were working. Most of the complementary educational programmes were using high school graduates as teachers' particularly female teachers. Volunteer teachers were given a short training course and introduced to the programmes curriculum/ methodology, which was used in the programme.

The vast majority of children participating in these programmes were between the ages of 6-15 years of age. Some programmes are particularly designed for 10-15 year olds in order to target pre youth who are either school dropouts or have never attended formal schooling. Instructional methods including "peer tutoring" and small group work sometimes self-paced are often used. This is the case in India's Equivalency Centres where learning takes place with teachers introducing new curriculum to the group and then students working in small groups to complete exercises.

Accelerated Learning Approach: The timing of the programme was another unique factor in complementary education programming, which often resulted in a better outcomes for the child and the family. Programmes were accelerated and/or compressed in order to impart basic literacy and numeracy skills within the shortest period of time. Many of the complementary education

programmes aimed at achieving a basic level of literacy within the shortest period of time in order to reduce the opportunity costs involved for parents. The amount of time learners spent in the programmes was reduced because of the flexible curriculum, teacher commitment and instructional approach. Community Schools in Egypt and India allowed learners to advance in a non-consecutive manner. In Egypt a compressed curriculum during the summer months enabled learners to move to the next grade if they passed an exam at the end of the school year (Small Schools). In Ghana, a more accelerated educational programme enabled learners to achieve basic literacy and numeracy skills within 9 months (School for Life).

Implementation and sustainability

The complementary education programmes were often implemented and facilitated through the support of Non Governmental Organisations with varied levels of input from National Governments. The vast majority of these models were developed through extensive field research and a long-term commitment by the implementing agencies in order to effect change in the areas they serve. Community and district authorities involvement and interaction with complementary education systems was essential to their success and sustainability in the areas they serve.

The study revealed that there was a high level of formal and informal women's involvement in most of the programmes in order to gain support for implementation, ensure student enrolment and retention particularly for girls. Some of the complementary education programmes helped to form "mothers groups" in order for women with no or little education to be involved in the school by keeping the school clean, encouraging children to attend on a regular basis and informally monitor the school and teacher attendance.

There is also a high level of community involvement in the design and implementation of the programmes. One essential difference between formal and complementary education systems is that the primary responsibility for the educational achievement rests with the community and not the government. All programmes include a high level of community participation often involving the support or remuneration for the volunteer teachers. Communities' mobilize their own resources—monetary, labour, manpower—for the provision, supervision and maintenance of their own facilities and take an active role in monitoring the school for effectiveness and efficiency. This increased community responsibility reduces isolation between the community and the teacher.

Outcomes and Student Achievement

The most important findings from the study revealed that on an international and national level--complementary education systems were providing children with educational opportunities and basic literacy/numeracy/life skill outcomes which had not been seen in other more formalised systems operational in the same areas. Evaluation reports from the complementary education systems reviewed suggest that programmes were effective in increasing access to underserved and hard to reach populations. They also revealed that in some programmes achievement rates in literacy and numeracy were higher in comparison to the formal education systems operational in the area (School for Life (2001).

Cost effectiveness

The complementary education study revealed that basic literacy rates were being achieved in accelerated time frames from that of the formal system and often at a lower cost to both the NGO and the family who were supporting the children in the system. This had tremendous implications for Government financing of education in Africa. The lower cost of the systems was mainly due to the higher levels of commitment by the volunteer teachers, lower costs in teacher remuneration and lower costs incurred for both pre service and in service training. The systems also depended on higher levels of community support and resourcing. Surprisingly volunteer teachers hired by communities and NGO's in most of the projects surveyed in Ghana demonstrated higher levels of interest and commitment to their work in the classroom than trained teachers working in the same region. Some of the factors related to the increased teacher commitment included a desire on the part of volunteer teachers to serve their own communities, higher levels of supervision, training and incentive packages. Table 2 reviews the main findings from selected case studies in the study.

