

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE GIRLS' EDUCATION IN GHANA:

A look at their Impact and Effectiveness.

A Joint Study by IBIS, UNICEF, SNV and WFP¹



February 16th, 2009

Final Draft 1.0: Summary Version

¹ This final study report was compiled by Leslie Casely-Hayford and Roland Akabzaa, Associates for Change with support from Justinaa Anglaare, SNV Ghana, Dina, Ibis and Eunice SNV Ghana. Initial Analysis was conducted by Seidu Alhassan.

Part I: Introduction to the study

In the 1990's girls' education became recognised as the single most effective development investment for reducing poverty by ensuring that women were able to improve the lives of their families and the next generation of children; indeed,

“All agree that the single most important key to development and poverty alleviation is education, which must start with universal primary education for girls and boys equally” (Wolfensohn, 1999).

Educating girls is viewed as a “strategic investment” for the individual, the family, the local community and the whole nation, greatly improving the nation's development indicators by providing numerous beneficial outcomes. Socio-economic research conducted by several agencies including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Department for International Development (DFID) indicates that educated women are far better equipped than uneducated women to improve opportunities for themselves by obtaining better-paid and higher-status jobs (Prah 2002). The developmental impacts of literate woman include: better environmental protection; improved health and nutrition for women and their families; lower child mortality rates; increased work productivity, and a tendency to marry later and have fewer children thus lowering the population growth rate (Casely-Hayford, 2002 Situational Analysis of Gender Issues in Education). With education comes enhanced self-worth, empowerment and improved opportunities overall.

However, the issues of gender equity and girls' access to education are yet to be mainstreamed within poverty reduction programming and policy formulation, despite predictions that Ghana is unlikely to meet the MDG3 commitment of universal access to primary education by 2015. At present the Government of Ghana is constitutionally mandated to provide free basic education to all its citizens, and to gradually make secondary and tertiary education access to all; it has also signed several international agreements including the UN Rights of the Child to Basic Education and the Education for All Action plans. Despite this, poverty, socio-cultural issues and poor quality of education are among the key factors that continue to constrain girls' access to education across the country. Some statistics here will serve to provide an insight into the current situation of girls' education in Ghana in the formal education system:

- The out of school population in Ghana is 700,000 children, the majority of whom are in northern Ghana (130,000) and spread across other poverty pockets of the country (Upper East, and Western Region). The majority of out of school children are girls.
- Access, retention, completion and transition trends in education follow the same pattern as the poverty profile of Ghana, showing that with poverty comes low educational rates (Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008).
- The MOESS 2008 study figures show the following enrolment rates for females in the school year 2007/08:
 - Primary Level 93%
 - Junior Secondary School 75%
 - Senior Secondary School 44%,

It is against this background that the Government, District Assemblies (DAs), NGOs and civil society embarked on a study to analyse the key strategies being implemented to improve the status of girls' education in Ghana. This policy brief is based on a full study called, 'Strategies to Promote Girls' Education in Ghana: A look at their relevance, impact and effectiveness' see www.associatesforchange.org. In this brief the impact and effectiveness of the major programs and education initiatives will be reviewed focusing particularly on the conclusions and recommendations at each level of implementation in order to discern their successes and limitations.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the current strategies for promoting girls' education, particularly based on IBIS, WFP and UNICEF experiences, with the aim of assessing their relevance and effectiveness.

In addition to this, to provide policy recommendations on how specific advocacy and lobby approaches can complement policy measures for achieving the MDG3.

Specific objectives of the review are as follows:

- To describe the current situation of education in Ghana with particular reference to girls education.
- To identify girls' education promotion strategies.
- To analyse the relevance and effectiveness of the strategies.
- To examine community participation in promoting girls' education.
- To examine pupils' assessment of the pull and push factors that affects their educational attainment and achievement.



Methodology

The study took place over the course of one year, August 2007 to December 2008 in the Northern and Central regions of Ghana. A total of twenty-four communities were visited, where interviews were conducted with teachers and pupils; community members; Regional and District Councilors and Coordinators; and local NGOs. Development agencies collected qualitative data using participatory research methodology which included focus group discussions, interviews, desk studies and observation. The study design and analysis was carried out by dividing the education policy sector into the macro level (policy) meso level (implementation of policy) and micro (impact of policy). The findings of this research will be discussed according to the different stakeholders, from the macro to the meso and micro levels.

