

Strengthening the Chain of Accountability to Improve Quality and Performance in Ghanaian Primary Schools

(The Synthesis Report¹)

“We know our rights of holding the teachers accountable ... the children are our children and their downfall is our downfall...” *(Parent focal group discussion in LCD community, Kassena- Nankana, Upper East region, Ghana)*

Link Community Development (LCD) External Assessment

Final

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¹ This synthesis report is based on a more detailed evaluation report of LCD’s work in Ghana (see www.associatesforchange.org) for the more full assessment report.

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Acronyms

AD	Assistant Director
BAK	Bosomtwe Kwanwoma
BECE	Basic Examination Certificate
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CBI	Cluster Based Inset
DEFAT	District Education for All Teams
DEO	District Education Office
DEOC	District Education Oversight Committees
DDE	District Director of Education
DEPT	District Education Planning Team
EMIS	Education Monitoring and Information System
FGAR	Female Gross Admission Rate
FGER	Female Gross Enrolment Rate
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GAR	Gross Admission Rate
GER	Government Enrolment Rate
GES	Ghana Education Sector
HT	Head Teacher
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
KND	Kessena-Nakana District
LCD	Link Community Development
LPS	Link School Programme
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PMT	Performance Monitoring Test
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
REP	Regional Education Performance
SMC	School Management Committee
SPAM	School Performance Appraisal Meetings
SPR	School Performance Review
SPIP	School Performance Improvement Plan
SIP	Schooling Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
TENI	Tackling Education Needs Inclusively
TLM	Teaching Learning Materials
TND	Talensi-Nabdram District
SBI	School Based INSET
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

The Research Team

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1.0 The Background

Tackling Education Needs Inclusively (TENI) project

Ghana has made significant progress towards achieving universal access at the primary education level. Enrolment and gender parity have improved over the last decade but wide regional and rural-urban disparities continue along with a growing divide related to quality education particularly in the rural areas. The majority of children are not reaching basic competency levels in literacy and numeracy even after completing nine years of basic schooling. The non state sector is increasingly becoming a visible actor, and making significant contributions towards improving educational quality and performance in the sector. Against this backdrop, the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) secured a grant from Comic Relief to implement the “*Tackling Education Needs Inclusively (TENI)*” which seeks to bring systemic educational change by improving transition, completion and quality of education for disadvantaged children in Northern Ghana over the next four years. TENI will tackle the underlying causes of poor educational outcomes (particularly for girls) in the three northern regions working with various stakeholders and institutions to synergise processes at the community, school and district levels to achieve better governance, ownership, accountability and management of schools. It will also tackle the quality of teaching and learning in an attempt to improve children’s educational performance.

The VSO, in implementing TENI, will work in close partnership with four local organisations including Link Community Development (LCD) in three of the poorest districts of northern Ghana. An external evaluation of LCD’s work over the last ten years was conducted in April, 2009 to assist the VSO assess the effectiveness of the current LCD program methodology related to strengthening educational quality, governance and accountability at the district and community levels. The evaluation assesses the outcomes and impact of improving quality education; and draws on lessons learned and recommendations to inform TENI project implementation.

Objectives of the LCD external evaluation

- *Assess the impact of the LCD’s education work in northern Ghana – in terms of its contribution to enrolment, retention, and performance of children (particularly girls)..*
- *Assess the importance of the School Performance Review (SPR) and SPIPS as a tool for bringing about changes in educational quality in Northern Ghana.*
- *Assess the level of community involvement in the management of education in the program.*
- *Assess the contribution of LCD’s work in improving the management capabilities of GES at district level.*
- *Assess the degree to which the policies and approaches have been mainstreamed into existing government policies.*
- *Assess the degree of cost effectiveness and sustainability of the LCD approaches,*
- *Capture the lessons learnt by different stakeholders of the LCD program.*
- *Make recommendations for replicating and scaling up methodologies in TENI.*

Overview of Link Community Development Programme

The Link Community Development (LCD) Program started its operations in the Upper East Region of northern Ghana in the late 90's and the Ashanti Region in 2007/08². The overall aim of the LCD programme is to: *“Improve the quality of teaching and learning in underprivileged Ghanaian schools so that disadvantaged pupils attain learning outcomes which compare favourably with the national average and thereby have better opportunities to improve their standard of living.”*

LCD implements three main strategies: the Link School Programme (LSP) strategy which is targeted at Ghanaian primary schools which are linked with interested schools in the United Kingdom. This approach involves providing head teacher and School Management Committees (SMC's) with training in project and financial management, providing small matching grants to the schools and encouraging cross-cultural exchange with letters and sometimes visits by the teachers to the UK and vice versa. The second major strategy of LCD is the “insider out approach” whereby the program builds on the capacities, and attempts to enhance existing systems and structures of the District Education Office to deliver quality education services to the communities. The final strategy of LCD is the School Performance Review (SPR) process which has been implemented since 2005/06 in the Upper East Region and more recently in the Ashanti Region (BAK District). The SPR strategy involves several dimensions including assisting the District Education offices (DEOs) collect three sets of data to enhance their own understanding of the performance of the schools. The data collection involves: performance monitoring tests (PMTs) which are given to the P3 and P6 levels across all the schools, and education data collection focused mainly on quality using both quantitative and qualitative observation instruments. The data collection by the district is followed by a participatory monitoring meeting with the teachers and the community parents reviewing the findings from the data and then planning action based on the findings to improve child performance at the school.

These three strategies are used to improve quality education at the district and community level by engaging closely with the leadership and senior management of the District Education Office to bring about change in the performance of schools, teachers and children.

Methodological approach

The LCD evaluation attempted to investigate the outcomes and impact that LCD made in two of its three focal districts in the Upper East Region—Talensi-Nabdam and Kassena-Nankana Districts. The evaluation used a results-based approach by considering the overall goals, objectives and strategies which LCD has used to attain medium term

² The Ghana program has scaled up to 71 Link schools across three program districts in the Upper East Region. Two of these three Districts selected for LCD intervention are among the 53 most deprived districts in the country.

outcomes and impact in its focal districts. The study also looks at the cost effectiveness and sustainability of these strategies which have evolved in the districts.

The evaluation study covers three levels of investigation. Firstly, an assessment of the impact at the district and regional levels based on statistical and interview data from the comparison of LCD districts with other non LCD districts across the northern region. The second level of investigation was conducted at the district level where extensive information audits and interviews were carried out with key senior management and operational staff at the District Education Offices. Head teachers and teacher workshops were also held to solicit views of key education school stakeholders across the evaluative focal districts. The final level of investigation was at the community school level where nine communities (5 LCD and 4 non LCD school/ communities) were visited over a two week period in order to interview children, teachers and parents along with SMC and PTA members to solicit beneficiary views of the LCD interventions and impact. Comparisons were made by the evaluation team by randomly selecting school communities which had been direct beneficiaries of the Link LSP program and neighbouring community schools which had no LSP program and were only involved in the School Performance Review (SPR) process.

