



## RESEARCH BRIEF

# Lessons Learned from the Sustainability and Scalability of Complementary Basic Education Program in Ghana

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## 1. Introduction

In Ghana, investing in basic education is pivotal for achieving broader developmental objectives. By prioritizing and improving access to quality basic education, the nation can significantly enhance its human capital, reduce inequalities, stimulate economic growth, and build a more inclusive and prosperous society. The impact of basic education extends far beyond the individual, shaping the collective future and sustainable development of the nation as a whole. Consequently, the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) program in Ghana was established to address the educational needs of out-of-school children and marginalized communities, aiming to provide quality basic education to those who have been traditionally underserved by formal schooling. The CBE program primarily targets out-of-school children, especially those in remote and underserved regions, who were previously unable to access formal education due to several factors such as poverty, distance to school and cultural barriers. CBE focuses on communities where access to formal schooling is limited or absent, often due to geographic isolation or socio-economic challenges.

The primary objective of the CBE program is to ensure access to education for children who, due to various socio-economic factors, were unable to attend or complete formal schooling. It emphasizes a community-centered approach, involving local stakeholders, parents, and community leaders in the educational process. The program offers a curriculum adapted to the cultural context and specific needs of the target communities as well as allow for flexible learning approaches. The success of the CBE program heavily relies on community engagement and participation: Local communities actively contribute to the identification of educational needs and the establishment of learning centers and trained local facilitators, often recruited from within the community, play a crucial role in delivering the curriculum and supporting the educational needs of children.

The purpose of this policy brief is to distill and showcase the invaluable insights gained through the implementation of Ghana's Complementary Basic Education (CBE) program and the lessons learnt on sustainability. It aims to extract key lessons learned from the program's execution, offering a comprehensive analysis that can inform policy decisions, educational strategies, and interventions not only within Ghana but also in similar contexts globally. By consolidating lessons learned, it serves as a repository of valuable insights accessible to policymakers, educators, NGOs, and stakeholders interested in implementing or enhancing

similar educational initiatives. In the ensuing section, we will show how non-state stakeholders influence the implementation of CBE program in Ghana. Subsequently, we will zoom down on the curriculum of CBE program, the key lessons learned on scalability and sustainability. The penultimate section will present the conclusion. The final section entails the recommendations.

## **2. Stakeholders in the implementation of the CBE Program**

The implementation of Ghana's Complementary Basic Education (CBE) Program involves a collaborative effort between the government, local communities, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), namely, Afrikids, Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Languages and Bible Translation (GILLBT), School for Life, Pronet, among others with each playing a significant role in its development and success. The Ghanaian government through the Complementary Education Agency provides the overarching framework, policies, and funding for the CBE program. It sets the educational standards, oversees curriculum development, and coordinates with various stakeholders for program implementation. Government support is crucial in establishing the legal and institutional foundations necessary for the CBE program's sustainability and scalability.

### **2.1 Community Engagement and Participation**

Communities actively participate in the CBE program to identify educational needs, provide infrastructure such as learning spaces, and engage in the selection and support of local facilitators. Community involvement ensures that the program is tailored to the specific cultural, linguistic, and social contexts of the areas it serves.

### **2.2 Role of NGOs**

NGOs play a pivotal role in complementing government efforts in implementing the CBE program. Specifically, NGOs assist in mobilizing resources, both financial and material, essential for the CBE program's sustainability. Most of the NGOs secured funding from donors, corporate partners, and philanthropic organizations to support various aspects of the program, including, capacity-building programs for facilitators and community members involved in the CBE program. These trainings focus on effective teaching methodologies, community engagement strategies, and sustainable practices.