Table 2: Description of Complementary Educational Programmes

Country	Type of Programme	Curriculum and Instruction	Scope, target group and results
India	UDDAN (girls Residential Camps)	Community school (with links to formal school system) and alternative education schemes using local languages to promote literacy. Intensive 10-month residential course to provide girls with education equivalent to grade 5 in formal schools with Hindi as medium of instruction. Two strands of curriculum: 1) main strand—competencies equivalent to formal primary classes (literacy and numeracy) and 2) social strand—focus on development of intra and interpersonal skills including gender, social, and cultural issues.	Primary focus on children who have had limited or no access to formal school, with an emphasis on girls, between the ages of 10-14 years, who have never been to school or have dropped out of formal schooling. Graduates of UDAAN have become change agents and role models in community; 270 girls applied for admission in second year of program—up from 96 in year 1.
	Formal Equivalency Centres	Curriculum is equivalent to formal school basic curriculum; emphasis is on free pace of learning and children construction knowledge by active participation, exploration, and inquiry. Learning is self-paced and when student completes one level (module) advances to the next module. Learning often takes place through peer tutoring and small groups with teachers introducing new curricular item to the group at large. Medium of instruction is Hindi. English is introduced at class 3; equivalent to formal school system. When formal schools are started in Community Schools, Community School is closed down, students are mainstreamed into formal system and Community School teachers work in the formal school for 6 months to help raise the quality of teaching and learning taking place in the classroom.	Children who do not have access to a formal school between the ages of 6-14 year with a focus on the girl student; pre-primary section of Community School or Early Childhood Centres (3-6 years) Community Schools are in areas (200-500 people) where barriers exist in accessing the formal school system such as: physical, social (e.g., caste system) or socio-economic (e.g., intensive child labour situations).

Country	Type of Programme	Curriculum and Instruction	Scope, target group and results
Bangladesh	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Basic Education for Older Children	The BRAC curriculum has been tailored to suit the needs of rural children. Most recently, it has been adjusted to cater to the needs of urban children too. The curriculum covers the five-year primary curriculum. As more than 90% of the BRAC graduates continue in the formal system, the curriculum incorporates competencies set out by the government for formal primary schools. The curriculum design encourages a learner-centred participatory approach. The teacher encourages group learning and participation.	Complementary education intervention with provision of basic literacy classes for children and their mothers. There are two primary school models in the BRAC Education Program. In 1985, the Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) model was initiated as a three-year program for children between the ages of 8 and 10 years. These were children who had never enrolled in any school or who had dropped out from the formal schools. In 1998, this model was expanded to a four-year program that covers the primary curriculum for grades 1 to 5. The BEOC (Basic Education for Older Children) schools known as Kishor-Kishori schools were opened in 1987. These schools run for three-years catering to the basic educational needs of 11 to 14 year old children. Program has more than 8,000 schools; concept has been emulated by NGO's in other countries (e.g., SAVE (USA) Community Schools in Mali are comparable) with similar circumstances of low literacy rates amongst rural inhabitants.
Ghana	School for Life	The SFL program operates a 5-day week for a 3-hour period (typically from 2-5 p.m.). Instruction focuses on three core instructional areas: literacy, numeracy and writing in mother tongue or the child's first language (L1). Two primers have been written in minority languages. A Facilitators Manual has also been developed as well as several supplementary readers for children. In addition, a radio program has been developed to supplement the teachers' instructional materials and broadcast lessons for the classes.	The service delivery component of SFL is primarily targeted at the rural out of school children between 8 and 14 years of age who are normally not enrolled in formal school due to the pressures on the farm and various socio-economic reasons. The program requires that at least 50% of the students are female. Classes are a maximum size of 25 students per village. It is expected that around 40,000 children will be enrolled in SfL classes in phase 3 meaning that approximately 8,000 children are enrolled in the program every year on average. Experience from Phase 2 shows that approximately 62% will continue into the formal system, which means that about 25,000 children will enter the formal system throughout phase 3.
Egypt	Small School Model Programme	Small Schools: Formal curriculum used in schools and taught with child-centred methodology and complemented with activities that reflects cultural and social realities of communities e.g., library activities, theatre, sons, trips, artistic work. MOE curriculum followed; activities and teaching methods used to simplify curriculum; use of "New Horizons' curriculum to raise students and families	For children, particularly girls (75% of enrolled) within compulsory age of education, who are not already registered in schools or who have dropped out during their primary education? School's aim is to enhance girls' opportunities for education. Admission age: 8 – 12 years of age. Small Schools (basic education equivalent of formal schools—minimum age of 8 years, not to exceed 12 years, for enrolment). Two teachers are in charge of