2.0 LCD Core Strategies and Objectives

All of the LCD strategies and programs were reviewed as part of the LCD program evaluation. It was often very difficult for the evaluation team to differentiate and directly trace LCD support to the change processes which were occurring at the district, school and community levels. This was particularly due to the close interaction and interweaving of LCD's approach at the District Education Offices and the natural process of transformation taking place as the interventions of LCD were tightly connected and interwoven with ongoing processes of education quality change and improved management at the district offices.

The Link School Programme

The Link School Programme (LSP) strategy is targeted at selected schools in each of the LCD focal districts which are linked with schools in the UK. The LSP approach involves providing head teacher and School Management Committee training in areas of project and financial management, the provision of small incentive grants to the schools with associated fund raising by recipient schools, and cross- cultural exchanges with letters and sometimes visits by teachers from Ghana and UK. The overall objectives of the LSP program are to:

- Improve the school effectiveness so that schools operate as centres of learning and community development
- Strengthen the school management and governance systems
- Improve the head teacher professional development
- Facilitate mutually beneficial links between UK and Ghanaian schools

The LSP program is being run in 71 schools in the Upper East Region and an additional 40 schools in the Bosomtwe-Atwima-Kwanwoma (BAK) District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

School Performance Review (SPR) Process

“The School Performance Review (SPR) is a unique Monitoring and Evaluation approach to promote and consolidate the collection and management of information at school and district levels. It aims at providing accurate information about school performance to inform decision making to enhance the understanding of school improvement. SPR also provides the opportunity for LCD, GES/MOE, and Northern schools to have access to vital school improvement information.”

The initial stages of the School Performance Review process emerged as LCD tailored its strategies and support to the needs of the districts. It also recognised the need to move away from a school focused approach to a capacity building approach targeted at improving school and child performance over the long term. The Performance testing of pupils had been implemented by the GES in the mid to late 1990s along with a participatory feedback mechanism known as the School Performance Appraisal Meeting (SPAM). This approach to performance testing and feedback was abandoned due to lack of Government support in the early 2000’s with the last PMTs and SPAMs carried out in 2001.

The School Performance Review (SPR) process designed under Link was piloted in 2004/05 and then began implementation in Bolga District in 2005/06, TNK (06/07), KND in 05/06 and more recently in the Ashanti Region (BAK District) (08/09). The SPR strategy involves several dimensions including assisting the DEOs collect three sets of data to enhance their own and the communities understanding of the school performance. The data collection involves performance monitoring tests which are given to the P3 and P6 levels across all the schools, education data collection using both quantitative and qualitative instruments. The data collection is followed by a participatory monitoring meeting with the teachers and parents reviewing the findings from the test data and then planning actions based on these findings to improve child performance at the school. The following diagram describes the SPR process:

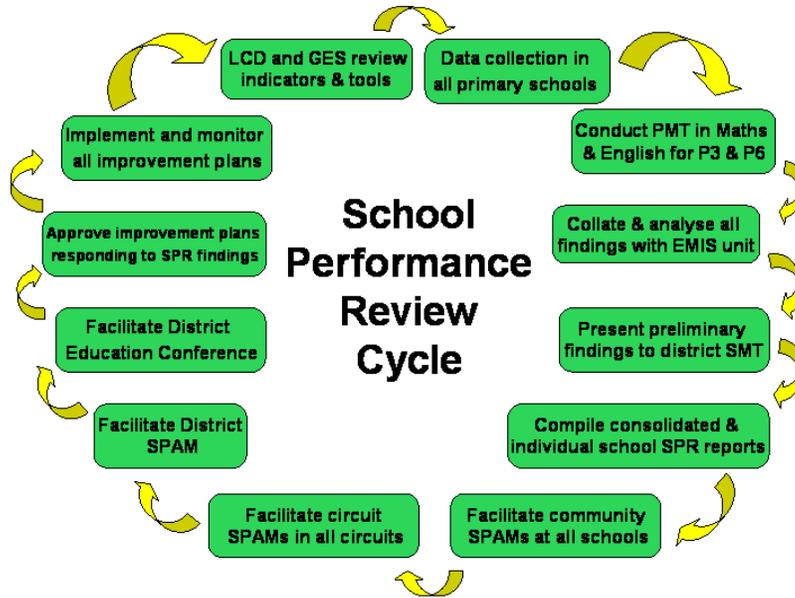


Figure 1: School Performance Review Cycle

Since the mid 2000s, the program has expanded to districts in the Brong Ahafo Region with growing demand for SPR intervention within Ghana and among countries in Africa (e.g. Uganda and Ethiopia). Districts in the Upper East, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions have requested support to launch SPR and similar processes to improve quality and strengthen accountability within the education system.

The "Insider-Out" Approach and Capacity Building at District levels

The third major strategy of LCD involves the “insider out approach” whereby the program builds on the capacities of the district education offices and attempts to enhance existing systems and structures of the District Education Office to deliver quality education services to their communities.

The LCD approach was designed to reactivate and rekindle some of the existing tools and systems which had been dormant at the district and circuit level such as the comprehensive school assessment and consultative processes of planning school improvement with School Management Committees. The approach requires that all aspects of the chain of accountability are activated including the Senior Management such as the Assistant Director of Supervision, Assistant Director for Human Resource Development, the District Planner and Statistics officer along with other senior officers. The accountability chain also includes improving the quality of supervision and monitoring by Circuit Supervisors (CS’s) within the district and ensuring that they are responsive to the needs of their schools and communities particularly following the SPAM meetings with the communities.

The basis of the insider-out approach is built on the following assumptions that, *“unless district staff are able to provide coordination services, support and monitoring to schools, education improvement will be limited. Strong management and effective supervision are integral parts of improving learner performance.* Finally, Circuit Supervisors are positioned to help manage and support school improvement; and empowering them to fulfil their jobs is crucial for improving district services to schools. The LCD model demands the creation of effective localized support bases for schools through the following capacity building mechanisms:

- Professional development of Circuit Supervisors (CSs)
- Creating space for the CS to share experiences
- Enhanced EMIS and performance data which is accessible to the CS
- Circuit plans based on school needs and which inform district education plans
- Circuit reports which inform district decision making
- The Appraisal of CS performance and impact on school improvement

Since 2006/7 the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Ghana entered a partnership with the LCD program to improve quality and accountability at the district education level. The VSO LCD partnership involved support to Circuit Supervisor Support Officers, Education Advisors and Teacher Support Officers who built capacity of the District Directorate to strengthen management systems and teacher instructional practice. The LCD and VSO partnership also included the placement of three VSO volunteers as LCD officers at the Bolgatanga Municipal Education office and two VSO volunteers at the Talensi-Nabdam District Education office. Finally, another key component of the LCD approach within the districts involved providing financial and human resource support to the district education directorate. This involved LCD planned training events and support to the district to carry out their own capacity building programs in areas where the DEO identified a need.

