



Community Monitoring and Participatory Budgeting to Promote Accountable Governance in 10 Schools in Ghana

CSO:	Action for Rural Education (ARE)
Years:	2010-2011
Country:	Ghana
Amount:	\$ 34,500 USD
Sector:	1) Controlling Corruption in Delivery of Social Services: Education 2) Improving Governance at local, municipal, state and national levels: Budgeting

Corruption Problem:	Corruption and Mismanagement of Education Budgets; Weak School Management Structures and a Lack of Community Participation in School Governance.
Tools employed:	Capacity Building, Awareness Raising, Advocacy, Coalition Building, Citizen Monitoring, Participatory Budgeting

To tackle Ghana’s backlog in guaranteeing universal primary education, the Government, in 2005, decided to abolish the system of school fees previously in place to finance basic schools. Instead, it established a system of capitation grants, a yearly allocation per student per school, geared toward transparently funding all classroom activities, including providing for salaries and administrative costs. Yet, the administration in charge continued to badly manage and weakly control the funds allotted, leading to substantial waste of public resources and substandard education outcomes.

Action for Rural Education (ARE), a Ghanaian CSO, decided to get involved and engage a range of important stakeholders, including students, teachers, principals, parents, and local education officials to monitor the funding process at 10 basic schools in Ghana’s coastal region through a project named “Promoting Accountable Governance in Education” (PAGE). The project’s objective was to curb corruption and mismanagement with a specific focus on the capitation grant and textbook allocations, elicit buy-in from all stakeholders and ultimately create ownership by all parties to contribute to better education outcomes.

Corruption Problem Addressed

The recurring mismanagement of funds in the education sector is well-documented and defined in comprehensive sector studies. Funding is channelled through the Ghana Education System (GES) Municipal Offices to the respective schools. ARE’s project approach and the identification of objectives was based on these. The studies show clearly that, despite the 2005 laws, funding for capitation grants still lacks transparency, and that the management and allocation process lacks community involvement and meaningful participation by civil society actors. The process and its timing are not laid out clearly, and thus facilitate leakage and corruption.

While the 2005 law granted formal roles to Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) in planning, managing, and monitoring resources, many members of both PTAs and SMCs were not aware of their powers and/or unable to effectively execute them. This led to continued substantial abuses in funding allocations and textbook supplies not reaching the schools and depriving the

intended beneficiaries, the students, of important resources to obtain their rightful education.

Actions Taken by ARE

The project aimed to eliminate opportunities for corruption, create a sense of ownership by all stakeholders involved and thus systematically strengthen the provision of basic education at the 10 schools targeted. ARE identified existing PTAs and SMCs, strengthened the committees by providing support and training and facilitated constructive engagement between all stakeholders involved.



The Abekah SMC/PTA community identified and curbed corrupt practices in the management of capitation grant money and made their local school a better place for educating their children.

Concretely, ARE supported the continued monitoring of textbook distribution and the formalization of ad-hoc committees to participate meaningfully in the budgeting and planning processes. This meant enforcing record keeping guidelines both at the district education offices and within the targeted schools as well as advocating for participation in the budgeting process. ARE facilitated stakeholder consultations prior to the execution of specific actions, organized training workshops and monthly community meetings and supported quarterly training meetings. The point of departure was to build a critical understanding of all dimensions of the capitation grant system as well as the textbook tracking processes among all

SMC members. This was done by moving systematically to build community buy-in, and legitimize and empower PTAs and SMCs. Prior to the project intervention these powers existed only on paper.

The biggest risk was the possible lack of enthusiasm on the part of the participating communities and the doubtful willingness of government entities to buy into the process. ARE minimized this risk by selecting a limited number of similar schools in a single district, concentrating and focusing its actions and thereby creating positive synergies. In addition, ARE ensured the cooperation of the GES Municipal Office well in advance of the official start of the project.

Impact and Results Achieved

- ✓ Sustained buy-in from communities and governmental stakeholders at various levels
- ✓ Ousting of a corrupt head teacher at the Abekah Abekah Methodist School
- ✓ Increased understanding of PTAs and SMCs regarding their transformative role enhancing the delivery of quality education through transparency and accountability
- ✓ Enhanced enrolment and retention rate of students
- ✓ Delivery rate of schoolbooks reaching the intended schools noted at 99.99%

The PTAs and SMCs became agents of change after becoming converts to the role of transparency and understanding their role in both monitoring and seeking corrective action when needed. The allocation of capitation grants is not solely decided by principals anymore, but in collaboration with PTAs and SMCs. Community members visit schools weekly to ensure compliance. As a result, waste in



supplies has diminished substantially and textbooks are reaching their intended beneficiaries.

The success and sustainability of the project was confirmed by subsequent initiatives: For example, one member of the GES Municipal Office transplanted the project approach to another community. In another instance, enthusiastic parents helped establish a school feeding program which has now been adopted by the government.

Although ARE undertook to define results criteria at the start of the project, these criteria proved difficult to measure. Thus, most of the positive results of the project are based on anecdotal and qualitative observations and not quantitative data.

Specific lessons learned thus include:

- ✓ Community ownership, PTA and SMC empowerment are critical to ensure targeted action and subsequent results.
- ✓ Ensuring constructive engagement between the GES Municipal Office and Civil Society is the essence of sustainably tackling corruption.
- ✓ To measure results quantitatively, there is continued need to provide resources for baseline studies.

Documentation

Project completion reports (PCRs) and Project completion assessments (PCAs) can be accessed at www.ptfund.org under the “Where-we-work” tab.

ARE’s website can be found at: www.areghana.org

For further information (ARE), please contact: info@areghana.org

For further information (PTF), please contact: info@ptfund.org

Prepared by: Kofi Asare, ARE; Willem Struben, PTF; Colby Pacheco, PTF