Country	Type of Programme	Curriculum and Instruction	Scope, target group and results
		awareness of certain issues (e.g., sanitation, gender, reproductive health)	classroom instruction (teacher criteria: inhabitant of village; socially accepted)
Mali's	Community School Programme	The curriculum is three-years, covering reading, writing (in Bamanan) and Mathematics. Additional material focuses on village life and the promotion of local knowledge.	Enrolment is restricted to children from the village and instructors are members of the community who had either spent five years in a formal school or been trained by SCF/US for literacy work. The community, at a minimum rate, pays them approximately one-ninth the cost of a government teacher.

(Based on Literature Review of Complementary Systems, 2003)

2.3 Ghana Based Findings

A closer look at three programmes in Northern Ghana where fieldwork was conducted assisted the research team determine the degree to which basic literacy skills were being achieved in a faster and more cost effective manner in the communities they operated. The School for Life Programme in Northern Ghana best fits the model of complementary educational programming, which is flexible, contextually adapted and culturally relevant to the learners in the programme. School for Life, a literacy and numeracy program for 8-14 year old children in eight districts in Ghana's Northern Region, works in rural deprived areas that have limited or no access to educational opportunities.

The programme was started over 7 years ago and is situated in areas where there is an acute shortage of teachers leading to a situation where schools are not functioning effectively. The fieldwork also revealed that settlements were small, sparsely populated and widely scattered in Northern Ghana. Studies in Northern Ghana suggested that formal education was alienating children from their culture and traditional way of life on the farm (Wolf, J and Odonkor, 1997).

Field research indicated that several of the districts where the programme was operational were experiencing very poor access and retention rates. Approximately 39% of children in Lawra district in the Upper West of Ghana were out of school and about 40% of communities in the Sissala District, Upper West were without schools. In Lawra district, of the Upper East, about 78% of the people were classified as illiterate and only 5% of the population over 11 year olds had ever been to primary school. Several key challenges emerged during the study in the rural areas of northern Ghana mainly that chronic teacher absenteeism adversely affected the formal learning environment. Poor communities were found to be disempowered and felt unable to face the District and Regional Education authorities with their problems of absentee teachers due to fear that the authorities would not post more teachers.

The School for Life Programme was designed to reach children living in these scattered communities, which had either dropped out of formal schooling, or had never attended school and were between the ages of 8 -14. The SFL programme had 767 communities participating in the programme and had enrolled more than 50,000 learners (School for Life, 2001). SFL had covered more than 25% of the communities it had worked with over the last 7 years of which 36,044 learners had enrolled in the formal system after completing school for life and representing over 50% of its population being mainstreamed. The main goal of School for Life

was to provide children with basic literacy and numeracy skills in order to become active and productive citizens.

Access and Participation

Access and retention rates in the districts with SFL programs have improved significantly; over 80% of School for Life graduates have continued onto the formal school system (primary, junior and senior secondary levels. Some School for Life graduates were unable to continue through the formal system due to lack of financial support and lack of schools in close proximity (11,000). Table 3.0 reveals the findings regarding access and retention:

Table 3*: SfL learners1995-2001 (30 districts)*

	Male	**Female**	**Total**
Initial enrolment in SFL	21,346	14, 698	36,044
Graduated from SfL	19,778	13,344	33,122
Dropped-out of SfL	1,345	1,805	3,150
# Transitioning to formal schools	12,996	9,094	22,090

(Fieldwork, January 2003)

Quality of Education

A significant difference between SfL and the formal school system is that SfL provides all teaching and learning materials required for each school child and does not require formal uniforms to be worn by pupils therefore reducing the cost to parents. The SfL program classes are also organised at a time suitable to the communities in order that pupils are available to help their parents on the farms and with household chores. The SFL school term runs from October to June, (9-month cycle) which is the dry season in order to avoid the major farming season when children are required on the farms.

