



Post Implementation Report on Trade plus Aid Assisted Projects – The Shepherd School Concept

1 Introduction

ActionAid Ghana, with funding from Trade plus Aid, in 1995 started an education initiative that sought to provide an alternative approach to providing access to basic education for children in deprived communities. Many of these children cannot access formal education because they have to help their parents on the farm by taking care of the family's livestock. The project adopted a flexible school system for shepherd boys and girls. Schools were therefore made flexible to suit the children's time and needs as shepherd children and by using the local language. To solve the problem of lack of teachers, facilitators were used to fill the gap. Shepherd boys and girls who were clever or developed interest in going to school were mainstreamed into the formal school system.

Three chiefdoms (Tanga, Teshie and Sapeliga in Bawku West District) benefited from the project. One Shepherd School each was located in Sitande, Agaogo and Salpiga.

2 Summary of Interventions

The funding from Trade plus Aid was used to support the communities to carry out the following activities.

- Provision of infrastructure
- Training of facilitators
- Training of school management committees (SMCs)
- Provision of teaching and learning materials such as exercise books, pencils, slates, flash cards, chalk etc.

3 Impact of Support

i) *Enrolment and Attendance*

The intervention resulted in increased enrolment and attendances in the 3 schools. The average class attendance increased from 62% to 83%. Girls' attendance, which used to be a problem, has improved to 81%.

ii) *Integration into Formal School System*

Training for SMC members lead to pressure being put on the Ghana Education Service to post teachers to the schools and as a result the Service has taken over the monitoring of the schools. Performance monitoring tests are also conducted every year to evaluate the performance of the pupils, in the same way they would be assessed in the formal school system. Some children have been successfully integrated into the formal school system. School performance appraisal meetings (SPAM) are also organised regularly in the 3 chiefdoms to share the results of the assessments. Solutions are found for weaknesses and good practices strengthened.

iii) *Performance of Shepherd School Pupils*

The performance monitoring tests (PMTs) conducted by the Ghana Education Service in 2000 revealed that 68% of the shepherd school pupils scored above 60% in the core subjects of English Language and Mathematics. 18% of them are among the best 10 in Mathematics, Reading and Comprehension.

The children in the shepherd schools obtain quality education comparable to the formal school system. In certain deprived schools, some schoolteachers sent their children from the formal school to attend the shepherd school. Since the project did not intend to create a parallel system, that trend

was however discouraged. There are currently 7 shepherd schools benefiting 28 scattered settlements.

4 Conclusion

The support received from Trade plus Aid has enabled deprived children in 3 poor communities in Ghana obtain access to school education. Shepherd schools have proved to be extremely effective and successful as they meet the needs of poor children, acknowledging the other demands on their time and offering flexible solutions to day-to-day issues. In addition, local people have a real sense of ownership and investment in their Shepherd Schools. These schools are a source of pride within communities. Now there are 7 Shepherd Schools in Bawku West, Bolgatanga and Builsa Districts of the Upper West Region supported by ActionAid Ghana.

ActionAid Ghana has used the shepherd school concept as one of its best practices to influence national education policy. In 2002, a presidential commission set up to undertake educational reform in Ghana invited ActionAid to make a presentation on the shepherd school concept for possible consideration for scale-up in areas with similar conditions.