Executive Summary (Draft 2.0)

The Political Economic Analysis of Education in Ghana
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Achieving increased voice, accountability and responsiveness is a complex undertaking particularly in the education sector where growing evidence suggests a crisis in educational learning outcomes among Ghanaian children, high rates of teacher absenteeism/poor time on task and growing challenges in relation to holding educational managers and teachers accountable due to weak CSO structures particularly at the grassroots levels. STAR-Ghana is a multi-donor fund programme which will address the need to increase civil society and parliamentary influence in Ghana and to foster better governance of public goods and services. STAR aims at developing efficient and transparent mechanisms which can link civil society with processes and the actions of government, traditional authorities and private enterprise.

According to the STAR-Ghana logical framework, there are four outputs to be achieved:
- Capability of CSOs to enable citizens, particularly women, children and excluded groups to claim rights increased; (this output will focus on providing capacity building support and technical assistance to CSOs)
- Civil society engagement in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring enhancement; (this output will involve the provision of grants to CSOs and the media)
- Increased use of civil society evidence in policy and practice; (this output will focus on M&E, knowledge management, research, communication and information dissemination)
- Improved representative, oversight and lawmaking functions of selected Parliamentary Sub Committees; (this output will involve the provision of support to selected Parliamentary Sub-committees, and strengthening of their Monitoring & Evaluation systems)

The purpose of the political economic analysis of the education sector was to identify the drivers of change, the key entry points into the 'business cycle" and assist STAR in the refinement of its strategy, particularly with respect to key issues for facilitating broad alliances and coalitions among key stakeholders in order to ensure pro-poor service delivery in the sector.

An extensive literature review was carried out as part of the study. Interviews were also conducted with key government agencies in the education sector including the MOE and GES, and Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) including ISODEC, Ibis, WUSC, PAGE and ACTION AID. Interviews were held with education coalitions including Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC), Northern Network for Education Development (NNED) and

some think tanks including Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and Centre or Democracy Development (CDD).

Research on the " drivers of change" in Ghana suggests that the public service, particularly the civil service is not engaged in high pace change processes and has reached a very "slow ebb" with regard to bringing about change in the country. Incentive structures within the civil service discourage initiatives and pro-activity within several sectors including education, with individuals wanting to avoid making mistakes, maintaining a low profile and letting senior management worry about the tough decisions that need to be made. Emphasis is on high profile, quick fix approach with little emphasis on bringing about structural reform which would ensure longer term changes are brought about - e.g. bring about quality education and teacher accountability (Booth et al. 2005). The Political Economic analysis (PE)[1] in Education study found that avoidance of politically tough decisions in the education sector has resulted in key decisions remaining unchecked, a growing unaccountable teaching force and difficulty in holding educational managers and district education directors accountable for performance. Political sensitivities particularly related to the teaching force and ensuring that this 'potential constituency' remains appeased is the current order of the day, with a strong union focused on teacher salaries and welfare issues, and not on teacher performance. Issues such as the large cost of teacher study leave, student allowances at training college and the inability to deploy teachers to rural deprived areas continues to characterize Ghana's education system despite the growing evidence conducted by development partners, research institutions and the GOG itself.

Various studies suggests that there are certain issues in the education sector that have received limited attention and/ or no change in the past years yet key decisions need to be made (e.g. teacher study leave, teacher allowances, and equity in financing). The MOE's own Annual Education Sector Performance Review (2008) suggests there has been little change in relation to educational quality issues and basic literacy achievement rates despite very high investments by the GOG in the education sector[2]. The latest FTI (2011 report) suggests the need to make hard decisions on strategies to improve educational efficiency and reduce wastage, ensure the better targeting of resources and cost cutting measures to ensure equity across the county (e.g. teacher study leave with salary). Currently the same number of teachers who leave the Colleges of Education go on study leave each year resulting in limited increases in the numbers available to improve the overall trained teacher to pupil ratios. The World Bank (2010) study on equity and efficiency across Ghana's education sector also suggests growing inequities in relation to resource distribution in the country fueled by ineffective teacher deployment, limited targeting

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[1] The Political Economic Analysis of Education (PE)

[2] Ghana remains the highest investor in educational provision compared to the rest of Sub Saharan Africa and is one of the highest investors globally.

and other resource allocations which favor urban southern schools as against rural poor northern schools.