The textbook to pupil ratio in SFL schools is 1:1. Instruction is sequential with emphasis on the phonetic approach to language learning. During the fieldwork the study team randomly tested some SfL pupils who were asked to read English. Pupils performed creditably in the random tests and pupils used the same phonetic reading approach acquired through SfL instruction to pronounce English words. The study team found SfL instructional approach was very participatory, interactive and child-centred.

Basic Literacy Acquisition

Teachers in the northern districts where SFL operates reported that a significant number of SFL students were able to transfer their literacy skills from the local language into the English and were often performing much better than children who had exposure only to the formal school system. A district official interviewed recommended “all pupils attend SfL before they entered the formal school system”. Performance Monitoring Tests (PMT) conducted by District Education officers confirmed that the SLF program had made a significant impact on improving the PMT results in schools where there were School for Life graduates.

The SfL evaluation report (2001) indicated that after 9 months of teaching, random testing of pupils showed that:

- 1/3 of pupils could read very well and write on their own
- 1/3 of pupils could read fairly well and could write a few words
- 1/3 could read with difficulty. (School for Life, 2001)

The study found that the School for Life program was able to achieve significant gains in basic education. Over 60% of the children enrolled in School for Life were able to reach a satisfactory level of proficiency in reading, writing and had basic math competencies after 9 months of the programme. The efficient and effective system of in-service support for teachers reinforced good practice and dealt with facilitator's instructional challenges. Finally, communities played an active role in managing the school system. Communities also began acting as "watchdogs" to ensure that facilitators/teachers were doing their job and that children go to school.

3.0 Implications for Improving Quality and Achieving Education for All in Sub Saharan Africa

Achieving Education for All and improving the human development status of people in remote rural areas of sub Saharan Africa will largely depend on improving educational quality within these contexts. Increasing levels of poverty and the scourge of HIV/AIDS will make it more difficult to find ways of sustaining the formal education systems, attracting and retaining trained teachers and reaching children with educational provision in remote areas (Casely-Hayford, 2001; Bennell et. al). Already there is a tremendous shortfall in trained teachers in these areas and with the onslaught of HIV/AIDS it will become even more difficult to find the needed teachers to improve quality. Equitable financing for basic education is also proving difficult within rural sub Saharan African where pressures for financing all educational sub sectors does not help to balance historic inequalities within countries and regions (Orivel, 2002). Most importantly as poverty indicators suggest a deepening of poverty, families and communities will need to see short and long term results from their educational systems to continue investing (Casely-Hayford, 2002b).

Facing up to socio economic and contextual realities

Complementary Education systems for the rural poor in Africa hold a key to providing basic education in deprived and under resourced areas. Complementary systems, which provide a cost effective means for assisting rural subsistence families benefit from basic education and in some cases, help the next generation of children escape the poverty cycle need more attention by Government and Donor Agencies involved in basic education. More focus on complementary education in terms of financing, research and government/donor involvement is necessary to reach EFA goals. Increasing funds to the civil society sector/ NGOs who in most cases are already designing and implementing complementary education programmes is essential to their sustainability and potential for scale up[4]. All too often, complementary education is not considered within education budgets and aid packages due to the fear that resources may be taken away from the formal public education system. Instead children who remain out of reach of the formal system continue to make up the growing proportion of out of school children in sub Saharan Africa. Quality Basic Education can only be achieved through radical innovative approaches, which include interventions, which are designed to reach the underserved in Africa

[4] One of USAID's key areas of focus for the next four years in Ghana will be providing support for complementary education systems in the northern region of the country (CARE, 2003). Ethiopia and Mali have both supported complementary education programmes through their national budgets (Ethiopia Ministry of Education, 2000).

where the vast majority of children are either out of school or have dropped out.

UNESCO's Institute for Statistics notes that 13 of the 15 countries with less than half of the official age population enrolled in schools are in Africa. Africa accounts for one third of the worlds out of school population—although it accounts for only 12% of the world's children between the ages of 6 and 11. Across the continent, between a quarter and one third of the children who enrol in primary one drop out by the time they reach primary five (International Consultative Forum on Education for All (2000).