Part II: Situating Girls Education within Ghana's Education Policy Environment

The three major policy documents guiding education in Ghana are:

- 1) The Growth & Poverty Reduction Strategy GPRS II (2003-2009)
- 2) The Government of Ghana's Education White Paper (2006)
- 3) The Education Sector Plan (ESP) targeted for (2003-2015)

These documents outline what is to be done to address the MDGs of achieving universal basic education and gender parity. The strategies and recommendations are to be discussed fully in the forthcoming section of this paper. The last of these documents, the ESP, provides the overall policy direction for education in four broad areas. These are: equitable access to education; quality of education; education management; science, technology and TVET.

Government Policy Programs & Initiatives:

The Ghana Government and MOESS have pursued several programmes designed to promote girls' education in order to meet its broad policy objectives outlined in the ESP. These programmes are either carried out by the government or in collaboration with development partners, and NGOs. The Programmes can be classified as generic and specific: The generic programmes are programmes pursued to increase enrolment, retention, and education quality in deprived areas but do not specifically target girls. The specific programmes are programmes that target only female education. The latter of these have been carried out through the collaboration of the Girls Education Unit (GEU), World Food Program (WFP) UNICEF, and local NGOs such as World Vision and PLAN Ghana:

Generic Programs:

- 1) The Capitation Grant
- 2) Ghana School Feeding Program

Specific Programs:

- 1) Community mobilisation and sensitisation programs to create awareness of the importance of education
 - 2) Dissemination of materials communicating the value of schooling
 - 3) Radio and television programs
 - 4) Take home food rations
 - 5) Scholarships and provisions of other incentives
 - 6) Formation of girls clubs and Annual Vacation Camps for Girls
 - 7) Formation of the Science Teaching Math Education Clinics for Girls
- (MOESS, 2008)

The first of these programmes targeting all pupils is the Capitation Grant which was introduced in 2004 to 53 districts. This grant subsidises every child GH¢3 to abolish fees at the primary school level, directly addressing the MDG of improving access to universal basic education. Another initiative that has come from the Government is the Ghana School Feeding Programme which provides one hot meal per day to pupils in selected primary schools. Both of these programmes were designed to appeal to pupils from more deprived backgrounds and improve rates of enrolment, participation and retention for all pupils. By removing the barrier of school fees they have increased accessibility for children from poorer backgrounds, and the provision of a daily meal is a further incentive for pupils to come to school every day.

The aim of the Girls Education Unit (GEU), established in 1995, was to specifically address the gender disparities in education by designing and implementing numerous programmes to attract and retain girls in schools. These have been carried out at the district and national levels targeting communities mostly in rural, poorer areas. Documented evidence shows that in the case of girls it is often socio-cultural factors that inhibit their chances of benefiting from the educational system. The work of the Girls Education officers is mainly sensitisation and advocacy on the importance of education for girls where it is most needed. Many initiatives have therefore been designed to address these deeply-embedded cultural perceptions, through educational materials and visits from Girls Education Officers to communities and families where school rates are lowest.



Impact and Effectiveness of Gender Programmes and Initiatives

These policies and programmes by the government, the GEU and other donors have all had a positive impact, and have led to significant increases in female enrolment particularly at the primary level. More progress needs to be made in the Northern districts and other poverty pockets in Eastern and Central Ghana where school rates are lower. The gender gap at the primary and JSS level has improved with a parity index increase of 0.03 between

2003/04 and 2007/08, and improvements of the MDG of gender parity at primary education level. There is an increase in female enrolment, retention & completion at every level, e.g. Primary Level increased 83% - 93% (2003/4). However, the gap between girls and boys achievement, access and completion levels remain. Furthermore, the gap of gender difference and completion rates widens at the higher levels of schooling. There also continues to be less improvement in closing the gap in poverty zones (i.e. in the north). The table below shows of school completion

Table 1: Key Targets for Achieving MDG 1 and MDG 2 within the Educational Sector

Indicators	Targets	Achievement in 2007/08
KG GER	100% by 2015	89.9%
Primary GER	100% by 2012	95.2%
JSS GER	100% by 2015	78.8%
Primary completion rate	100% by 2012	88.0%
JSS completion rate	100% by 2015	67.7%
% Female in Universities	50% by 2015	34.0%
% Female in Polytechnics	50% by 2015	30.0%
% Female Enrolment in Tertiary	50% by 2015	34.0%
% Female enrolment in TVET	50% by 2015	16.7%