The political party manifestos are increasingly influencing the education machinery such as policy decision making and the strategic planning of GES/MOE particularly when there are transitions to new governments. The "weak bureaucracy" is afraid of standing up to plans and key educational issues in the country because of losing their job when new governments comes into power when they could be asked to "proceed on leave"[3]. Unfortunately the political party manifestos remain silent on core issues such as child achievement rates, teacher accountability and education quality. The party manifestos are focused on sustaining high visibility projects with popular support (e.g. Ghana School Feeding Programme, capitation grants, free school uniforms, schools under trees and scholarships). Given the large number of teachers and strong unions at all levels, as well their influence over communities, political parties are mindful of taking decisions that will bring about the needed change but might make them unpopular with the teaching force.

Ghana has been promoting free compulsory universal education since the 1950's and has put in several measures including Development Partner (DP) financed programmes to improve access, quality and management efficiency in the system. A large amount of resourcing have been committed to the sector with increased investments from $US 384.5 million to over 1 billion $US in 2006. Thirty percent (30%) of the Government of Ghana budget is spent on education, 25% of which is for teacher salaries (ESPR, 2008). The education share of GDP increased from 5% (1999) to 5.7% (in 2006) and currently stands at about 11.1% (Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008; World Bank, 2010). This means that Ghana spends more than any other African country on education which is far above Fast Track Initiative targets. Donors contribute 5.5% to the education budget (World Bank, 2010). The GOG is currently calling on more private sector financing and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) to invest in education to increase education delivery at all levels (AESR, 2009). There are also new resource channels assisting the sector including: the GETFund which is the 2nd largest and Internal Generated Fund (IGF) is the 3rd largest contributor to the education sector budget after MOFEP itself. Other sources such District Education and MP Common Funds (DACF) also contribute to financing the education sector at district level.

Other forces which impact on the power over decision making and policy direction in the education sector include the current aid architecture, the lack of a full implementation by DPs of a sector wide approach along with other implementation forces. Some of these implementation forces include: the decentralization process, District Assemblies' plans, development partner

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[3] Interviews with two key governance experts... documentation to support and validate.

agenda's/ modalities, and weak structures at the district and community levels (e.g. SMCs/PTAs). These district and community level structures provide more of a voice for parents and children in the performance of the system and have a direct long term vested interest in seeing improvement in the education sector. Despite sector wide approaches to education including collective strategic plans being developed, there is still evidence of significant fragmentation in the sector due to the projectization resulting from DP and NGO approaches, piloting and programming over the last 20 years. Discussions with DPs, suggest that there is increasing usage of country systems with signs of limited capacity for delivery by MOE/GES but CSOs remain on the outskirts of these interventions.

Drivers of Change in Education

There are certain sectors of the political economy that constitute traditional drivers of change in the education sector. These include: the government, development partners/donors, trade unions and student unions, NGOs/think tanks, faith based institutions, district assemblies and traditional leaders. All these institutions have exerted influence over educational policy making, financing and implementation in the education sector. An often unrecognized driver of change in the education sector is those groups who have a direct vested interest in the sector. They include children, and youth who are currently in the system, youth who have completed but not attained entry to second cycle institutions (120,000) and parents and school management committees (SMCs/PTAs) working to manage their schools and oversee their teachers. These grassroots interest groups and institutions continue to lack the voice at district and regional levels in order to hold government accountable.

The civil society sector is seen to lack core funding for its projects, and is weak in terms of coalition and membership building and has limited staff to push forward their agendas. With only one national representative coalition body, 15-20 large scale Ghanaian National NGOs and approximately 400-500 NGO/CBOs involved in education, the CSO sector needs growth, scale and capacity building. Another finding based on the Political Economic Analysis of the sector suggests that more constituency grassroots voices with a direct vested interest to bring about long term change are needed. The media sectors have also limited experience in dealing with complex, structural barriers to educational improvement with limited and sometimes unethical reporting on key education issues (e.g. sexual abuse of girls in schools etc), much more work is needed to build capacities among socially responsible media agencies who are interested in bringing about change and looking at the social responsibility they have towards the public.

Current Areas of CSOs Engagement with Government in Education

The current areas that CSOs engage with the government in the education sector are the planning cycle, and to some degree in the monitoring and performance review activities. CSOs are generally not well informed of the MOE "business cycle" and the timing of inputs/engagement with regard to policy making, planning, budgeting and monitoring. The NGO education community has representation on the MOE policy advisory committee and education sector group but experiences limitations in relation to participation in the government planning cycle. For instance, the education strategic planning process does not include their inputs but requests for them to be involved in the review once the document is drafted – it is not collective or national in nature. Some CSO's and think tanks are able to gain entry into the cycle through their social network, donor leveraging and recognition as value added contributors. Several CSOs and think tanks are engaged in resource and expenditure tracking at district, regional and national levels in areas such as teacher deployment, teacher absenteeism, capitation grant, GSFP and text books[4]. There is very limited engagement of CSO's in the budget cycle with more development partners' engagement and access at national levels.