3.0 Key findings at District Level

The evaluation team assessed the outcomes of the LCD programme in northern Ghana based on five key indicators. These included LCD’s own articulation of its outcomes based on their own project documents which highlighted the following objectives:

- Improved supervision, planning and coordination to improve school performance;
- More effective planning, monitoring and reflection at district levels;
- Improved financial and project management skills at district and school levels;
- Enhanced human resource and district operational systems; and
- Improved capacity of the district office to initiate and deliver better quality and responsive services to the community schools.

The overall impact of the LCD approach was measured using two major indicators:

- Improved quality of teaching and learning in underprivileged Ghanaian schools so that disadvantaged students attain outcomes which compare favourably with the national average and improve their standard of living; and

- Improved capacity of the DEO to deliver quality education.

At the Circuit level some of the impacts which were expected from the LCD program approach were:

- Improved monitoring and supervision approach of Circuit Supervisors (higher quality of feedback);
- Improved teacher instruction and teacher performance at the school level (time on task); and
- Better learning outcomes for children.

Evaluative field work at the district directorate and community/school levels suggests that the LCD School Performance Review process has revived the accountability system in the delivery of education particularly in districts with strong leadership. Communities were sensitized on the value of formal education as a vehicle for socio-economic development and their roles in schooling improvement. In addition, there have been fundraising activities at the community level to ensure community time and material investment in education provision. This is to elicit community commitment resulting in enhanced accountability to community stakeholders (parents and children); and community stakeholders demanding better value for their educational investment. Education providers are now being confronted with the challenge of satisfying this demand with the better quality of service. The evaluation revealed a degree of quality change being felt in some of the districts in the Upper East Region based on LCD interventions and best practices. LCD's approach of stimulating demand also required a reorganization of management and supervisory systems at DEO level to ensure that more efficient delivery of quality education to satisfy the demands of the stakeholders at the community level was made.

The outcomes of the two districts were clear throughout the evaluation in relation to school and children performance; the districts which had weaker leadership at the top management levels were not able to maximise the LCD support to produce significant change in the delivery of education at the school level. The following section outlines the key differences between the two evaluative districts and the impact this had on LCD programme outcomes.

Management Structures for Accountability

Several management and accountability structures were put in place with the support of LCD to ensure effective delivery of education services by the District Education Offices (DEO) evaluated. One of the significant outputs of the work by LCD was the establishment of a functioning Senior Management Team (SMTs) to provide a forum for coordination, idea sharing, responsiveness to problems and monitoring of ongoing programmes across the two districts studied³.

³ Members of SMT comprised the District Director, four frontline Assistant Directors (Supervision, Planning, Budget and Human Resources), the Girl Child Officer and other senior officers. Meetings were to be held monthly to discuss educational issues emanating from reports submitted by field officers and the community/circuit SPAM meetings.

Findings from the evaluative field work and interviews with key DEO staff suggest that the SMT meetings were valuable for ensuring proper oversight to the supervisory and monitoring work of CSs and monitoring of other processes at the DEO office. The SMT meetings also assisted key district officers obtain valuable management information, opened up consultation processes with senior management and empowered them to feel part of the leadership at the district level. More work by LCD was needed to ensure oversight of educational delivery at district level and stronger governance systems were set up (e.g. DEOC and DEFATs).

There was some evidence that the DEOC was functional in Talensie Nabdam District (TND); LCD had been given the opportunity to adequately brief members of the DEOC on its programme and its outcomes in educational delivery in the district. This platform was not used to the same degree in Kassena Nankana District (KND) where there was no evidence of a functioning DEOC. This further weakened the efforts of LCD in ensuring that the Directorate was more effective in its delivery. More work is needed by LCD to help reinvigorate and strengthen the DEOC given the vital role it plays particularly in weakly led districts. *Pressure from the District Education for All Teams (DEFAT) may be an excellent mechanism for attempting to strengthen the DEOC structure along with the critical involvement of the District Chief Executive or District Coordinating Director.*

Systems of Accountability

The evaluation found that support through LCD's insider out approach had improved and strengthened the circuit supervisory systems set up by the DDE's in one of the two districts where the evaluation was conducted. For instance, in TND circuit work plans were based upon the Schooling Improvement Plan (SIP) and the School Performance Improvement Plans (SPIP) in order to follow up with the schools on their progress. The SIP was also used to monitor school progress by the circuit supervisors since it describes issues such as: teacher absenteeism, pupil absenteeism, non functionality of SMC/PTA, alcoholism on the part of teachers and heads, and poor preparation of lesson notes and delivery. What was missing is a monitoring system to see how far the communities are moving towards the targets that they established during the SPAMs.

The Circuit Supervisor (CS) support given by LCD had improved the work planning process at the district levels and regular monitoring support to districts. LCD had been supporting the purchase of fuel for the CS motor bikes of CSs for the last five years; this has encouraged some DDE's to continue to support the funding of CSs after the LCD funds were no longer available since June 2008. In the case of TND, the DDE makes it a priority that all CSs are provided with a minimum of 2 gallons of petrol per week. Even after the LCD funds stopped in TND in 2008/09, the district still found it important to continue prioritizing fuel from their own resources to transport officers to the field.

Capacity Building of District Education Officers

Several in-service training events and on site mentoring are used by LCD to strengthen especially the skills and capacities of the front line ADs along with other members of staff including the planning and statistics officers responsible for the implementation of the SPR. Performance reports for the Talensi-Nabdam District state that LCD had assisted the district strengthen their capacities by: “*supporting all professional staff for monitoring, supervision and capacity building and holding regular meetings of senior management team (SMT) to evaluate the progress of work in the district.*”

Two major approaches were used by LCD to strengthen the capacity of district officers. LCD provides direct training to all the key professional staff at the district levels and sometimes focused training for CSs and the key front line ADs of Supervision in areas of school monitoring and supervision, inspection, and planning. LCD also supported districts to develop their own in-service training for teachers and staff in a variety of areas and they would provide the financing for training of untrained teachers.

