

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICA EDUCATION WATCH GHANA REPORT

By

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Madam Chairperson, Distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here this morning to launch the Ghana Report of the Africa Education Watch. The report is the outcome of a year-long assessment process of primary school financing in the country conducted by Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), the National Chapter of Transparency International (TI) in Ghana. The report is an attempt to present a balanced assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the governance structure within the primary education system. In doing so, the report seeks to clarify the link between robust governance and quality service delivery, and offers recommendations to improve governance in an effort to increase the quality of education for primary school age children in Ghana.

According to the United Nations Education and Scientific Council (UNESCO), primary school enrolment increased by 36 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1999 and 2005. In the context of the global agenda of achieving Education for All (EFA), this increased demand for quality education poses a challenge to many countries because of the need to scale up resources and has rarely led to better educational outcomes. Financial leakage, waste and inefficiencies in how education funds are used often results in fewer resources available to achieve the EFA goals. Improving the management of the scarce resources available for education will, therefore, be necessary if the successful achievement of the second Millennium Development Goal is to have any impact at all.

Madam Chairperson, it is in this context that TI initiated its Africa Education Watch (AEW) programme in July 2007. The project is a three-year programme running from 2007 to 2010 and covers seven countries: Ghana, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda. The rationale for the programme lies in the observation that despite increased resources being spent on primary education in participating countries and recent increases in enrolment, education outcomes remain low, and Education for All (EFA) goals remain at risk. The AEW's aim is, therefore, to improve transparency and accountability in the use of primary education resources, which should then lead to an improvement in access to quality education for the majority of children in Ghana.

It is also worth noting that decentralization reforms in Ghana's education system have focused on two areas: structural changes in the delivery of primary education to bring public services closer to the 'user', and giving local stakeholders a greater stake in the management of primary education. New education authorities, such as School Management Teams with stakeholder representatives, and administrative and fiscal responsibilities, have been put in place at regional, district, communal, and school level. The AEW sought to find out whether these new bodies and tools are effective in controlling malpractices, improving resource flows to primary schools, and preventing resource leakages or delays.

Distinguished members of the Media, the first step of the programme was an assessment of the primary education system in Ghana, which involved the legal and administrative regulations and financial mechanisms that govern primary education. The second phase was a quantitative field survey of providers and users of the system across selected parts of the country.

The survey, conducted in March 2008, included 1,020 households, 60 Head Teachers, and the 60 chairpersons of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) of the primary schools selected for the study. It also covered six district education officers in three regions: the Greater Accra Region representing the coastal area, Ashanti region, representing the forest/middle belt and the Upper East region, representing the savanna zone.

Madam, chairperson, the study is based on the hypothesis that local accountability mechanisms need to be effective if financial resources are to be spent effectively. The Programme examined the scope and forms of waste, inefficiency and corruption in the use of financial resources, if any, and analysed the way in which local accountability institutions and instruments are effective in preventing leakage of resources.

The survey also gathered opinions on specific policies, primarily the Capitation Grant Scheme (CGS) and the School Feeding Programme (SFP). The uniqueness of the survey lies in both the scope of the interviews and their emphasis on providing an opportunity for education target groups (parents), education providers and policy makers to reflect on policies that supposed to be the best solution to the problems of Ghana's education system. The information gaps that these surveys fill include allocation and utilization of budgetary resources. The surveys also reveal the responsibility and ownership of resources in education institutions as well as management issues.

Ladies and gentlemen, the study turns the spotlight on the oversight role local communities can, but do not yet play in helping to improve the delivery of primary education in Ghana. The recommendations highlight policies that can help Ghana achieve Education for All, the education targets of the Millennium Development Goals and national targets.

By compiling and processing this wealth of information (legal, administrative and financial) and by cross-referencing it with the information gathered on day-to-day experiences of the users and providers of primary education in the country, GII has been able to draw up a picture of the system as it currently works, with all of its strengths and weaknesses.

Chapters I and II of the report present an extensive overview of the system, including analyses and discussion of specific problems and shortcomings in the governance and management structures of the primary education sector, the quality and cost of education and the general attitude towards the education system. Chapter III is a detailed analysis of the survey data while Chapter IV summarizes the findings, analyses their implications and presents recommendations.

The report reveals that the annual education budget is derived largely from two sources, domestic and foreign. This goes to support mainly public educational institutions. A small proportion of Ghanaians also send their children to private schools. Private fees for pre-tertiary education represented 1.9 % of GDP in 2003.

Furthermore, the internal sources of funding for education are stated under six categories in the budget. These include: the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative debt savings (the HIPC Account), the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) and the District

Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), mainly for the provision of school infrastructure and furniture. The GETFund monies support education nationwide. The bulk of the discretionary expenditures are allocated to education under the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MOESS). The two other sources of government funds are the Student Loan Scheme and the Scholarship Secretariat.

In addition, several NGOs support specific shortfalls in the education sector in Ghana. These include: school infrastructure (World Vision International), food for mid-day meals (Catholic Relief Services), hiring and payment of volunteer teachers (Actionaid Ghana) and scholarships for girls in deprived districts (Integrated Social Development Centre). Where NGOs provide funding support directly to beneficiaries, rather than passing through official channels, funds are not included in the annual budget

In 2005, donor groups in Ghana pledged their support to ensure that Ghana achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but urged the country to show a strong commitment to eradicate poverty. These donors, which included the Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank, support the sector-wide approach (SWAP) in the Education sector and the design and implementation of the ESP.