Source: MOESS, 2008

The capitation grant is positively impacting on enrolment and retention in schools across the country. CREATE (2007) estimated this programme alone led to a 17% increase in basic education. However, the capitation grant does not have specific gender targets or provisions for districts with endemic poverty and entrenched socio-cultural issues. *The School Feeding Programme* is contributing to increases in school enrolment and retention in the schools where it is has been piloted, but does not yet cover all primary schools. The programme may not be sustained due to high costs, and it is not seen as a holistic measure for addressing poverty and gender disparities in the educational sector. Lastly, the activities of the *Girls Education Unit* and other organisations have influenced girls' access to education but have not always reached the most needed Northern regions. These social means of addressing issues of education are very successful for changing behaviour, attitudes and cultural norms. The importance of education for the girl child and her whole community is being transmitted via officers and through mentorship programmes.

Conclusions & Recommendations at this stage

- Material incentives such as the Capitation Grant and School Feeding are improving enrolment and retention rates for girls. Free education for all is a big step to eradicate financial barriers. The problem with the food incentives is that they are designed to make immediate impact

which will not necessarily translate into long-term improvements in education. Furthermore these strategies are not sustainable economically in the long term. When donors remove their aid after some years it is to the detriment of the recipients. Structural changes in the communities are necessary to improve the economic situation so parents can support their child's education themselves.

- Traditional practices and entrenched beliefs that continue to be barriers to education are being addressed by sensitisation programmes, education and community involvement. This has been successful so far, but formal education as a means to development is not always readily accepted, particularly in the case of girls. These programmes need to be larger scale and better resourced.
- Early marriage; child-fosterage; family betrothal; low value of female education; and absence of female role models in the communities are the main social difficulties to be faced when trying to improve education levels in deprived communities. Considerable efforts are needed to dismantle negative perceptions of the value of girls' education by parents and communities. Girls clubs and camps are designed to tackle these issues and are in the process of being mainstreamed nationally.
- Many studies suggest that the presence of female teachers in schools impacts positively on girls who see the teachers as role-models. The teachers also help to make the school environment safer for girls. Gender targets for female role models and teachers at the Teachers Training College needs consistent attention by the government as attracting and retaining teachers at the rural and deprived schools remains difficult.

Part III: Development Partner Interventions

The multi lateral and bilateral agencies working on girls' education are UNICEF, WFP, DFID and USAID. The role of these development partners is to promote a wide range of interventions and programs to support girls across the target districts. They mostly work through local partners (government and NGOs) to ensure that programme goals are effectively pursued and achieved. All development partners work towards the removal of levies and other financial and non-financial barriers to access to education at the national level. Some efforts at this stage are material support such as UNICEF's provision of bicycles; School Feeding and Take Home rations and supply of school equipment. Most of the support of bilateral organisations is in the form of funding, technical, logistical and capacity building. For example:

- Making schools more child-friendly
- Capacity-building of women at grassroots level
- School Health Education

- Improved leadership and capacity in advocacy of girls education
- The Girls Ambassador Programme
- Supporting education staff through data collection and supervision of projects

The Girls' Education Strategy study revealed that all four development partners work closely with the Ministry of Education/GES with the aim of providing improved leadership and capacity to promote girls' education at various levels including school community, district, regional and national. Secondly, specific activities for promoting girls education have included sensitisation, sex education, school health education and child rights campaigns often implemented through the development agency's local partners. The third area of support from Development Partners is the Girls Ambassador programme which trains local women as mentors to support girls in school by building their confidence and self-esteem at the local level.

All of the development partners stated that they have worked towards removing financial barriers to educational access at the national level, ensuring that policy makers include basic education in national plans. They also have been working to improve the development of advocacy, communication and training materials with a focus on girls' education. Measures have also been taken to ensure more child-friendly schools through lobbying for the reduction of violence and abuse against girls and the removal of corporate punishment in the school system. All of the gender capacity programmes are fully supported from the local to the national level from UNICEF, USAID and World Food Programme (WFP).



Impact and Effectiveness of Development Partner Interventions

All four development partners believe that the abolition of school fees was one of the most effective strategies for the promotion of girls' education helping to reduce the barriers to girls' access to education. Initiatives that are targeting

females through information and advocacy of the value of education are positively contributing towards changing perceptions of education and allow girls to understand the benefits of education.

