

POLICY BRIEF

ADDRESSING CORRUPTION RISKS IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDG 4 (EDUCATION SECTOR) IN GHANA

Issued by Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) &
Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC)

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The Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) and the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC), with the support of the Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (STAR-Ghana), carried out a Corruption Risks Assessment in the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4 and 16 (SDGs 3, 4 & 16) between July and October, 2019.

The Corruption Risks Assessment was part of a project titled “Creating Anti-Corruption Voices in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” aimed at generating recommendations for anti-corruption advocacy to help deal with corruption in relation to the implementation of interventions towards achieving the SDGs 3, 4 & 16.

The overall goal of the intervention is to reduce corruption in the implementation of SDGs 3, 4 & 16, which have to do with Health, Education and the promotion of peaceful, just and strong institutions for sustainable development, especially increased access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

The project seeks to make the SDGs anti-corruption targets visible and known by the CSO platform on SDG 3, 4 and 16 and the general public at large. It also seeks to strengthen CSOs capacity to mainstream SDG 16 targets - 16.5.1 and 16.5.2 into SDGs-related service delivery engagements and to promote sustainable procurement in the implementation of the SDGs.

As Ghana has signed on to the global commitment to sustainable development goals, it must address all the goals, including eradicating corruption as required by SDG 16.5, seriously.

This is because it is virtually impossible to achieve any of the SDGs without dealing successfully with corruption. Ghana's inability to successfully deal with corruption has, therefore, drawn the attention of many stakeholders, including the government and its agencies and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), hence the need to take up the fight against corruption much more seriously than has been done so far.



METHODOLOGY

The Methodology for conducting the CRA started by identifying the key stakeholders in the delivery of the SDGs 3, 4 and 16, particularly with regards to procurement. These stakeholders included the Ministries of Health, Education and Justice and Attorney-General's Department, the Ghana Education Service, the Ghana Health Service, Audit Service and the Judicial Service. Other stakeholders included the National Procurement Authority, the Economic and Organized Crime office, the CHRAJ, the GETFund, the National Health Insurance Authority, and some hospitals and schools. The rest were the CSO Platform on SDGs 3 and 4 as well as CSOs working on these Goals, including GACC, GII, SEND Ghana and experts and individuals working on procurement, among others.

These stakeholders were then surveyed to help identify the types of corruption that exist or can arise within their sectors, the probability of the occurrence of these corrupt acts and their impact if they do occur. The study also examined the control measures that exist to minimise their occurrence and assessed how effective these measures are. In addition, the stakeholders also proposed additional control measures that could be introduced and assessed how effective they would be in curbing corruption in their sectors.

KEY FINDINGS OF CORRUPTION RISKS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

In education service delivery, bribery, extortion and illegal payments were identified as serious corruption risks that can frustrate Ghana's efforts as achieving the SDG 4. This is because such acts have the impact of depriving poor and marginalized parents and children of education that should be easily accessible to all.

Malpractices in the admission of students to education institutions such as the use of protocol lists, demands for bribes in return for admission, especially into the so-called good schools and the imposition of unauthorized school fees, definitely deprive the poor and marginalized of equal access to quality education.

Secondly, malpractices in the execution of special programmes such as the School Feeding Programme (SFP), the capitation grant and the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) will frustrate the achievement of the SDG as these programmes are interventions in the education sector aimed at improving access to quality

education. Corruption risks in these programmes include the politicisation of recruitment of caterers for the SFP, leading to inadequate and poor-quality food as supervision is compromised. Similarly, politicisation and political patronage in the allocation of education infrastructure and award of scholarships that are not based on merit and/or need have been identified as high corruption risks in the administration of the GETFund. Corruption risks in the administration of the capitation grants involve the inflation of school admissions and the misuse of the grants by school authorities.

Furthermore, the education sector also encounters corruption risks such as collusion with suppliers, absenteeism and persistent lateness by teachers, academic cheating (poor invigilation, sale of examination questions and bribery for grades, among others) and embezzlement and financial malpractices that can threaten the achievement of the SDG 4.



Education, and access to quality education at that, is a basic human right that every Ghanaian child is entitled to. Any act, including corruption that prevents any child from accessing education, that risks the achievement of the SDG 4 in Ghana must, therefore, be eschewed.

The GACC and GII, therefore, call on the government of Ghana and its relevant agencies, particularly the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service, to put in place adequate measures to curb corruption and address the corruption risks that have been identified in its CRA. More specifically, the two anti-corruption CSOs and their partners demand action on the following recommendations:

- The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service and their agencies must comply with the laws for public procurement, including competitive bidding, transparency in bidding processes and stiffer sanctions in case of default. This will ensure quality delivery of both education infrastructure and supplies;
- Modern approaches for procurement like electronic procurement should be used for all public procurements as it will open up and ensure fairness in the process. However, delays in payment for supplies often lead to reliance on just a few suppliers who may not deliver satisfactorily. The government, therefore, needs to comply with payment schedules to avoid poor quality and inflated costs of supplies;
- The GES should conduct regular performance appraisals of teachers, empower circuit officers to effectively monitor teachers and introduce staff attendance registers to curb absenteeism and lateness to schools by teachers;
- The practice of using protocol lists for admissions into SHS and tertiary institutions must cease as it is not fair and provides opportunities for corruption;
- The SFP needs to adopt fair and honest ways of recruiting caterers to ensure effective delivery of quality food and sanctions in case of default. The School Management Committees and the Parent/Teacher Associations must also be empowered to supervise caterers and the SFP to ensure quality delivery of meals to students;
- Scholarships awarded by the GETFund and Scholarships Secretariat should be streamlined and adequately screened to ensure that the poor and marginalized benefit.
- Political interference in the award of scholarships must be avoided or brought to the minimum as, in most cases, parents who can afford end up benefiting to the disadvantage of the poor who actually need these scholarships.
- There should be joint multi-stakeholder corruption risks assessments and strategies for mitigation of the risks employed in all areas that implement the SDG 4 interventions;

CONCLUSION

The impact of corruption risks in the education sector can be huge as it reduces access to quality education and definitely makes it impossible for Ghana to achieve the SDG 4. It is, therefore, imperative that the government and its relevant agencies take adequate steps, including the above recommendations, to curb corruption in the sector.