

2010-2013 Education Strategy Extension

1. Situation Analysis

At the midpoint of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) campaigns, Ghana has made impressive access gains and is poised to take critical next steps to improve education quality. At the same time, the education system is responding to a shift in the country's development strategy from a primary focus on poverty reduction to an increased focus on pro-economic growth interventions.

Both international and national commitments stress the importance of universal access to basic education. Over the past decade, primary school gross enrollment in Ghana has risen from 70% to 95%. The elimination of school fees, significant capital investments, targeted school feeding efforts, and private school expansion have helped bring thousands of new students into the system. This rapid increase in enrollment has placed enormous stress on system capacity. Yet, with a half million children between the ages of 6-14 not in school, Ghana still faces challenges to universal access.

While concerted efforts by the Government of Ghana and its development partners may make universal access obtainable by 2015, the provision of quality education is a longer-term challenge. At present, roughly half of all students fail their basic education completion exam and roughly 70% drop out before obtaining a high school diploma. For those students who do complete school, many are ill-prepared to find employment or seek further education. Without the assurance of quality, investments in education may be questioned by governments and individuals alike.

These issues of access and quality can be illustrated by considering 100 six-year olds about to enter primary school in Ghana. According to Ministry of Education statistics, that group of 100 will face the following:

- 95 will enroll in primary school
About half will be girls
- 88 will complete primary school
26% will meet English standards and 10% will meet math standards
- 85 will enter junior high school
48% will be girls
- 68 will complete junior high school
30% will meet English standards and 25% will meet math standards
- 33 will enter senior high school
40% will be girls
- 31 will complete senior high school
59% will meet English standards and 61% will meet math standards

Of the original 100, only 18 will eventually finish high school having learned what was expected. The figures highlight critical issues in the areas of *primary school enrollment, upper-level transition, school level completion, and academic achievement*.

The reasons for these system failures are many, but funding is not first among them. The Government of Ghana has made significant commitments to education over the past decade, with the school system consuming roughly 7% of annual GDP and 30% of annual government

budgets, both above international norms for education investment. Further, Ghana has been assisted by significant amounts of World Bank's funding, including Fast Track Initiative (FTI) capital injections, multilateral support from UNICEF and the African Development Bank, and strong bilateral assistance from the British, Japanese, Dutch, and US Governments. How these investments are best used to meet critical access and quality challenges is an on-going debate. This debate is complicated by a great diversity of needs across Ghana, with some districts far behind, some transitioning, and others approaching or having met national education goals.

2. Problem Statement

Recent gains in educational access, though still not universal, have put strains on the system and called for better use of limited resources. Low educational quality, a perennial problem, is further threatened by the influx of new students realized by recent enrollment gains. Growing access and stagnate quality threaten to exacerbate already low transition and completion rates. Significant variation in these problems across the country complicates reform approaches, making one-size-fits-all remedies problematic.

3. Assumptions and Risks

Development experience demonstrates that increased literacy and numeracy help alleviate poverty. Further, the labor forces of the middle income countries are characterized by high percentages of workers with a high school diploma, resulting in a critical mass of advanced human capital. Both basic skills and advanced human capital are associated with higher levels of democratic participation and economic growth and lower levels of disease and violence. To continue Ghana's move towards a sustaining partnership with the United States, the Ghanaian educational system must do a better job of enrolling and retaining students and ensuring that they exit the system with a quality, relevant education. The risks of not doing so are evident throughout the region.

It is assumed that the USG and GoG commitment to reaching these goals and mitigating these risks by making the needed educational investments will continue through the 2010-2013 time period. As a host-country partner, it is assumed that the GoG will continue its movement towards real decentralization and that capacity of lower level education units will continue to be built. It is also assumed that the educational system will benefit from additional GoG resources once recently discovered oil makes it to market. As these resources are realized, the assistance strategy of the USG will shift more fully from resource transfers to capacity building and technical assistance.

4. General Approach

The Government of Ghana is motivated to address its education challenges and USAID is well-placed to assist in several key areas. This basic education aid relationship is buttressed by three key commonly held beliefs and is encoded in key strategic planning documents.

First, decentralization is the most effective way to identify and address local educational challenges and to promote accountability. The GoG has recently passed a Local Government bill giving District Assemblies greater budgetary and managerial control over their District Education Offices. Due to disparities within Ghana, the educational challenges these District Assemblies face vary greatly. This is particularly true when comparing districts identified as "deprived" and other transitioning and succeeding school districts. For some districts, issues of access dominate, with school buildings, teachers, textbooks and food being the most pressing

needs. In other districts, access has been adequately addressed and the quality of education and increased upper level transition now top the reform list. A decentralized approach to educational aid allows the USG to effectively and efficiently assist districts with their specific goals while contributing to national GoG goals of education development.