Empirical evidence shows that NGOs collaborate with local education authorities to develop the curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the communities served by the CBE program. They provide facilitators and learners with teaching aids, learning materials, and educational resources to supplement the curriculum. They also conduct monitoring and evaluation activities to assess the program's impact and effectiveness on the CBE graduates and provide feedback to improve program delivery and address challenges. In essence, NGOs act as facilitators and partners in the implementation of Ghana's CBE program, leveraging their expertise, networks, and resources to support the government and local communities in providing quality basic education to marginalized children. Their multifaceted contributions significantly enhance the program's curriculum and teaching methodologies.

## **3. Curriculum and teaching methodologies used in CBE**

The curriculum and teaching methodologies employed in Ghana's Complementary Basic Education (CBE) program are tailored to meet the diverse needs of marginalized and out-of-school children. They are designed to be flexible, culturally relevant, and adaptive to the specific contexts of the communities being served. The CBE curriculum considers the socio-

cultural context of the communities. It integrates local languages, traditions, and practical skills that are meaningful and relevant to the daily lives of the learners. The curriculum further emphasizes foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy, life skills, and basic sciences. It focuses on building a strong educational foundation that prepares children for further learning and development. The teaching methods in CBE are interactive and participatory, encouraging active engagement from students. Rather than rote learning, emphasis is placed on hands-on activities, discussions, group work, and experiential learning. Another unique aspect of the CBE program is that local facilitators use a variety of teaching aids and multisensory materials to cater to different learning styles. Visual aids, storytelling, songs, games, and practical exercises are incorporated to make learning more engaging and effective. In short, the CBE curriculum and teaching methodologies prioritize inclusivity, flexibility, and relevance to ensure that education reaches those who have been historically excluded or unable to access formal schooling. These approaches aim to create an environment where learning is engaging, practical, and meaningful for the holistic development of the children involved. In the next section, we will document the key lessons of the CBE program from the angles of scalability and sustainability.

#### **4. Key Lessons Learned on Scalability and Sustainability**

Following from the successful implementation of CBE program in Ghana, the following key lessons learned are documented.

##### **4.1 Flexibility in Curriculum and Teaching Approaches:**

Scalable CBE initiatives have adaptable models that are replicated in diverse contexts. Flexibility in curriculum, teaching methods, and community engagement strategies facilitates expansion to different regions or communities. Empirical studies suggest that adapting the curriculum and teaching methods to suit the needs and contexts of marginalized communities is essential because it incorporates local languages, culture, and practical skills that are more effective.

##### **4.2 Facilitator Training and Capacity Building:**

Continuous training and support for CBE facilitators are critical. Equipping educators with the skills to engage diverse learners and employing interactive teaching methodologies significantly impacts learning outcomes, including literacy, numeracy and lifelong learning. Well-trained teachers are better prepared to address the specific needs of marginalized students, improving the quality of education provided in CBE programs.

##### **4.3 Community Engagement and Ownership:**

Sustainable CBE programs are those where local communities take ownership and actively participate. Communities that feel a sense of ownership are more likely to invest their resources and sustain the initiative even after external support diminishes. Involving local communities in program design and implementation is crucial. Communities that take ownership of the education initiatives tend to be more committed to sustaining and supporting them. The engaged communities contribute to the success and sustainability of CBE programs by providing resources, infrastructure, and ongoing support.

##### **4.4 Sustainability and Funding Strategies:**

Relying on diverse funding sources beyond initial project phases is crucial. Collaborations with government, NGOs, and community contributions (such as in-kind support) are vital for securing long-term financial stability. Sustainable funding ensures the longevity and scalability

of CBE programs, preventing disruptions and enabling consistent access to education for marginalized children.

#### 4.5 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment:

Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is crucial. Regular assessments help measure program effectiveness, identify challenges, and guide continuous improvement efforts. Data-driven decision-making based on monitoring and evaluation results allows for targeted interventions, ensuring better program outcomes and accountability.

#### 4.6 Importance of Socio-economic Impact Assessment:

Evaluating the socio-economic impact of CBE programs on communities and individuals is essential. It helps measure the broader implications of education beyond academic achievements. Understanding the socio-economic impact allows stakeholders to assess the program's contribution to poverty alleviation, community development, and overall well-being.