At both TND and KND, training of officers had taken place. At the directorate level, intensive training has been given to Circuit Supervisors including Assistant Director in charge of supervision (head of the CSs)⁴. There was also training at the school level to update the management and supervisory skills of head teachers and pedagogical skills of teachers. Although LCD had made strides in building the capacities of the district Circuit Supervisors, district education officers suggested that more oversight structures should be put in place to ensure their performance particularly in districts with weak senior management and leadership capacities (e.g. Kassena-Nankana). According to the Regional Director of Education yearly forums and other avenues are needed to share best practices in the Upper East Region to ensure strong accountability strategies are mainstreamed into districts with weak leadership.

Data Management at the District Level

The findings from the evaluation reveal very limited and weak capacities on the part of DEOs for data retrieval in order to track quality improvement and learning outcomes in the long run. This limited the sustainability of the SPR process to inform future planning and performance monitoring exercises. The evaluation findings suggest that the two District Education Offices were able to retrieve varying amounts of School Performance Review (SPR) data related to the performance monitoring process over the last (3 years). TND officers were able to retrieve and share data from two rounds of the PMT data (the SPR for 2006/07 and the SPR for 2007/08); however KND officers were only able to produce the most recent round of PMT data (2008/09). They had not properly stored or backed up the first round (2007/08) thereby losing valuable data⁵.

⁴ Topics covered during the training included: project planning and management, teacher supervision (including lesson notes planning, preparation and delivery, class management), records keeping and financial management.

⁵ What was left were a few PMT results in English for P3.

Both districts had less data available related to the SPAM processes and limited evidence that they had kept copies of the School Performance Implementation Plans (SPIPs), and even the SIPs which were to be used for CS monitoring at the school level. In TND, some officers were able to produce a few copies of the SPIP reports which they have been using to monitor school progress toward SPIP targets but there was no overall process of filing of SPIP reports to track change within the schools over the last three years of LCD intervention.

LCD staff told the evaluation team that they relied mainly on the districts to store the data sets in order to build district capacity and ensure ownership of the data. They also explained that due to the limited space in the LCD Regional office in the Upper East Region, they have decided a few years ago not to keep hard copies of all the data and were relying on soft copies but not backing up these up effectively. Consultation with LCD officers indicated that a systematic approach to data management was needed by LCD and the District offices to better manage the data generated from the SPR process. Unless a more stable system of data management is developed, this will have far reaching impact on LCD and the Regional offices' ability to track change, monitor performance and demonstrate impact in their districts over the long run.

District Ownership of the SPR Processes

The LCD approach of allowing the districts to lead the SPR process had meant that they were able to organize their own SPRs in different forms and increasingly finance these events over the years. Since the first SPRs in the 2006/07 period, Talensi-Nabdam, Bolga and Kassena-Nankana districts have all been making significant contributions towards the ownership of the SPR process; they have provided funds for their own officers to collect the SPR data and even produce the instruments which are used to collect the data which are used to generate SPR reports. The main outcome of the School Performance Review exercise - particularly the PMT tests conducted across the majority of schools at the district level - was that districts had direct control and ownership of the information being generated, and the process. The outputs from these processes could be used by planning officers to inform management of the challenges and opportunities schools were confronting in the district.

Planning at District Level

One very positive outcomes of the SPR process is its inclusion into the regional and district level discussion; clearly LCD had made significant contributions at both the regional and district levels across their focal districts in helping planners at all levels recognize the important of performance data and use it as a means for assessing their education system performance. Discussion with directors across two LCD and two non-LCD districts as well as the Regional Director confirmed that LCD was making significant contributions towards helping directors analyze their situation. The District Director of Education of Bongo confirmed that LCD had made contributions towards assisting the region produce their performance reports. There was also evidence from the two evaluative districts that their performance reports and annual education operational

plans had been enhanced due to the analytical work of the statistics and planning officers and their understanding of the problems of education in their districts.

One of the weaknesses of the SPR cycle was that most of the districts did not have an ADEOP which reflects the key problems which emerged from the EDUCOM and the district SPAM. Evaluative field work and the district education information audits which were carried out in the two evaluative focus districts suggest that community and circuit SPAMs were discussed at the district level but sustained analysis of the SPAM process and needs of the school/communities in vital planning documents was not achieved. The evaluation team found little written data on the outcomes of the circuit SPAM in district offices. The lack of reporting on SPAM events affected the degree to which an overall district implementation plan could be developed. LCD officers mentioned that the district ADEOP took the place of the District Implementation Plans (DIPs) but upon review of the Annual District Education Operational Plan (ADEOP), the evaluation team found that this document did not reflect the peculiar needs of the two districts visited. More care should be taken to ensure that a district report is generated from the circuit and district SPAM meetings. As LCD scales up to other districts a better system of circuit and district reporting will be needed to ensure that plans can be generated based on a district SPAM report.

4.0 Community Level Outcomes and Impact

Community level outcomes and impact were judged based on the following key outcomes and indicators mentioned in LCD program documentation:

- Active participation of community members in school development;
- Community access to information and ability to demand for quality education
- Ability of the community to hold their teachers accountable;
- Ownership of schools by communities.

The ability of people to actively participate in school management was measured based on the knowledge of the SMC and PTA regarding their functions and right to quality education. The team also looked at the influence fundraising and financial management of the SMC and PTA had in relation to their level of participation and ownership of the schools. Finally, the team evaluated the degree to which the communities were holding their teachers accountable for pupils' performance and quality of education in the school. Some of the indicators included the level of monitoring by the community including number of school visits and the knowledge of their children's performance.

At the community level, there was a high sense of ownership which was evident in the attitude of communities and parents towards school development issues. Parents and communities embarked on various investment drives in the school which ranged from improvement in infrastructure to quality teaching and learning in the classroom. Pivotal to community ownership was their increasing involvement in school management. This was enhanced by the Links' fund raising and grants efforts which made SMC/PTAs co-signatories to the Link account. There was not much variance between Link and Non-

link schools in relation to the level of community involvement and ownership. What was emerging from the evidence suggested that the higher the level of investment by communities in the school particularly where district education offices were not functioning, the higher the awareness of communities towards their educational rights.

Communities were well sensitised by a range of NGOs and were increasingly challenged by the authorities to ensure quality education and discipline in the teaching force. The PMT, and SPAM processes were particularly effective in “waking up communities to their right to quality education.” LCD ensured that during the SPAM meetings SMC’s were made aware of their rights to monitor the schools and teacher attendance. In a situation where education authorities were not supportive, community members were starting to find their own solutions. Thus the training of SMC/PTA executives by Link on their role and responsibilities was helping to sensitise the communities. The challenge was for the DEO to act on these demands and improve teacher conduct and performance in the schools.