The development partners stated that their strategies and programs had been quite effective in influencing policy and supporting the Government to implement policy. They mentioned that it was through the monthly education strategic sector meetings and reviewing of the education sector plans on a yearly basis that had enabled the government to move towards major policy shifts such as the school fees being abolished.

Despite scientific evidence emphasising why girls' education is important for Africa, interviews with senior officials and development partner agencies show it is clear that key decision makers are not yet convinced that girls' education is worth a full and concerted effort. They continue to hold onto, "but what about the boy child?" as it is believed by some that current educational strategies over-emphasise girls to the neglect of boys. This uncertainty of the importance of schooling for girls is hindering progress.

Conclusions and Recommendations at this stage

- There is a tendency among most of the donors the government to focus on improving access and participation at the basic education level. This has neglected interventions for improving the quality of education. There is now a need for more emphasis on improving retention and completion through quality education. There also needs to be increased achievement in order for girls to transition to higher levels of education and complete JSS and SSS.
- Secondly, the study shows a lack of donor collaboration and organisation at the district and regional levels in particular. There continues to be a lot of individual agency initiatives in girls' education which remain uncoordinated. Guidance by the Ministry of Education is essential for more specific focus. Furthermore donors must agree on mainstreaming interventions to ensure girls are tackled within the Education Sector Plan (ESP). Other priorities by donors such as HIV/aids have redirected emphasis on girls' education and this must be minimised.
- Another challenge faced by Development partners when working with local partners is their ability to implement. UNICEF and WFP have limited capacity in terms of numbers of staff to support the coordination efforts of various actors with assisting in planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of girls' education interventions. There was no evidence of development partners conducting research into girls' education, particularly gender issues.
- Under-funding of girls' education is agreed by all development partners as being a major challenge in terms of attaining MDG3 gender parity. This also extends to limited resources of staff and teaching and

learning materials. It has been suggested to use "gender budgeting" to monitor expenditures on girls' education to ensure enough money is being allocated for these means.

- USAID and WFP development partners both acknowledged the powerful cultural influence on the attitudes and behaviours of parents towards their girl children and felt that much more work is needed in order to see real change in northern Ghana.

Part IV: International Non-Governmental Organisations & their Interventions

The INGOs work directly with local NGOs, communities and key stakeholders. Those that have a gender education dimension to their programming were interviewed for their work in the Central and Northern regions of the country. These included: Action Aid International; Plan International; Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), OXFAM and the Foundation for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). The girls' education activities carried out by INGOs and their partners in Ghana ranged from:

- Research Advocacy and Community Sensitisation activities
- Sponsorships
- Formation of Girls' Clubs
- Provision of school infrastructure - libraries, classrooms and toilets
- Teaching and learning materials
- Micro Credit Schemes for parents
- Community Mobilisation using Participatory Learning Approach (PLA)
- Training teachers to become Mentors and Role Models

Case Study on CAMFED Girls Education Programme:

The CAMFED Girls Education Program has been working in the Savelugu-Nanton District since 1996 and in Bole and Gushiegu Districts since 2001. The organisation's principal focus is to promote access to education for the girl child using interventions at the pupil, school, parental and community levels. At the school level CAMFED provides infrastructure to construct and renovate classrooms and school buildings including libraries and toilet facilities; recruitment of voluntary females to serve as role models, counsellors and sensitisers about the need for girls to attend school. The

programme is also providing basic needs such as uniforms and books to schools with high levels of drop-outs.

The NGOs implement numerous educational programmes. The main strategy used is child sponsorships. Through these sponsorships the NGOs provide teaching and learning materials for the pupils; train teachers; and improve school buildings and facilities.

Impact & Effectiveness of INGOs

The study of Sutherland Addy (2002) found that advocacy and community sensitisation of communities by NGOs was one of the strongest areas of activity. A well-sensitised community and signs of government commitment create the ideal environment for interventions promoting girls education. Teachers and chiefs were among the focus for creating local committees at community level when aiming at increasing enrolment in rural districts. Furthermore, scholarship schemes were aiding decisions to enter into formal education. Girls clubs and other female centred programmes were transforming pupils into being more confident and studious.

The study found that there was a change of attitude amongst the girls receiving CAMFED sponsorships. They were better behaved and helped willingly with work on the house. Fewer girls were moving south to work as street porters, and take home food rations were improving enrolment rates overall.