The large part of CSO monitoring and evaluation activities take place at the district, regional and national levels. During the Annual Education Sector Reviews, the CSOs are given the opportunity to present a position paper in key issues of concern but the Review does not provide them with a platform to present their own evidence on sector performance in a holistic manner. The ESR process of engagement is based on government M&E systems, and data collection systems with limited or no systems of verification. This has brought about a growing interest among the CSO community to conduct their own research and generate an alternative education performance review using a separate data tracking system.

Strategies which work in holding government accountable

The strategies that work in accountability and responsiveness in the education sector include the system of school and district performance appraisal monitoring sometimes carried out by CSOs

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[4] The education resource tracking studies reveal wastage and leakages in the distribution of the capitation grant, textbooks and TLMs distribution and utilization. Other studies by Africa Watch/GII also reveal the weak supervisory and management structures for ensuring proper oversight and optimum usage of teachers.

and MOE/GES. When child performance data is fed back directly to the school management committees and community members, evaluation studies suggest that this stimulates communities to holding school managers (head teachers) accountable on issues of teacher absenteeism, and teacher accountability for performance. Increasingly the MOE and GES are conducting school report cards and achievement testing in order to track student, school and district level performance. The school appraisal monitoring systems (SPAM), performance monitoring tests (PMT), national examination assessment (NEA) and school education assessments (SEA) are all part of the reintroduction of systems to improve child, school and district education performances. Link Community Development (LCD) has been facilitating and adding value to the process in three districts in the Upper East Region and two districts in the Ashanti Region. LCD has been able to put in place strong accountability measures with SMC's at the grassroots and improve response mechanisms at the district education office level.

Studies by CSO's engaged in budget and resource tracking also suggest that budget and expenditure and resource tracking studies which are national in character (e.g. teacher absenteeism studies, PETS) have great potential in creating awareness among duty bearers that they are being monitored. The evidence which NGO's are collecting and/or commissioning think tanks/research agencies to collect, helps to position CSOs to hold government accountable on issues such as equitable targeting and improving their service delivery (e.g. GSFP, capitation grant, TLMs and textbooks allocation).

Finally, another accountability strategy which has been supported by DP's and has evidence to suggest it is effective, are projects that facilitate institution building among grassroots structures which outlive their "project" duration at district and regional levels. The GAIT programme and other more recent programmes such as PAGE are helping to strengthen district education institutions (e.g. District Education Oversight Committee) which will increase the space and entry points for CSO's engaging with district duty bearers. The GAIT programmes also helped to create district SMC and PTA structures which opened CSO space and assisted parents and concerned citizens have a voice at the district level on issues of education and social development. District Assemblies' engagement in budget scrutiny and ensuring that district education plans are carried out in an equitable and targeted manner remains a challenge within the sector which needs more support.

What is not yet working: Gaps in the Business Cycle.

Gaps remain in the CSO engagement process in the education "business cycle". Some of the challenges which remain include:

- Lack of national and district wide <u>independent</u> performance reviews to provide an objective picture of key education indicators.
- CSOs at the grassroots level lack the capacity to conduct district performance reviews due to limited funding and sometimes technical capacity to carryout large scale research, they lack linkages to research institutions and have not maximized on university programmes (e.g. UDS etc);
- No sustained school mapping processes at district level to identify the gaps in basic infrastructure, supply issues including trained teachers particularly in deprived areas of the country.
- There is the lack of sustained engagement at district levels particularly in ensuring structures, institutions and voices of parents and school management committees continue after development partner programmes closes.
- Limited scaling up of good practices in accountability and service delivery approaches with respect to school performance monitoring, complementary education to ensure basic rights.

The PE study in education also revealed that there is a need for CSOs to better coordinate the performance monitoring and budget tracking studies at district and regional levels in order to report on facts which can be presented at a national level (e.g. AESR). Broader more thematic coalitions are still not emerging with the exception of a few on Complementary Basic Education in the Northern Region. There is the need for the formation of thematic coalitions in the education sector who will have a common voice on key issues such as gender/girls education, literacy and learning outcomes, teacher performance and management efficiency etc.