Second, good public sector and civil service management is needed to effectively use limited resources to produce expected results. The management problems in the Ghanaian education system are most acute at the district and schools levels where governance systems are often inefficient and ineffective. The current structure has each of the 170 District Education Offices overseeing roughly 10 circuits of 15 schools each through a network of district staff, circuit supervisors, school head teachers, and School Management Committees (SMCs). However, policy decisions are centrally made and poorly communicated, down-stream supervision of schools is sporadic and generally lacking, and some school environs are marked by teacher absenteeism, student truancy, and parental disengagement. At the national level, the teaching service needs to be better managed to ensure rational teacher deployment and enforce professional standards.

Third, both the GoG and USG believe that the private sector can assist in reaching educational goals. This assistance can come through more private education supply, as well as through more and better public-private partnerships. Currently, 17% of all primary school students attend private schools. National test results have shown that these private school students, many of them from low-income families, score two to three times higher than their public school peers on assessments. These results are achieved at schools with a lower percentage of teachers trained and suggest that an increase in the percentage of children attending private schools would raise educational attainment for Ghana while off-setting public costs. Beyond private schooling, both the GoG and USAID are exploring ways that public-private alliances can contribute to and benefit from the education system. The areas of infrastructure, school resources, and student scholarships are particularly well-suited for these types of alliances.

5. Assistance Strategy

The assistance strategy proposed here represents a refinement and extension of the current education strategy. Under the 2004-2010 education strategy, access to quality basic education has been pursued primarily through two large mechanisms implemented in 25 districts. The first of these mechanisms, the Education Quality for All (EQUALL) project, focuses on increasing access to basic education for girls, improving reading instruction practices, and improving education management practices. The second mechanism, the Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT II) program, promotes community participation in education at the school, community, and district levels and works with districts to better respond to school needs.

As EQUALL and GAIT II wind down, the lessons learned from this assistance approach are becoming clear. EQUALL and GAIT II acted as pilot-based testing beds for innovative ideas. This structure served Ghana well as it embarked on MDG and EFA campaigns and looked for effective ways to meet ambitious access and quality goals. In the end, a number of successful EQUALL and GAIT II sub-activities in areas of education access for the most marginalized, bilingual literacy instruction, distance teacher training, and education governance have been bought into by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and are being expanded nationally. However, there were also several drawbacks to this type of assistance strategy:

- The demonstration aspects of the programs created temporary “green patches” of success within districts and between districts. This approach created inequities and lacked short-run national impact;
- Both mechanisms were managed by American organizations. The significant overhead paid to these organization ensured high quality programming, but also limited full acceptance and ownership by the GES. Due in part to the good work of these programs, external audits have shown the GES ready to assume greater responsibility for the programming of USAID funds;
- Both activities targeted districts considered to be high needs or most deprived, making gains hard fought and reducing some efficiencies of funding. While these deprived districts need support, there are other, “transitioning districts,” that could effectively and efficiently use USAID funds to consolidate gains and join the group of high performing districts.

Building on current programming and lessons learned, the education office will pursue a two level approach to educational programming during the 2010-2013 strategy extension period. The first level will focus on improving access to quality primary education in deprived districts, particularly in Northern Ghana, and particularly for girls. The second level will focus on improving access to quality junior and senior high education in transitioning districts. At both levels, technical and financial resources will be offered to districts to produce manageable intervention units and compliment GES decentralization efforts.

The first level will target the 53 districts (30% of all districts) identified as deprived by the GES. These districts have significantly lower primary school enrollment, gender parity, teacher quality, and school infrastructure indicators than the rest of the country. From past USAID assistance to these types of districts, we know that they benefit from targeted school enrollment campaigns, girls scholarships, community teacher programs, literacy instruction support and improved management and supervision capacity. The 25 deprived districts targeted by USAID under its current strategy have shown access and quality improvements.

The second level will target transitioning districts that have largely addressed the challenges of primary school access and quality, but still face challenges to retention and promotion of students at higher levels of the system. This group of districts, numbering roughly 35 (20% of all districts), will be selected by combining their high primary school completion rates and achievement scores with their low junior and senior secondary transition rates to identify places where high achieving students face impediments to school completion. Districts in this group will be assisted with increasing access to quality junior and senior high education through scholarship programs, infrastructure support, teacher training, community outreach programs, and district management improvements.