One critique was towards the small-scale of activities, with NGO programs reaching 1,000 girls or less. This is because the Ghana Education Service was not mainstreaming any of the INGO program strategies. It is also suggested from the study that communities would benefit greatly from more mentors, without whom, girls may abandon school to engage in petty trading activities, become pregnant or otherwise influenced by non-school attending peers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- There needs to be more support for girls transitioning from primary to JSS level of school. An increase in Girls Education Officers and mentors will help to oversee girls' behaviour and redirect attitudes towards education. Role models and mentorship schemes also contribute towards girls' confidence and self-esteem, keeping them in school.
- A main problem found at this stage is the lack of collaboration between NGOs. This has been attributed to a lack of contractual agreements leading to weak commitment by collaborators such as district assemblies. The outcomes of this are a lack of information sharing; an inability to scale up NGO approaches by government and donor agencies and duplication of NGO aid. For example, food rations, uniforms and bicycles may be frequently reaching the same girls and

families, whilst others may be receiving nothing at all. More work is needed on ensuring co-operation and knowledge exchange amongst NGOs.

- Following discussions with major INGOs it has been suggested that several girls' education strategies such as scholarships, School Feeding Programme and sponsorships create a welfare dependency relationship with the parents. This is an area to be addressed if education strategies are to be long-term and sustainable. NGOs should not be creating a situation of dependency through their scholarships and sponsorships. A situation of dependency removes responsibility of the child from the parents, and will create severe problems for these beneficiaries if and when the INGOs support is withdrawn. Economic empowerment of parents through their own income-generating activities is paramount.
- Advocacy must also emphasis alternative education such as technical, agricultural, vocational and structured apprenticeships. For example people can be trained in dress making or improved farming techniques. These would equip people with necessary skills to transfer them into employment.



Part V

Strategies from District and Government Perspectives

The Ghana Education Service (GES) has a major part in promoting education and supporting girls' education initiatives in the districts. Their responsibilities also lie in designing the school curriculum, the provision of teaching and learning materials, employing teachers and networking with other stakeholders to put in place the various schemes. The MOESS and GES have

developed various schemes which mainly address the access and participation category of the ESP.

General approaches conducted in partnership with local and international INGOs put in place in the Central region have been:

- Appointment of female officers for female pupils in the Districts
- Employing local, professional women to serve as role models for girls,
- Guidance and counselling
- Formation of education clubs in schools
- Advocacy for girl friendly learning environment
- Lobbying for policy to allow pregnant girls to sit exams, and for teenage mothers to be reintegrated into schools
- Partnerships with those working in girls education, i.e. DFID, UNICE, Plan Ghana, MURAC Muslim Society.

In an effort to curb teenage pregnancy, the GES have imposed sanctions on the boys who impregnate girls, which is usually down to peer influence. Alongside this the District Education Office undertakes workshops to educate communities in the consequences of rape, teenage pregnancy, defilement and other issues. Female officers and role models all contribute towards changing social perceptions and combating behaviour that prevents young girls from being in school.

The role of the District Girls Education Officer (DGEO) is visiting schools, collecting data on areas such as gender attendance and performance, and then disseminating the findings of these visits in reports for the Districts. According to these reports, a continuous training of more teachers and Girls Officers would contribute positively towards the current situation. If initiatives are designed to increase pupil attendance, then clearly this leads to a correlating increase in the number of teachers to maintain reasonable class sizes. Research findings by International NGOs are used for designing and implementing advocacy and lobbying projects at the district level for improving girls' rights at school.

Case Study: The Gyahadze Community

Gyahadze is a rural farming community located around the fishing coast of the Central region not far from Winneba. Here there are more girls attending school than boys up until JSS, which is unusual for a rural community. According to the community, the appreciation for girls' education there is attributed to the activities raising awareness and advocacy on educating the girl child. There is also a mentorship programme implemented by NGOs which

trains local females to act as role models in the local community to supervise enrolment levels support the education of a number of children they have assigned to them. This allows them to monitor which households have children attending school or not. The mentors are then able to maintain dialogue with parents of the children not in school to make them enrol them. This activity is very effective in positively promoting and encouraging education for girls. As a result of the efforts of the mentors, the programme has contributed to the increase in girls' enrolment and retention in the community.

Impact & Effectiveness of District & Government Interventions

Figures indicate there is definite success in these strategies being carried out. Despite the continuity of approaches across Ghana, net enrolment rates vary widely, with the northern region having 67% of girls of school age enrolled, compared to 98% of girls in the central region. However, whilst initial enrolment levels seem strong, it is retaining pupils within school and maintaining consistent academic performance which needs further thought. It is here that quality of education is important, as is parental support and the presence of good mentors.