Knowledge of functions and rights of SMC/PTA’s

LCD reported in interviews that it used the SPAM meetings and workshops for head teachers and SMCs members as a means to educating the SMC and PTA on their roles and responsibilities. Many of SMC/PTA’s members interviewed in both districts had a strong understanding of what was going on in the school. They were knowledgeable about the programmes and projects the schools were benefiting from and could list the support NGO’s were providing. With regard to their functions, many including some of the newly elected SMC/PTAs knew their roles and responsibilities as SMC/PTAs. *“We know our rights to hold the teachers accountable; the children are our children, their downfall is our downfall” (SMC/PTA member, Atoa, KND).*

In TND for instance, the SMC chairpersons acknowledged that they were given training by the District Education Service on their functions and right as SMC/PTAs, and on school management. *“I attended a meeting in Kongo (a town in TND) and we were told that the school belongs to us. They said SMC members should visit the school to check on the teachers and the pupil as well. If the teachers have problems, we should discuss them and support them to solve them. We should report teacher absenteeism, lateness, drunkenness and other immoral behaviours to the head and then to the circuit supervisor” (SMC Chairman, Tarebora Primary).* Some of the SMCs in both districts explained explicitly their role and narrated steps they had taken when a teacher is found to be absence, late or drunk.

Fund raising and financial management⁶

All the Link schools were actively engaged in fund raising, which involved community members making contributions (farm produce, birds and animals during the harvesting season –October to November) to sell in a festival to raise money. Some communities

⁶ The LCD expected outcome at community level was that there would be improved financial and project management capabilities at school level.

also employed other innovative means depending on the environment and economy of the community such as picking stones and gathering fire wood to sell, working on farms for money, among others. The money raised was kept in a bank account which had the head teacher and the SMC or PTA chairperson as signatories. In these schools, the fundraising was a requirement to qualify for the Link school grants. In 2007/08, Link required that the communities to raise a minimum of GH¢ 50.00 to qualify for school grant of GH¢ 100.00.

The fundraising raising and the system of involving the SMC/PTA in the planning and spending of the grant gave the SMC/PTA interest, experience and power within the realm of school affairs. It also created confidence in the SMC/PTA members by increasing their involvement in the running of the school, making decisions on grant disbursement and holding the head teacher and teachers accountable. LCD was not only supporting fund raising efforts in the Link schools but also encouraging other schools in the district to undertake fundraising efforts as part of the overall school improvement process during SPAM meetings.

The SMC/PTA had a fairly good understanding of the Link grant process, requirements and how it was being used⁷. The SMCs and PTAs interviewed were more knowledgeable about the LCD grant usage in comparison to the Ghana Education Service (GES) capitation grant due to several factors. LCD required that all SMCs were signatories to the Link bank account and involved in the planning process along with the head teacher from the SPAM to the SIP development. SMC/PTA members in five LCD schools visited explained that the head teacher involved them in the planning of the Link grant. They stated that usually the head teacher with teachers identified the problems or needs of the school and called a joint meeting with the SMC. At these meetings they discussed the needs and problems of the school with the head teacher and agreed on the way forward. A budget was then and sent to LCD for approval; after approval by LCD, the head teacher and SMC/PTA chairperson purchased the items and showed these items to the community before they are used in the school. This was in sharp contrast to the GES capitation grant process which did not require full participation of the SMC/PTA and often did not even involve the teachers in the school.

Community participation and monitoring of schools

The evaluation field work in the nine communities revealed that the PMT and SPAM process served as a participatory forum for the community and teachers to discuss problems, take decisions and solve issues affecting the schools. In many of the Schools the evaluation team visited and where PMTs and SPAMs were conducted, the results of the SPAM triggered follow up meetings aimed at addressing the problem identified in the SPAM. At the Atoa community, parents asserted that it was after the PMT and SPAM exercises that they realised their children's reading performance was very poor. They convened a meeting with the teachers to discuss the SPAM results. The performance of

⁷ In many schools visited, the grant was used for buying water containers for classes to maximize pupil-teacher contact time. SMC's also used the money for the repair of furniture, classroom blocks and purchasing books and teaching learning and materials.

teachers in the school, their absenteeism and lateness and its impact on child performance was scrutinized and the results of was the engagement of volunteer teachers from the community to teach in the school. The SMC also intensified their monitoring activities and reported certain teachers which were known for absenteeism to the circuit superiors. At Ayaga community, the results from the SPAM triggered the building of teacher quarters by the community in an attempt to reduce teacher absenteeism and lateness by the teachers; the community also agreed to support the school feeding programme after the Catholic Relief Service (CRS) pulled out of school feeding in the area. In the Anaanore community, the SPAM process translated into the building of a JSS and the provision of a volunteer teacher by the community to assist in the school. At other schools, parents were reducing the domestic workload of their children in the house and in some cases stopping certain negative cultural practices such as early marriage and child fostering.

In all the nine schools visited the community members and SMC were engaged in an enhanced level of school monitoring particularly focussed on improving the attendance and performance of teachers. In the Talensie Nabdam District both Link and non-Link schools, SMC/PTA and community members were visiting schools to monitor their activities. However, seven LCD and non-Link schools were very proactive in monitoring teachers and compared to the other two communities which had new SMC/PTAs who had just been elected to office and the Heads of the schools had also changed. The long term presence of a committed head teacher became a major factor in continuity and sustainability within the community and for effective impact of the SPR and SPAM processes. In Sembu community in the KND district, the PTA/SMC selected seven people to visit the school in turns; at least one member of the PTA/SMC visited the school each day. *“I usually come to the school around 10.00 am when they are supposed to be in class so if I found that the pupils are roaming or there is no teacher in a particular class, I ask the Head teacher”* (a member of the seven selected to monitor school at Sembu). In Tinga community in TND a parent said: *“Now the teachers attend school. My house is just by the road to the school, so I always sit on the rock and observe how many teachers come to school and I have realized that they now come to school. At first some three teachers were absent from school three consecutive days in a week but because the new Head teacher is hard working, the teachers attendance is now better* (Parent in Tinga community, TND).

Many of the schools in both districts have initiated actions against teachers who were non-performing due to alcoholism and absenteeism. District actions against teachers included transfers, suspension and freezing of salaries. Aside from the checking on teachers, community members said they ask the head teachers if there is any problems or challenges in the school that the community or SMC/PTA can help to solve. They also talk to children and parents of children who are reported to be stubborn or truant. In Anaanore, Atoa and Ayaga community/primary schools in the KND, parents and the SMC/PTA were regularly visiting the schools and holding teachers accountable. They questioned teacher attendance and reported teacher absenteeism, alcoholism and lateness to the Head teacher and Circuit Supervisors.