Programs reflecting local cultural traditions, and educational experiences that respect positive cultural practices, belief systems, and needs of communities and at the same time integrate these into curriculum are having success in mobilising communities and ensuring high levels of literacy and numeracy. This study revealed that there are three key elements that constitute an effective complementary education curriculum and instructional approach: 1) learner-driven and learner-focused, 2) flexible and culturally appropriate, and 3) skills oriented/competency-based. These basic education programs contain an accelerated learning program component.

Learner-driven and learner-focused*:* The context typically determines what the learner wants and needs to learn in order to be a functioning member of the community as well as to foster community support and acceptance of the education program. Instructional methods allow for peer tutoring and small group work. In India, the curriculum is self-paced. Learning takes place with teachers introducing new curricular item to the group at large and students working in small groups to complete the exercises.

Flexible and culturally appropriate: The curriculum is based on existing (country-specific) programs and materials that are outlined with input from local communities as well as appropriate flexible (seasonal) calendars and timetables. By including various local stakeholders in the process, the programs reflect local norms, needs and resources. The determination of whether teachers should be drawn from the community or come from outside lies in the ability of the programme to foster cultural acceptance of education development.

Skills-oriented/competency based: Program design and content target specific competencies in literacy and numeracy, as well as general life skills such as problem solving and decision-making. In Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Mali, and Togo program design and content target specific competencies in literacy and numeracy that are immediately practical (e.g., the student learns how to write his/her name) and the teaching and learning materials reflect local language and culture, which facilitates learning by laying the foundation for activities that promote participation, exploration, and inquiry.

Accelerated Learning Approaches: Using learner focused and driven curriculum, which is adapted to the skills and competencies students need for the local environs, allows for accelerated learning to take place. For students, the amount of time they spend in school may be reduced because of this flexible curriculum and instructional approach. In Egypt and India, community school students are able to advance to various grade levels in a non-consecutive manner. During the summer months in Egypt a compressed curriculum for a school year is taught followed by an exam. If students pass they may move forward a grade level thus reducing their overall time in a community school. In India, once students have completed a level (module) they may move to the next level; students are able to complete more than one module in a year.

The theoretical frameworks developed to study relationships between educational context ---- social, economic, culture and their influence on educational quality and effectiveness in deprived area contexts include work by Proudford and Baker, 1994; Carron and Chau, 1996; Fuller and Clark, 1994. The studies consider the socio-economic and contextual factors, which influence schooling in different areas of the world. Research in the late 1990's "*Education, Culture and Development in Northern Ghana: Micro Realities and Macro Context: Implications for Policy and Practice*" revealed that Educational policy often failed to account for the contextual factors, livelihood patterns and values of traditional communities. These factors were key in understanding how communities utilise their education systems and the returns they expect in order to continue investing particularly in areas where experimentation with the formal education system is still apparent (Casely-Hayford, 2000).

Hyde (1999,2002) outlines a number of factors that have contributed to the success of complementary education programmes including: community involvement in school governance, local language as the medium of instruction, volunteer teachers, partnerships and collaboration with local educational authorities and the "school as an organic part of the community". These factors should be studied in the context of rural education programmes across the continent. Similar studies which track and bring together the achievement data within complementary education programmes is badly needed in order to influence and inform educational policy, and international and national educational actors involved in seeking educational solutions for sub Saharan Africa.

4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The identification of key approaches for sustainable cost effective basic education in resource-deprived areas in Africa are essential for meeting the educational quality and effectiveness goals embodied in EFA. The factors militating against pro poor policy reform within the education sector and principles necessary for supporting more equitable approaches to educational development/provision within resource poor contexts (i.e. rural areas) is essential for EFA to be attained in Sub Saharan Africa.