In sum, the GES strategies all remain to be effective, the sensitisation initiatives increased female attendance in schools; role models also helped to inform and encourage education; food rations brought higher attendance levels; as did improving and increasing provisions for school in the way of learning materials which reduced financial burdens for parents. Sex education policies and male sanctions have helped to curb teenage pregnancy. Arguably the full effects of these schemes cannot yet be fully realised, as the true worth of education is measured by its quality, and through other indicators including completion of the schooling system and then the types of employment following school. Even more so, the increase of girls working within the education system to maintain female teachers, mentors and district officers.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- At the District Education and District Assembly levels it has been suggested that further dialogue and consultation is needed between District Assemblies and District Education Officers for improving poverty reduction efforts and supporting girls' education more efficiently.
- The limited levels of co-ordination between INGOs have become a problem, leading to wasted time and resources, due to duplication and lack of information sharing. This becomes a major difficulty faced by

District Assemblies who have the responsibility of overseeing activities of organisations. They state that when activities of partners are well coordinated complementary strategies help issues of funding. Nationwide planning and regular correspondence and co-ordination of these agencies must be made and maintained.

- Lack of funding and under-resourcing continues to be problematic, straining resources and impeding on the quality of work. There are too few officers' in charge of girls' education. The Education Office only provides one officer to serve as GCO for the district. This limits their effectiveness in supervising the girls and constrains monitoring and follow-up visits leading to poor reporting. DFID and UNICEF were among the few organisations providing funds for the Girls Child Officers; more financing is required in these areas.
- Donors should develop programmes which can be understood by other agencies to increase the scale of capacity building . For instance the training of girls educational officers should be on a regional or national scale involving all the District Officers. Alongside this, there should be nation-wide gender planning which would build consistency of interventions and would mainstream gender issues into the District Education sector plans.
- A last conclusion here is that district targets are needed to measure progress being made for girls' education. In the light of government efforts to meet the MDGs on education and gender parity by 2015 and the number of initiatives made at the national, regional and district levels it is greatly needed.

Part VI

Community Level – Community, Teachers, and Pupils Perspective

The final level of investigation was at the community level. Community members, teachers, parents and children were all questioned for their perspectives of the effectiveness and impact of girls' education strategies within their district.



Community perceptions

Community members tended to view the situation of education in Ghana as poor. They attributed this to the lack of role models in their community, parental neglect towards their child's education and the lack of commitment of teaching staff evident in their lateness and inadequate work preparation for lessons. In the northern districts of Savelugu and Tamale, participants recognised the need to send children to school but blamed poverty as the major barrier. Shea-nut picking, kayayo activities and other household work occurs amongst girls because of both cultural reasons and economic constraints. Practices of early marriage and child fosterage occurring in the Northern region are structurally embedded in the society, preventing most girls from remaining in schools, despite girls education packages.

School based factors

Factors affecting girls' education stated by members of the schools Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs) are teachers' poor attendance; harmful attitudes and behaviours of teachers towards children (such as corporeal punishment and sexual assault); and male attitudes and pressure towards female students. Teachers however, attribute the lack of role models for girls; poor school facilities such as toilets and water; lack of teaching and learning materials. They add to this the poor learning capacity of girls was due to heavy workloads at home that was interfering with their studies and class attendance.

Children's perspectives

The push and pull factors for attending school according to pupils were as follows: Major pull factors were sports, food rations, capitation grant and specific activities such as quizzes, competitions, drama and excursions. However reasons for dropping out according to them were peer group

pressure from those roaming around not in school; lack of uniforms or school fees; broken homes; and poor academic performance. Again, pregnancy, early marriage and child labour were also reasons cited. Many reasons for wanting to be in school were teacher based, showing preference for teachers with favourable attitudes who were hard-working, who listened to their concerns, offered protection, advice, counselling and female teachers they saw as role models. Responding to what they did not like about school pupils stated the poor conditions of the classrooms –cracks and leaks in the walls, broken desks and chairs. They also pointed out the lack of science laboratories and science teachers and the poor motivation from the teachers.