At Tarebora primary school (Link school in TND), the SMC/PTA actions led to the transfer of a drunken teacher from the school two years ago and currently there is another teacher who drinks and has been given his final warning. According to the SMC/PTA the teacher's behaviour has changed however *"if he reverts back to his old habits, they will report him to the Circuit Supervisor and make sure he is transferred from the school"*. At Sembu community, a similar action was taken a year ago which led to the teacher's salary being frozen and the teacher being transferred from the school. This was in contrast to the lack of action by the District education authorities in the KND district.

Community members were increasingly feeling a responsibility towards holding their teachers and pupils accountable due to the level of investment in their schools in the form of building, fundraising, and providing for children to attend school. This coupled with the sensitisation processes by NGOs related to the communities' role in schooling; communities were resolute in demanding accountability from their schools. *"We thought that the school was for government; we did not buy books or pens for our children but we were made to understand that the school belongs to us. Now we buy books, pens, bags, etc for our children and support the school. It will be unfair not to monitor what is going on in the school"* (SMC member, Bagire community). *"Considering the amount of resources that have gone into the school, it would be unfair not to have teachers in the classroom"* (PTA members, Bagire community).

Limits of Ensuring Teacher Accountability

However, there were limits to which the SMC/PTA and community members could hold the teachers accountable particularly in districts which had weak accountability structures in place for teachers, poor overall leadership and weak supervision. In some cases the community members/SMC level of education (a lot of them are illiterates) limits their confidence, willingness and ability to follow through to the highest authorities even though they know their rights. In many cases, there were impediments created to restrict the SMC/PTA and community members from holding teachers accountable. The teachers, head teachers and interestingly higher authority such as the Circuit Supervisors and officials at the District Education Office employed various tactics including intimidation, threats and verbal abuse against SMC/PTA and community members. Usually some of teachers threatened to refuse posting to the community and education authorities and threatened to withdraw teachers from the community if community members complained about the performance and conduct of their teachers.

At Anaanore Primary school, when the PTA complained about teacher absenteeism and lateness this was the response from one of the teachers. *"We have heard that Anaanore community force teachers to teach and if you want to force us to teach your children, we will leave the school and you look for your own teachers to teach them. No wonder you don't always have enough teachers in the school"* (SMC Chairman of Anaanore Primary quoting a treat from a teacher). The PTA chairman of Ayaga, recounted an instance where he approached a teacher to discuss some issues and the teacher questioned him *"where is your teacher certificate"*. The teachers also verbally abuse the community members and SMC/PTA who try to hold them accountable. One SMC chairman cited an

incident where a teacher insulted him as a “*useless and foolish old man*”. The common threat is that if the parents were demanding accountability by asking teachers to come to school regularly and be punctual, they will leave the school. Given the fact that these schools already lacked teachers, this created fear in the parents and SMC/PTA members.

The limited accountability and weak leadership in the KND district which was a result of action by authorities against non-performing teachers reported to education authorities undermined the willingness and ability of communities to continually hold teachers accountable. Many SMC/PTA and community members interviewed are in a quandary and expressed worries as to the next step to take after reporting non-performing teachers several times to the circuit supervisors without seeing any action taken against such teachers. It seems the line of accountability at the community level ends at the circuit level.

In the KND district, the evaluation team found that education authorities had often discouraged communities from reporting teachers or problems of the school to authorities above the Circuit Supervisors. The lack of action taken against non-performing teachers also stifled accountability at the school level. The SMC/PTA and even the head teacher and Circuit Supervisors were finding their jobs frustrating. In three primary schools in Kassena-Nankana District, two of which are LCD schools, parents and SMC/PTAs were frustrated with the lack of action taken against absentee, alcoholic and drug abusive teachers who have been reported to the Circuit Supervisors several times. According to SMC/PTA members, the Circuit Supervisors told them that they had forwarded their reports to the District Headquarters. As one frustrated SMC chairman said after numerous attempts to get the District Education Office to act (through the Circuit Supervisor) on non-performing teachers in their school “*You can force a donkey to the river side but you can not force it to drink water*” (SMC chairman, Atoa Primary, KND).

Community Ownership of Schools

At the community level, there was a high sense of ownership evident in the attitude of communities and parents towards school development issues. Parents and communities embarked on various investment drives in the school which ranged from improvement of infrastructure to quality teaching and learning in the classroom. Pivotal to community ownership was their increasing involvement in school management. This was enhanced by the Links’ fund raising and grants efforts which made SMC/PTAs co-signatories to the Link account. The level of sensitization within the communities was very high due to the efforts of Link and several other NGO’s working in the district including: CRS, WFP, Censudi and Action Aid. These sensitization efforts improved the performance of schools in terms of their fundraising efforts and the increased in SMC and PTA involvement in the schools.

The huge investment that community members were making in the schools reinforced ownership. “*We want to state categorically that we suffered to build this school; the NGOs (EU and DFID) helped us, the government did not help much but the District Assembly supported us to roof the old mad block*”(Chief/SMC chairman, Sembu Primary

school, KND). Some communities were quick to state that they will sustain some of these initiatives such as fund raising after Link pulls out. *"Because we have built the school ourselves, we have the school at heart --- we will continue with funding raising at harvest and continue with what the whites had helped us to do"* (SMC chairman, Tarebora Primary School, TND). Training of SMC executives by GES/ Link and SPAMs also encouraged community ownership and leadership in the school. In two of the schools visited, chiefs of the communities were keenly involved in mobilising community members to provide support to the schools. At Tinga, the chief mobilised community members and also got money from eco-tourism (community operated tourism) to support the building of the KG for the school.

5.0 School Level Outcomes and Impact

The best evidence that the evaluation team could gather related to learning outcomes and the degree of educational quality change over the last three years were gleaned from interviews with the P6 girls and P6 boys along with their parents and teachers. These interviews enabled the evaluation team to ask children questions about the “the things they liked and did not like about their school and classroom.” They were also asked about the changes they had experienced in the classrooms and what had brought about these changes⁸.

At the school level, the evaluation team found that the PMT and SPAMs process was having a significant impact on the improvement in school community planning, engagement of key stakeholders and increasing accountability in school management. This had a direct impact on improving school quality, education delivery and consequently enhanced pupil performance. On financial and data management, Link was successful in fusing good data and financial management skills through Head teacher training in Link schools but the transfer of Head teachers did not guarantee the sustainability of this process at the school level. This was evident in Kassena-Nakana District where head teachers were frequently transferred.

The performance of teachers and community-school relationships was directly dependent on leadership at the district, circuit and school levels. Where there was strong head teacher leadership, there was improved teacher performance and hence enhanced quality teaching and learning in the school. On the other hand, where leadership was weak, teacher performance was poor and quality of education suffered. The LCD assessment revealed that parents were well sensitised and were demanding quality education for their children; where accountability of teachers was weak as a result of teacher non-performance, school-community relations were stressed and tension was building.