Madam chairperson, donor funding for education comprises two categories of aid: concessional loans (good rates or partially interest free) and grants. Loans are provided by development banks, in particular the World Bank and the African Development Bank. Grants are provided by bilateral government agreements. In the past decade the biggest donors were USAID and DFID. The Japanese Government, through (JICA), also contributes substantial grants. Other bilateral donors come from Norway, France, and Germany. The European Union has also provided some assistance more recently.

Moreover, the allocation of resources is done at two main levels: at the sector level, the Education sector, by agencies, and then at sub-sector levels of education. The distribution of resources is characterised by a higher share given to primary and pre-school levels which constitute about 35%, that of junior secondary, about 21% bringing the total share of basic education to 56%. Secondary Education's percentage is 11.6%, while tertiary education, including teacher training, receives 15.9%.

In the very recent past, two new policy initiatives to improve access and quality of education were introduced. The CGS was introduced in 2008 to enable the school undertake minor repairs and maintenance, procure essential teaching and learning materials, support sports and cultural activities and service end of term examinations, as well as support needy children. Teacher salaries are paid directly by the central government. Until the introduction of the CGS, public primary schools had no budget of their own and most of them tended to levy parents to meet minor expenses in the schools. Several stakeholders, including Head Teachers indicated that the CGS allocation is inadequate to meet the needs of the schools and have called for increases. This has since been addressed by the new government that took office a year ago.

Members of the media, in view of the fact that public primary schools are considered community institutions, communities are mandated to exercise control over the management of schools. Under the CGS, control over the use of resources is placed under a management group (the SMC) that represents the major stakeholders in primary education. The SMC includes the District Director of Education, the Assistant Director (Supervision), Circuit

Supervisors, the District Accountant, the SMC, the Head Teacher, and the Assistant Head Teacher. The PTAs are voluntary associations that play a role in resource utilization only if they involve PTA funded projects. Individual members of the community can question inappropriate actions that affect the quality of education delivery at the PTA meetings.

Distinguished invited guests, the School Feeding Programme was hailed by all stakeholders as a good initiative with non-beneficiary schools calling for an extension of the programme to cover them. However, during the discussions of the draft report, several problems were identified in the implementation of the programme, including the politicisation of the programme and the selection of contractors on party lines. It is generally believed that the SFP is an education programme and should be better managed by the education sector.

Madam, chairperson, permit me to quickly list the key findings of the study which are contained in this report. These are:

- School governance was generally weak. Few parents, SMC or PTA members were involved in school financial management, though the opportunity for participation existed.
- School record-keeping was generally poor. Records were hard to locate particularly where there were newly appointed or newly transferred Head Teachers.
- SMCs lacked knowledge of financial issues. PTAs rarely enquired about school finances and parents generally showed no interest.
- The poor record-keeping and knowledge of finances reduced public access to school financial information. Most parents did not know they had the right to access such information.
- School infrastructure, such as classroom buildings and furniture was generally inadequate resulting in over-crowding and poor quality of teaching and learning.
- Teacher shortages, absenteeism, drunkenness, the shift system and the use of unqualified teachers, especially in the rural areas which lacked residential accommodation, exacerbated these problems.

It is based on these findings that GII has made some recommendations aimed at improving governance and the management of resources in the primary education sector. They were developed by GII in cooperation with key education stakeholders, including the Ghana Education Service (GES) both at the national and district levels.

- Parents, SMC members and executive members of PTA must be educated about their rights and roles in school management so they can participate more actively in school governance.
- SMC members should be trained in basic planning and financial management so that they can track school resources and help reduce leakages and corruption.
- Head Teachers should receive on-going financial management training. Having trained them, those who fail to keep proper, transparent records that ensure accountability, should then be sanctioned.
- The government should provide more classrooms and furniture as school enrolment increases and/or open new schools and/or extend the shift system to schools with large numbers of pupils.
- The government should recruit and train more teachers to make up the current shortfalls and provide for future increases in enrolment as it opens new schools.

Madam Chairperson, like any type of social study, our Research Team faced a number of challenges during the study, which might have affected the findings of the study and our ability to generalize them to other districts and schools. These limitations are as follows:

- a. Head Teachers had to assist the Research Team identify and locate parents or heads of households to interview. This could have inadvertently affected the responses of the respondents. Also, in an effort to portray that their schools are well-run, some Head Teachers could have given self-serving responses.
- b. In some schools, information records were scattered, incomplete (as some expenditures were not recorded) or unavailable. The way records were kept and organized in schools made it difficult to answer some questions especially on the budget data sheet. Also, some Head Teachers were either newly appointed or transferred and were unable to provide adequate information.
- c. Financial records at the District Education offices were kept on an annual basis, whereas school records were kept on a term basis. This made it difficult to reconcile budgets for such things as supplies for the full academic year.
- d. Some of the schools aggregated budgets and did not budget for individual items. In some schools, Head Teachers stated that they could not prepare budgets until they knew how much money they were going to receive.
- e. Some heads of household could not complete their questionnaires. This was either because of illiteracy, they were absent through travel or the options in some multiple choice questions were not relevant,

Madam chairperson, let conclude by emphasizing that GII shared the findings and recommendations of this report with key stakeholders including officials of Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service as well as officials of the District Education Offices, the PTA chairpersons, SMC chairpersons and head teachers of the schools where the data was collected. The report was also shared with non-governmental organizations such as the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) and further collaboration is planned with all the stakeholders.

Finally, we hope that you, our readers, will find these analyses and recommendations useful and invite you to contact us should you wish to join us in our efforts to build a more efficient primary education system in Ghana. We shall make copies of the publication available to all of you at no cost to you.

Thank you for your attention.