Key Issues for STAR

There are seven key issues which arise from the PE analysis in Education and are informed by recent sector analysis and Ministry of Education performance reviews in the sector (WB, 2010 report; FTI 2010/ 2011; Sawyer, 2010). These include the following in order of priority:

- **Quality:** Accountability and <u>poor performance of teachers</u> (absenteeism and low time on task) based on poor learning outcomes at primary and JHS levels (less than 25% of children are able to read and write after 6 years of schooling; and far fewer children are able to achieve basic numeracy competencies (10%)). Inequity in learning outcomes among the poor in rural vs. urban Ghana; among public school children vs. privately schooled children; and between girls and boys.
- **Teacher indiscipline:** High rates of teacher absenteeism and low levels of teacher time on task in Ghana (less than 2.5 hours at school). Very limited monitoring and supervision by District Education offices; limited functioning of district education oversight committees; SMC's are still not aware of their roles and responsibilities and do

not always supervise and oversee schools; there is also evidence of School Performance Implementation Plans being developed by Head teachers alone (SPIPs, capitation etc).

- **Equity issues for Ghana**: Lack of <u>trained</u> teachers in the most deprived regions of the country (three northern regions and Western Region in particular); Less than 50% of the teaching force in the three northern regions is trained; Trained teachers are unwilling to be deployed to remote rural areas of the country; Inequitable deployment of trained teachers across the country; inequitable pupil unit costs per child by government resulting in inequitable access to school buildings, and teaching learning materials along with trained teachers; and overall inequitable resource allocations.

- **Access:** Distance to schools especially in the remote areas of the most deprived districts, lack of school mapping with communities not in easy walking distance of primary school and schools under trees…particularly in the Northern Region; 11% of communities still not having access to schools within a 2 km radius of the village mainly in northern Ghana (GLSS 5); over 25% of communities not having a school within their own community. Still over 900,000 children in Ghana out of school and are unlikely to access through conventional formal education systems that require complementary/alternative service delivery systems (UNICEF, 2010; Casely-Hayford, 2010[5]).

- **Gender and abuse:** Growing evidence of gender based abuse in Ghanaian schools particularly in relation to <u>verbal,</u> physical and sexual abuse of children. Corporal punishment in schools widespread and having negative impact on learning outcomes. Limited awareness of teacher code of conduct and limited usage of disciplinary measures.

- **Performance tracking:** There is a critical need for independent performance appraisal of the education sector which allows CSO's, media and parliament to receive an independent appraisal of the sector performance on an annual or bi annual basis.

- **Resource tracking, usage and delays:** Inadequacy and equity issues, and leakage issues in basic logistical provisions: capitation grant and other text books and logistical provisions are not targeted to the most needy areas of the country; very little oversight by Parliament, District Assemblies, social sub committees; and inactivity of district education oversight committees related to targeting resources to the needy areas...

Another major finding from the most recent education sector performance reviews is the very poor learning outcomes among Ghanaian pupils despite the high level of national investment in the sector. Over the last 20 years only 20-25% of children at P6 can read at international acceptable standards. Sixty three percent of children reaching SHS are from the wealthiest quintile, while 50% of the students from the poor quintile never reach SHS. Out of school children in Ghana are from the rural poor areas of the country and mainly from the three

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[5] Casely-Hayford et al. currently working on study on the barriers and bottlenecks to children out of school commissioned by UNICEF Ghana.

northern regions. There are widening disparities in PTR with often 1 trained teacher to 36 pupils in southern Ghana compared to 1 trained teacher to 130 pupils in northern Ghana (WB, 2010).

The Ghana educational sector lacks a longitudinal assessment system which is independent, consistent and sustainable to ensure the monitoring by independent bodies. Underfunding of the EMIS, NEA and SEA and the dismantling of the PMT and SPAM have resulted in a fragile performance monitoring system at school and community levels. Ghana is still very dependent on development partners to sponsor these surveys.

Change Processes in Ghana's Education Sector

The PE analysis in Education reveals the need to open up more democratic space to better monitor the government's performance, efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery in the education sector. This would include more monitoring in relation to the budget cycle: allocations oversight and usage of the GETfund, District Assembly/MP Common Funds, and Multi Donor Budgetary Support. At the district level this would require more monitoring of the usage and decisions made in relation to District Common Fund expenditures and MP common fund allocations to education. Much more CSO representation, consultations and budget tracking of these systems are needed. The budget tracking studies and research processes need to be better harmonised, coordinated and shared among CSO's possibly using a focal NGO/or research institution to drive the process and coordinate budget tracking processes by CSO's in the education sector.

The stronger focus on institution building and strengthening of constituency based structures to demand for change particularly on issues of learning outcomes, teacher absenteeism or gender based violence at the school is needed. Given the large number of community based organizations working on education issues and the small number of Ghanaian and International NGO's working at the national level – there is limited capacity to engage collectively. The PE study highlights the need for STAR to consider the following:

- a call for proposals on issues which will build organizational capacity among constituency based groups such as school management committees, youth associations, and other CBO's who are not yet engaged due to their limited organizational capacity—linking these to research think tanks and larger national NGO's[6]; and

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[6] Larger NGO's could facilitate this process but the result should focus on stronger institutionalized awareness and voice among groups with a direct vested interest in bringing about change.