More emphasis on research into complementary education systems and their outcomes is needed by comparing similar models such as child literacy and numeracy programmes and community schools across Africa. More emphasis on funding and support to scale up existing programmes by civil society is also needed. More support is needed for the Non Governmental and Civil Society sector including local communities themselves who often manage complementary educational programming reaching out to underserved areas. Governments while assessing and redefining their strategies for EFA should ensure that civil society agencies are involved in considering the educational gaps within sub Saharan Africa and help to seek practical well tested solutions. A larger thrust towards complementary education programming run by non state actors will provide cost effective alternatives in countries and hard to reach areas to ensure more equitable access and quality basic education.

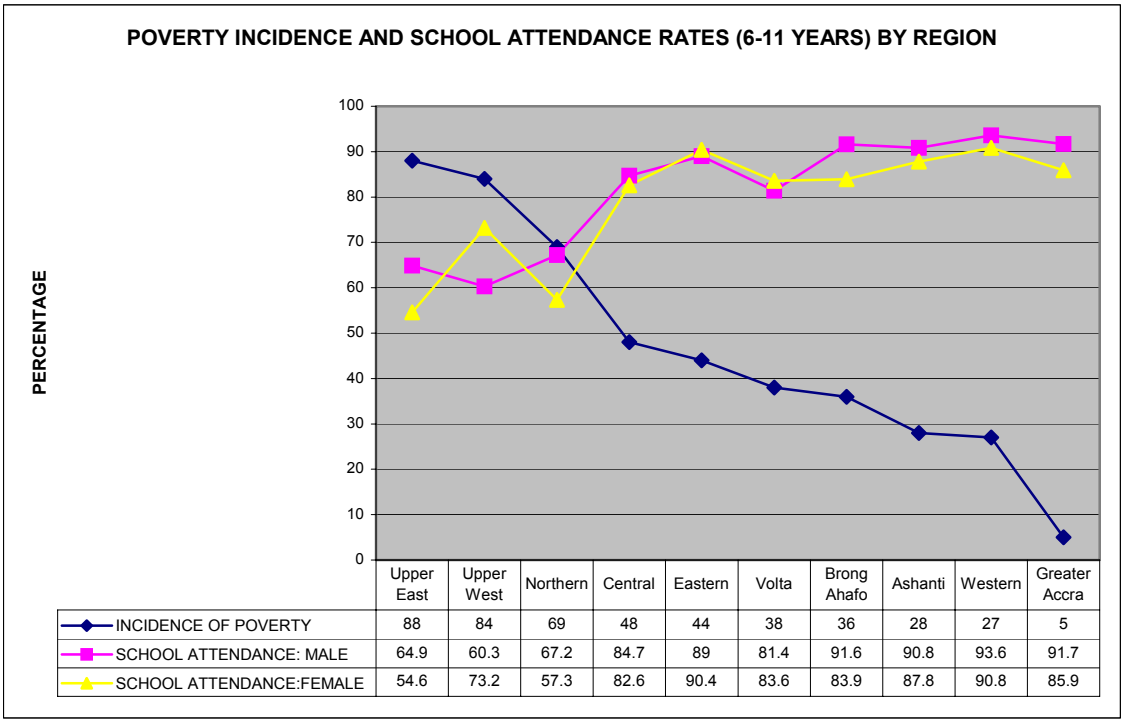
Most importantly educational ministries should continue to consider more flexible approaches to educational provision and financing allowing more resources to flow to rural education outside the urban, town and city schools where private education is taking a lead in providing quality (Orivel, 2002).

Annex 1a: Regional Percentage Reaching the Criteria in English over Five-year period

Region	Percentage Reaching Criterion in 1993 (Rural)	1994[5]	1995[6]	1996	1997[7]	2000
Ashanti	.7	.6	2.9	4.5	1.4	7.1
Brong Ahafo	1.0	1.6	1.7	1.7	3.7	4.1
Central	1.4	.9	1.9	1.1	11.4	5.1
Eastern	.5	1.6	2.0	5.4	3.4	11.4
Greater Accra	.9	13.4	11.1	14.8	18.0	32.2
Northern	1.9	4.4	1.8	5.2	3.1	2.8
Upper East	4.8	4.8	3.9	4.2	6.1	3.0
Upper West	2.3	0.0	3.6	1.0	11.5	5.4
Volta	1.7	3.4	3.1	4.6	4.2	10.8
Western	2.7	1.9	5.8	8.4	3.6	5.5
TOTAL	1.5	3.3	3.6	5.5	6.3	10.0