Districts within each group will be required to apply for USAID assistance through competitions that promote funds being programmed in the places best-suited and most-motivated for its efficient and effective usage. District applications will draw upon numerous activities to produce the mix most appropriate for their needs.

Cutting across both levels will be efforts to improve educational governance. As District Assemblies take on additional roles and responsibilities, the way they approach planning, decision making, service delivery, and internal and external accountability for results will be critical. Current USAID community participation and education management improvement

activities are well-placed for improvement and expansion to meet governance improvement needs.

Geographic Coverage: Consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the express desire of the GoG, USAID is moving towards national programming. Under the previous and current strategies, educational programming has been largely targeted in nature. From these strategies, a number of successful programs have been developed that are worth expanding and rolling-out at a more national level. Under this strategy extension, roughly half of the districts in Ghana, covering all ten regions of the country, would be eligible for USAID basic education assistance. Beyond district level support, USAID will also engage in national efforts to improve educational assessment, teacher training, and/or reform system structures.

4. Results Framework and Illustrative Activities

The overall success of this strategy extension will be measured by the number of targeted districts achieving MDG and EFA goals of universal access to quality basic education. Meeting access targets will require increasing enrollment and reducing drop-outs. The provision of quality education will be evident in the number of children achieving at or above standards on national exams and by increases in the number of students choosing to pursue higher levels of education. Specific Intermediate Results (IRs) of the strategy extension include:

IR1: Increased Access to and Completion of Basic Education

At present there are 500,000 out-of-school primary aged children in Ghana. Many of these children live in deprived rural areas where trained teachers are reluctant to work, schools are ill-equipped or non-existent, and cultural, religious, and economic factors keep parents from enrolling their children, especially girls, in school. In less deprived areas where primary school enrollment is near capacity, efforts are needed to help students from low-income families advance within the system and ultimately complete senior high school.

IR1: Illustrative Activities

There are two promising access related activities from the current strategic objective that will be built upon in this result area. The first is a community teachers program that recruits, trains, and supports volunteers to teach in short-staffed rural schools. This program currently places these teachers in schools built or refurbished by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), but could be expanded beyond these schools. An improvement to the program over previous years will be to work more closely with Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) to ensure that qualified community teachers are admitted to their area TTC and enrolled in distance courses so that they can become certified and remain at their local school as a formal teacher. The second activity that will be extended and expanded is the girls scholarship program. Currently, USAID supports girls scholarships through a bilateral mechanism and through the Washington-funded Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP). Both have been highly successful at increasing girls enrollment and retention. Going forward scholarships for marginalized children, not just girls, to attend all levels of basic education will be expanded through the GES. Other activities under this IR might include school refurbishment, water and sanitation provisions, school transportation assistance, and community outreach activities.

IR1: Performance Indicators

- Increased primary school gross-enrollment rates in targeted deprived districts.

- Increased junior high completion rates in targeted deprived and transitioning districts.
- Increased senior high school transition rates in targeted transitioning districts.

IR2: Increased Quality of Education

National test results at the primary, junior, and senior high levels suggest that more students are failing to meet standards than are reaching them. When 90% of students cannot meet math standards and 75% fail to meet English standards after six years in the system, difficult education investment questions will be asked by individuals and their government. Making the problem worse is the belief that past investments have not yielded results. However, evidence from private schools and from districts currently receiving USG assistance suggests that a quality education can be delivered with limited resources. The private school model of accountable school management and engaged parents and USAID's experience improving classroom teaching and learning will be built upon to improve the quality education in both deprived and transitioning districts.

IR2: Illustrative Activities

The factors most effective in improving education quality include: improved teacher quality and professionalism, enhanced learning environments, innovative curricular approaches, improved school management capacity, and better accountability systems. Activities to improve teacher quality will include teacher training and support, primarily at the in-service level where teachers need practical skill upgrades related to large class management, mother-tongue instruction, interactive pedagogy, and student assessment. Many of the teacher training activities and school-based support modules developed under the EQUALL project are worth continuing and expanding. Further, both EQUALL and the Washington-funded Teaching and Learning Materials Program (TLMP) have demonstrated that teachers can be better instructors and students better learners when provided with high quality teaching and learning materials (TLMs). The continued provision of teacher support and updating of TLMs under the innovative USAID-funded and GES-managed National Literacy Acceleration Program (NALAP) will help consolidate and expand literacy gains chalked by bilingual literacy programs.

Activities to promote better school management and accountability include a new report card program whereby districts and schools will be responsible for collecting relevant data on their performance and making these reports available to all levels of stake-holders. Knowledge of exact inputs, processes, and outputs allows for better planning, better accountability and ultimately better education quality. USAID is also committed to helping the GES to improve processes for recruiting, training, and supporting circuit supervisors and school head teachers. Head teachers are the day-to-day managers of schools and circuit supervisors are the crucial supervisory link between schools and their district offices. These front-line personnel are often selected in an ad-hoc manner, offered limited training, and given inadequate support.