Improving Quality education

Evidence from interviews conducted with circuit supervisors, head teachers, teachers, pupils and community members confirmed that LCD programmes had contributed to

⁸ Despite having previously conducted numerous qualitative research exercises in Ghana members of the team were shocked to find out how vocal and forthright the children in the Upper East Region can be.

improving quality across schools in the districts. Programmes including the PMT/SPAM process, provision of TLMs, improvement of school infrastructure, in-service training for teachers (phonic approach, lesson preparation, etc) and exchange activities with Link Partner schools (e.g. exchange of letters and drawing, teacher exchange visits, etc) were cited as enhancing teacher performance and improving learning outcomes at the school level. The LCD programme also enhanced school management through training workshops on financial, data and school management organised for head teachers and SMC chairpersons.

In the area of teacher performance, the evidence revealed a mixed picture but it was clear that teacher performance was significantly and directly dependent on the strengthening of district leadership and educational governance. Where there was strong and high quality leadership, teacher performance was outstanding and where there was weak district leadership the reverse was true. There were also differences in the methods schools adopted to assess pupils' performance and to communicate these learning outcomes to the pupils and their parents. Above all, many of the outcomes translated into better performance by pupils. District staff including the District Director of Education in TND asserted that Link schools were outperforming their non-Link counterparts.

School Management

Evidence from the interviews conducted across the nine evaluative schools suggested that school management including project data and financial management, school-community relations and staff management was stronger in TND than in the KND District. This was partly a result of head teachers having been at the post for a longer period and the fact that very few new head teachers demonstrated an ability to sustain the good management and filing practices set in motion by their previous heads. Another factor was that the discipline instilled at the district offices including processes of rewarding and punishing recalcitrant teachers had ensured that the entire TND was responsive to the new "culture of teaching and discipline." Far fewer reports of teacher absenteeism and a change in the culture of teaching were apparent in the Talensi Nabdram (TND) brought about by a new approach to head teacher leadership (e.g. demotion for non-performing Head teachers and removal from the school sometimes on the advice of the community).

While school-community relations in TND were very cordial and progressive, within KND school-community relations was characterized by hostility between the teachers and the communities. The PMT and SPAM were greatly facilitating improvement in quality delivery of education at the circuit and school levels. These processes also gave voice to stakeholders who by convention had no say in school management. The increased resource flows through the conditional and special grants provided Link schools with an added advantage over non-Link schools. These resources often allowed schools to solve immediate problems facing them which resulted in better financial management in the Link schools. The increased support to teaching and learning processes was also enhanced by the support that LCD was providing in terms of responsive support to the district education directorate for in-service training, onsite supervision and training in areas of literacy and lesson note preparation.

Financial Planning and Data Management

Auditing of the school based information data availability and organisation in the school revealed that the Link schools were better than their non link counterparts in terms of availability of data and degree of organisation than the non-Link schools⁹. In all the Link schools visited where the head teacher had been at post for more than a year, the data were well organised and it was not difficult to locate documents. Records of financial management such as petty cash and cash books were up to date in the TND. However at KND, most of the Head teachers were new to the schools but in most cases their predecessors had arranged the documentation well. In Alagba community for instance, the previous Head teacher had a list of files in the office and instructions as to where they where the files were located.

Table 1: Existence and Organisation of Financial Documentation in the Schools¹⁰

Items	Link		Non-link	
	Exist	Up to date /Organisation	Exist	Up to date/ Organisation
Capitation SPIPS	√	Good	√	Good
SPIPS	√	Good	×	
Petty cash books	√	Good	×	
Cash analysis book	√	Good	√	Good
Financial record – bank statement , audit reports,	√	Good	√	Poor

From the table above it can be concluded that Link schools have maintained better financial records, plans and management tools which the Head teachers were using. The introduction of petty cash books, random auditing and financial record keeping into the Link schools helped track expenses. These processes were non-existent in the non-Link schools. Thus the Link school Head teachers are better financial managers given that they were training on financial management and have been given tools to operate effectively. The LCD offices also ensured yearly random audits across LCD schools; this helped to hold the HTs accountable. Data management was also an issue. Link head teachers who have been in post for more than a year (i.e. TND) had bank statements, audit reports, receipts, etc of both the GOG capitation grant and the Link grant. Interviews with DDE and the CS's across both districts revealed that the LCD schools were much better prepared to develop and manage the capitation grants due to their experience in managing the LCD School Performance Implementation Plan (SPIP). This was confirmed by Head teachers in interviews at the school and small group meetings between LCD and non LCD school Heads in KN and Talensi-Nabdam.

⁹ Link as part of its programme gives training to head teachers in Link schools on data and financial management.

¹⁰ See Annex for a more detailed account of the

Quality improvement

From all the interviews with key education stakeholders, it was clear to the evaluation team that the PMT and SPAMs were crucial in improving school management and education quality in the schools visited in the Upper East. The PMT and SPAM process engendered democratic principles in school management. It gave voice to the various key stakeholders in community schools including community members, SMC/PTA executives and pupils who conventionally would have been easily ignored. The process enhanced the chain of accountability and reminded stakeholders of their responsibilities towards the school. For the community including chiefs, parents, SMC/PTA executives and pupils, the PMT and SPAM processes brought renewed confidence to actively involve themselves and take ownership of schools in the community. It also diminished the gap between school authorities (teacher, head teachers, CS) and the community as they discuss issues that pertain to improving the school using an independent means of assessment instead of the usual PTA meetings where either the PTA or the Head teacher draws the agenda for the meeting.

Interviewees across the nine evaluative school/communities revealed the benefits of PMT and SPAM to their schools. Teachers, community members and pupils catalogued actions to be taken to improve the quality of education in the school emanating from the SPAM process. Table 2 below shows three schools in each district who have translated issues raised in their SPAMs into action over the last two years in Link and non-Link schools.