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- how to stimulate links with rural media groups (e.g. radio stations) in order to build awareness among the larger population in a district or region on the poor learning outcomes of children in tandem with the work at the national/political levels…(SMC networks and work with parliament)….

STAR should slowly but consistently work to encourage CSO involvement on the political drivers at national and regional levels (e.g. political parties, national media, parliamentarians, research think tanks,) and encourage these stakeholders to address sensitive issues of educational equity, efficiency and accountability (e.g. teachers performance, and inequalities in resource distribution…)

Preparing for a Call Focussed on Education Issues

Building momentum for tackling "sensitive issues" within the current political economic context of Ghana will require:

- Greater technical capacity among NGO's to identify existing evidence, present research and provide reports to the media, parliamentarians and the district assemblies. The technical training among CSO's would require more knowledge on the entry points with parliament and the "government business cycle" to ensure that a higher quality of proposals is developed.
- Preparation towards a STAR call for proposals in education would also require a quick mapping of NGO's and CSOs directly working on education issues across the country along with their capacity needs etc.
- CSO's should be required in all calls to build stronger partnerships with existing think tanks and research institutions (including universities) to avoid research duplication and the potential problem of inadequacy in research quality[7].
- STAR will also have to carry out more research on issues related to the influence, orientation, and agenda setting of teacher unions in Ghana... exploring potential strategies to help bring teacher unions on board issues of accountability, responsiveness and performance.
- STAR will also need to look at supporting research on gender in the media and its impact on girls' education to fully consider a call for proposals which is gender focussed.

NGO's should be able to <u>share existing best practices</u> such as the upward and downward accountability processes being developed in programmes like TENI and Link Community

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[7] Interviews with CSO's and government reveal that research evidence among NGO's is not often seen as reliable or valid by the Government. CSO's reported that they recognize a need to work with existing reputable research bodies such as: think tanks, universities and research institutions.

Development. Best practices in accountability would also include sharing findings/strategies and stimulate better coordination of research among NGO's already engaged in budget tracking and policy change. Best CSO practices which have been evaluated and can assist existing NGO's scale up similar methods is needed; this will require mapping of the approaches and wider exposure and training for potential CSO's wanting to implement similar programming.

Most importantly, the strengthening and development of constituency based institutions that can mobilise and represent the "voiceless" on accountability issues in education is needed. The voice at district levels includes: SMC, parents and children being the direct constituencies who can bring voice to the issues of poor teacher performance, poor quality, inequity and abuses in the system.

Enhancing CSO's Engagement with the "Business Cycle": Policy Formulation, Implementation and Monitoring

For greater accountability and better performance in education service delivery, political leadership needs to be challenged on "sensitive" yet pressing challenges for the population and sector. For instance, if STAR was to raise a call for proposals on "teacher accountability and teacher absenteeism: its impact on child learning" some of the approaches which could be addressed in a proposal could be the following:

- Develop a national lobby on professional certification of trained teachers who would have the power to withdraw the certification or impose penalties if teachers do not adhere to the established code of conduct.
- Strengthen the District Education Oversight Committees to deal with the teacher code of conduct and teacher disciplinary issues.
- Lobby the Ministry of Education and Parliament for the implementation of a National Inspectorate Board to deal with key teacher issues (contained in the Education Act).
- Establish methods at regional and district levels to address upward and downward accountability of teachers/district education offices using child performance monitoring testing, community score card systems and school performance appraisal or school report cards...
- Strengthen methods of tracking teacher attendance and performance at schools using approaches developed in studies on teacher accountability.

One of the most important needs of the education sector which is necessary to ensure sustainability within the STAR programme mandate is the establishment of a virtual learning website for all CSO's to post their research or links to existing websites which contain Ghanaian Education Research relevant to CSO lobby/ advocacy work in the sector. This website should be managed in order to share documentation particularly on budget tracking, policy research and

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other evidence based work carried out across the country. STAR should also support a virtual documentation centre for CSOs in education to maximise on existing research and to support advocacy work. Through the creation of learning activities/ conferences and sharing events, STAR will create linkages between universities, think tanks and NGOs to maximize the use of existing research studies. STAR should support more research into the relationship between teacher unions and the government policy process focussed on the key issues of concern for the unions. More research into the influence of the media on girls' education, and its potential impact is needed. Finally, a full mapping of the capacities and focus issues in the CSO sector in education is also needed.