(Based on CRT reports, Ministry of Education, Accra, Ghana)

Annex 1b Regional Disparities in Ghana



	Upper East	Upper West	Northern	Central	Eastern	Volta	Brong Ahafo	Ashanti	Western	Greater Accra
INCIDENCE OF POVERTY	88	84	69	48	44	38	36	28	27	5
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: MALE	64.9	60.3	67.2	84.7	89	81.4	91.6	90.8	93.6	91.7
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE:FEMALE	54.6	73.2	57.3	82.6	90.4	83.6	83.9	87.8	90.8	85.9

[5] Only for public schools
[6] National sample schools which may include public schools only
[7] Included urban and rural schools combined in public schools only

Annex 1c Children out-of-school (6-11 years) (Ghana Living Standards Survey, 2000)

	***Upper West* Region**	**Upper East Region**	**Northern Region**	**Total in Ghana**
% of boys out of school	**40%**	**35.1%**	**32.8%**	**15.6%**
% of girls out of school	**26.8%**	**45.4%**	**42.7%**	**18.4%**

Annex 2 Type of alternative/complementary education programmes

Type of Program	Characteristics
Community Schools Promote linkages to formal school system so students may transition to a higher level of education. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee Education Programme (BRAC) Togo (PEP) India (Formal Equivalency Centres) Egypt (Small Schools) Afghanistan (Community-organized primary schools)	**Community** training in community-based participatory methodologies (Participatory Rural Appraisals), resource mobilization, school administration, and supervision of school personnel, decision-making, and conflict resolution is necessary to monitor and support the learning environment. **Curriculum** is equivalent to formal school basic curriculum; emphasis is on free pace of learning and children construction of knowledge by active participation, exploration, and inquiry. **Pre-service and in-service teacher training** focus on child-centred instructional approaches, effective classroom management, relevant teaching and learning material development, and multi-grade teaching techniques. **Language of instruction** is local language for first level(s) before changing to a non-local language (e.g., English) for medium of instruction. Students take **national examination** to determine admittance to formal school system.

Literacy/Numeracy Programs Promotes expansion of knowledge base with key skills, but does not necessarily promote transition to a formal learning environment. Ghana (School for Life) India (UDDAN)	**Curriculum** is child centred, (e.g., learn by doing) and relevant to local context, (e.g., incorporating practical examples) in their work. **Language of instruction** is in local language **School calendar** is shorter with flexible hours, usually 2-3 hours per day and allows for those who participate in farming, fishing, and other activities to attend classes. Programs typically follow seasonal calendar and timetable. **Pre-service and in-service training** provided to teachers/facilitators to ensure they have basic skills in supervision, instructional approaches, and implementing the curriculum. Teachers are usually from the local or neighbouring community. **Community-based participation** includes providing space/land for the school, in-kind contribution (e.g., reeds for roofing), direct financial support (to provide support for teachers' salaries or instructional materials) and training to build skill base.

Supplementary education programs to improve quality in formal system Systems and mechanisms that enhance/improve the effectiveness of the formal education system. Ghana (Rural Education Volunteers) Ghana (Basic Education and Civil Society) Kenya (Basic Education Fellows)	**Curriculum and supplementary teaching materials** usually provided in local language(s) and are simplified to promote direct learning of formal curriculum **Basic education service providers (e.g., Civil Society Organizations**) strengthened (institutionally and technically). The development of organizational capacity addresses the ability of grassroots organizations to manage their day-to-day operations. This entails the development of systems that ensure that an organization can effectively plan and implement projects, manage its personnel and finances, and be accountable to donors through reporting and evaluation mechanisms. Technical training focuses on providing training in areas that the CSOs need to be strengthened, for example if an organization is working the field of primary education teacher training may be needed. **Civil Society Coalitions** network CSOs to share ideas, lessons and resources to strengthen their ability to impact policy and practice through advocacy. In addition targeted research on key education issues and ongoing monitoring of Government expenditure and activities in the sector provides a check and balance system.

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