These lessons highlight the importance of community involvement, adaptive teaching strategies, teacher capacity building, sustainable funding, effective monitoring, and comprehensive impact assessment in the successful implementation and continuous improvement of Complementary Basic Education programs in Ghana. Integrating these lessons into future initiatives can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of educational interventions for marginalized populations.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Ghana's Complementary Basic Education (CBE) program has yielded valuable insights, showcasing key lessons that hold significance for educational initiatives globally. The program underscored the paramount importance of community engagement, emphasizing the pivotal role of local ownership in sustaining educational interventions. It highlighted the necessity of flexible and culturally relevant curricula, tailored teaching methodologies, and continuous facilitator capacity building to effectively cater to the needs of marginalized learners. Moreover, the CBE program emphasized the significance of sustainable funding mechanisms, robust monitoring, and comprehensive impact assessments for program success and longevity.

Equally crucial is the recognition that equitable access to quality education serves as a cornerstone for sustainable development. Education empowers individuals, bridges societal gaps, and fosters economic growth, social cohesion, and civic engagement. The lessons learned from Ghana's CBE program underscore the transformative potential of inclusive and accessible education in shaping prosperous and equitable societies. This underscores the urgent need for concerted efforts from policymakers, stakeholders, and international partners to prioritize inclusive education initiatives worldwide. It calls for strategic investments, collaborative partnerships, and policy frameworks that ensure every child, regardless of socio-economic status or geographic location, has access to quality education. It urges a collective commitment to breaking down barriers, promoting equity, and fostering inclusive educational systems that nurture the full potential of every individual.

In essence, the lessons gleaned from Ghana's CBE program provide a roadmap for guiding future endeavors in education. They advocate not just for education as a fundamental right but as a catalyst for sustainable development, societal progress, and the realization of human

potential. It is a call to action to prioritize inclusive education as a cornerstone of building a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

## **6. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are gleaned from the study:

### **6.1 Strengthen Collaboration for Sustained Support:**

CBE stakeholders should foster robust partnerships and collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, and local communities. This will enhance dialogue, improve shared decision-making, and joint planning to ensure sustained support and effective implementation of CBE programs. Subsequently, the stakeholders can establish platforms for regular communication to streamline efforts, leverage resources, and align objectives towards common educational goals.

### **6.2 Invest in Facilitator Training and Professional Development:**

The central government should prioritize continuous training and professional development programs for CBE facilitators working in marginalized areas. The government can focus on equipping the facilitators with effective pedagogical skills, cultural sensitivity, and strategies to engage diverse learners. The government can also develop mentorship programs, peer learning networks, and access to ongoing learning opportunities to enhance the quality of teaching and support facilitators' growth.

### **6.3 Promote Research and Data-Driven Approaches:**

Civil society organizations (CSOs) need to encourage a culture of research and evaluation within CBE initiatives. CSOs must invest in rigorous data collection, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms to assess program effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and guide evidence-based decision-making. CSOs should also support research initiatives that explore innovative teaching methodologies, community engagement strategies, and the socio-economic impact of CBE programs to continuously enhance their outcomes.

### **6.4 Advocate for Increased Funding and Resource Allocation:**

CSOs should advocate for increased financial resources and sustainable funding mechanisms to expand CBE programs in marginalized and underserved areas. CSOs can engage with governmental bodies, international donors, and philanthropic organizations to prioritize investment in CBE. Government can also allocate resources strategically to the Complementary Education Agency to ensure that they are directed towards critical aspects such as facilitator training, learning materials, infrastructure improvement, and community engagement initiatives.

Implementing these recommendations will bolster the sustainability, effectiveness, and reach of Complementary Basic Education programs. By fostering collaboration, investing in educator capacity, promoting research-driven approaches, and advocating for increased funding, stakeholders can collectively advance inclusive education and create transformative opportunities for marginalized children, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of sustainable and equitable development.

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