IR2 Performance Indicators

- Increased Grade 3 literacy in both Ghanaian and English languages.
- Increased NEA passage rates in Math for Grade 6 in targeted deprived districts.
- Increased NEA passage rates in English for Grade 6 in targeted deprived districts.

- Increased BECE passage rates for Grade 9 in targeted transitioning districts.

Result Three (R3): Improved Educational Governance

With the recent passage of decentralization legislation, District Assemblies have been given primary responsibility for the management of District Education Offices, including teacher staffing, infrastructure improvement, and work planning. USAID has long believed that decentralized units hold promise in their ability to identify problems and propose sustainable solutions. USAID's experience in Ghana suggests that the impediments to effective and efficient district-level education governance include low management capacity, inadequate inclusion of community voice in planning, and insufficient usage of quality data in analyzing results. As District Assemblies enter the equation, they will need assistance in understanding educational challenges and in acting as effective overseers of schools in their jurisdiction.

IR3: Illustrative Activities

Over the past 10 years, USAID/Ghana has supported targeted pilot programs to improve educational governance in Ghana. These programs introduced and enhanced a number of governance tools, including annual school performance improvement plans, annual school performance appraisal meetings, civic union alliances, and parent-led school management committees. Evidence suggests that the districts targeted by USAID under these governance activities engage in more robust educational planning and accountability processes and are characterized by higher levels of community participation than other districts.

Bridging the current and extended strategy is a program called Grants and Reporting Accountability Improve Literacy (GRAIL). The GRAIL program offers deprived districts a financial and technical assistance package aimed at improving education quality and promoting accountability for results. The financial assistance component of GRAIL includes incentive grants competitively allocated to districts based on the quality of their current planning and evidence of their past results. The technical assistance portion of GRAIL seeks to improve district level management capacity and school-level teaching and learning. Also included in the technical assistance package is a report card program to promote accountability. The report card portion of GRAIL is being rolled out nationally with the help of GES country systems.

It is anticipated that District Assemblies will be included in expanded versions of GRAIL so that they can build capacity for participatory planning, operational transparency, and accountability for results.

IR3 Performance Indicators

- Increase in # of targeted deprived and transitioning districts using annual report card program for school-level and district-level School Performance Improvement Plans (SPIPs) and School Performance Appraisal Meetings (SPAMs).
- Increase in # of targeted District Assemblies and District Education Offices meeting standards for participatory, transparent, and result-based education management.

5. Alignment and Harmonization

The extension of the strategic objective is aligned with host-country needs and harmonized with the development assistance of other donors. While the Education Strategic Plan of the MOE and GES is being revised, the current 2003-2015 plan includes the following priorities with which this strategy extension is aligned:

- Increase access to and participation in education and training;
- Provide girls with equal opportunities to access the full cycle of education;
- Ensure literacy and numeracy in English and a Ghanaian Language;
- Develop effective accountability systems;
- Identify, clarify, and strengthen management roles at all levels of the education system;
- Strengthen monitoring & evaluation, and accountability systems across the whole sector;
- Ensure effective decentralization and community ownership and participation;
- Strengthen the involvement of civil society in education management;

These focal areas are also useful for understanding the division of labor and harmonization of efforts among the other basic education donors in Ghana. In the area of access, The World Bank (Fast Track Initiative), the African Development Bank, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), UNICEF, and the Japanese are building and refurbishing schools. No other donors are providing community teachers for deprived schools and scholarships for marginalized children. USAID has signed a memorandum of understanding with MCC to provide community teachers for the schools they are refurbishing.

In the area of quality, USAID takes the lead with teacher training, curriculum development, and teaching and learning materials initiatives. Few other donors, save the Japanese, devote significant resources to education quality improvement. USAID and JICA have signed a memorandum of understanding to work together on in-service teacher training initiatives.

In the area of governance, and education management more narrowly, USAID is taking the lead on student and teacher assessment, accountability systems improvement, and community participation promotion. The World Bank has a program for national level education sector capacity building and the British Department for International Development (DfID) contributes large amounts of budget support and national level technical support.

One area in need of better harmonization is district grant making. In addition to the World Bank, UNICEF, and DfID, the Canadians (CIDA) and the Danes (DANIDA) have district grants programs. In its current education sector group leadership position, USAID can advocate for the better alignment of financial and technical assistance to education at the district level.