Impact & Effectiveness of Education Strategies at the Community Level

Interestingly it was the teachers' point of view that material incentives such as food rations and basic school needs should continue to keep children in school, although evidence shows that material support alone is not enough for continued education. Teachers describe the various interventions by other stakeholders as useful and have contributed to girls staying in school. For example girls' attendance is regular and punctual due to the bicycles provided to them by UNICEF. They did not tend to cite the need for empowering parents or addressing cultural practices to improve schooling rates.

Interviews with community members, women and children revealed what they found to be effective in supporting girls' education: The flexible school hours of the complementary school programs; the continued sensitisation programs; and initiatives aimed at improving the livelihoods of parents as key for improving girls' education at community levels. The food rations and capitation grants were observed as supportive for children by women in the Dipingu community.

The School for Life program is seen as one of the most effective strategies for attracting and retaining girls in complementary education, whilst generating high academic levels of performance. This complementary schooling system enables boys and in particular girls in rural areas to receive education and training alongside family duties and labour. Its flexibility and integration of literacy and maths alongside local skills and knowledge is well-suited to the rural community environments

Conclusions & Recommendations at the Community Level

- Findings at the community level show that there are a range of interventions being carried out for short, medium and long-term impact. The community members can see the immediate impact of food programmes and basic school materials. They also appreciate the sensitisation programmes which deal with socio-cultural beliefs and the presence of mentors and GCO's in the communities.
- NGOs need to consider that collaborative efforts to bring together the school, community and pupils will bring about more holistic and integrated change, rather than continuing their work in isolation.

- Available Literature shows that the majority of teachers in schools across Ghana are untrained. This has a massive effect on the quality of education and achievement rates of pupils. Investment into teacher training is essential, as is utilising community participation through school management structures like PTAs for parents to vocalise concerns and press for change.
- The successes so far of the flexible schooling system suggest that this is a key area of investment for improving girls' education in the rural areas with higher levels of poverty. Not only does this education method complement existing livelihoods of the families but the benefits also instil confidence and assertiveness amongst many of the girls and help to improve gender parity.
- It has been recommended that the study continues its investigation into how able parents and communities are to continue assisting their girl children through school when programmes are phased out. Further research needs to be done into the alternative strategies for empowering parents to support their children in school without dependency on external aid.



Part VII

Final Conclusions and Observations from the Girls' Education Study

The situation of education in Ghana is in the process of development. The issue of girl child education is made problematic by social, cultural, economic and structural constraints. Many approaches at every level of implementation are necessary for universal education to become realised.

Poverty is the most commonly cited factor for holding back children from school and is one of the most difficult to deal with. Many NGO projects encourage school attendance with material incentives to combat poverty, and the recent educational reform removing school fees has had dramatic results. However these initiatives could be creating a relationship of dependency and not empowerment from poverty for the recipients. Attention should instead be

paid to poverty reduction strategies. Increasing the income levels of parents through improving agricultural production, or micro-credit schemes for women is crucial.

Cultural practices, values and behaviours at the community level hold girls back from remaining in education; however frequent and continuous sensitisation programmes are succeeding in changing perceptions and encouraging girls to be educated along with boys. It must be acknowledged that it will take time to see the full extent of all these initiatives, possibly several generations. Improvements in the schooling system can also be cited as an area of change that is essential in the way of teachers conduct, the quality of teaching, and more teaching and learning resources.

It is clear there is much work to be done in the issue of creating gender parity and universal access to education as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. Transformation cannot be instant, and the more sustainable, long-term initiatives that will become part of the future of Ghanaian education will take the longest time to put in place. General recommendations at this stage are to continue efforts towards education holistically, alongside gender parity and livelihoods approaches within the wider framework of sustainable development. Until the true value of female education is fully realised at every level from the government down to each community, policies and programmes will not reach their full capacity; international targets and national goals will not be met; resources and financing will continue to under-fund girls, and initiatives will remain small scale. More specific recommendations are as follows:

- Maintain all advocacy, sensitisation and education initiatives at the community level
- Continue investigations for more sustainable and empowering livelihood strategies for parents of educated children
- Increase funding and resources for the girl officers, mentors, female teacher training and mentorship programmes at the district level
- Recommend collaboration and exchange of knowledge between INGOs and all donors
- In relation to the ESP four dimensions, invest further resources and monitoring into the quality of education and school management
- Engage all of the community in awareness of the value and impact of girls' education for the girl child, family, community and national level.
- Expand complementary schooling system and maintain monitoring of pupils after they have left
- Place sustainability and empowerment at the centre of every initiative