Table 2: Actions Resulting from School/Community SPAMs

School	Link/non-Link	Problems/Issues	Actions after SPAM
Kassena-Nankana District			
Atoa	Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of teachers and teacher absenteeism, drunkenness and drug abuse (marijuana) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage and pay three volunteer teachers from the community; • Report two absenteeism teachers to Head teacher and then to Circuit Supervisor • Increase monitoring and visits of school by SMC chairman and other PTA members
Ayaga	Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher shortage • Low attendance as a result of roll out of CRS feed programme • Low performance of teachers as a result of absenteeism and lateness which teachers blame on the distance they have to travel to school • Pupils not comfortable with typed questions during the PMT exams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage one volunteer teacher from the community • Community contribute food to continue providing food for pupils • Commitment by SMC to award teachers if the school gets a high ranking in the next PMT • Provision of teachers' quarters to accommodated teachers in the community • Introduced typed exam for Primary 1 to P6.
Anaanore	Non-Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of teachers and teacher lateness, absenteeism and drunkenness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage one community volunteer teacher • Frequent visit to school by SMC

School	Link/non-Link	Problems/Issues	Actions after SPAM
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of classroom space for JSS pupil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chair and other Report non-performing teachers to CS Building of a three classroom unit block (with cement blocks)
Tanlesi-Nabdam District			
Bagire	Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance pupil move to access to drinking water during class hours. Stoppage of CRS feed programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containers to store water in classroom to limit pupil movement from class Borehole drilled in the school compound to provide water for pupil School farm which feed pupil in school
Tarebora	Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to drinking water by Pupils; Poor pupils not able to buy books and uniforms; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containers to store water in classroom to limit pupils movement from class
Tinga	Nom-Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irregular attendance of pupils to school; Lack of class for KG Shortage of teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage one community volunteer teacher Parents now able to monitor children and make sure they are in school Community building two classroom unit block (cement) for KG

Head teachers, teacher and education officials at district level were quick to commend the PMT and SPAM for improving education delivery at the school level. As one head teacher said “it puts us on our toes”. According to another head teacher, “*SPAM is good for the school because it helps you to know your weakness. ---it serves as a check. After the SPAM, some of the parents became more responsible*” (Head teacher, KND). Many head teachers said that after the SPAM there were changes in the schools: circuit supervisors visited more frequently, parents began to live up to expectations and teachers also tried to improve their performance. According to the interview with the Deputy Director of Education in KND, “*SPAMs are organised in an open manner; pupils openly talked about the behaviour of teachers, teachers talked about the behaviour of parents. It results in improvement in school management,--- “the various stakeholder resolved to change afterwards”*. He added that they adopted what they termed “aggressive monitoring” where almost all officers at the district office visited schools to monitor them because of very poor performance by certain schools.

School Classroom Resources and other Incentives to schools

There are remarkable differences in terms of resource inflows and privileges enjoyed by Link and Non-link schools which enhanced the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Many non-LCD head teachers and teachers asserted that Link schools were far better off than non-Link schools even though there are other resources that non-Link school also benefit from. They stated the Link schools had more resources such as:

teaching learning materials, sports equipment, grants, that facilitate teaching and learning in Link Schools which are absent in non-Link schools.

Specific programmes like partner schools (exchange of letters and teacher visits), school grants and fund raising, TLMs and “Let’s Read” programme were particularly appealing for the non-Link schools. A number of Link schools were improving the school infrastructure and facilities from their school grants and special grants.

Table 3: Link programmes in Link and non-Link schools

	Link Schools	Non-Link Schools
School incentive grants/fund raising	√	×
Special grants (for projects)	√	×
Letter writing and school partnership (including exchange visit)	√	×
In-services training for Head teachers	√	×
“Let’s Read” programme (in selected schools)	√	√
In-services training for teachers	√	√
PMT and SPAM	√	√
District support grants (fuelling of CSs motors, etc.)	√	√

Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) were available in most of the Link schools particularly those who were part of the Link “Let’s Read” programme from the UK. The “Let’s Read” programme also included non-Link schools; there were five schools each in KND and TND which were non-LCD schools. The UK partners and the LCD staff produced and delivered TLM kits to schools as part of the programme. The kits are based on the phonic method produced for each class level. Some schools also had TLMs painted on the walls of their classrooms such as the human organs, plants, etc which pupils said were very helpful. Other schools were privileged to have their partners schools in the UK send TLMs and support partner teachers in how to prepare TLMs.

In-service training

The quality of education delivery in terms of teaching and learning processes was also enhanced by the support that LCD was providing in the arena of in-service training, onsite supervision and training in areas of literacy and lesson note preparation. Many head teachers and teachers interviewed particularly at KND confirmed that they had been given in-service training in different areas including phonics methodology at the lower primary level classes, TLMs preparation, lesson note preparation, and teaching certain subject by the district supported by LCD or by the CS.

Teacher Performance and motivation

Teacher performance was one of the major issues of concern to pupils, community members and some head teachers. The evaluation team found that there was some variation between Link and non-Link schools in relation to teacher performance, teacher attendance, punctuality and discipline. In both Link and non-Link schools there were reported cases of teacher non-performance such as absenteeism, lateness, drunkenness,

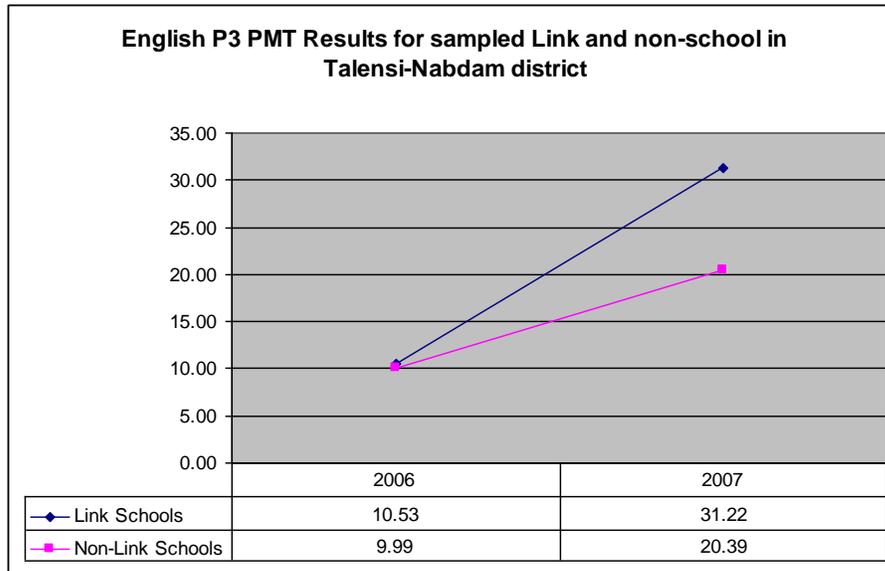
drug abuse and abuse of pupils by teachers (beating pupils, taking pupils to farms during instructional hours, verbal abuse, etc) but this was higher in the non link schools. There was also a very marked variation in the incidence of teacher non-performance between the districts under study: KND and TND. Also, the success of such measures taken to solve these teacher problems also differed greatly between the two districts due to the senior management.

At KND, it was clear that teacher non-performance manifested in teacher absenteeism, lateness, drunkenness and even drug abuse was a major challenge to the delivery of quality education in the district. Out of the five schools visited, four schools had serious problems with non-performing teachers. This came out in all the interviews with SMC executives, parents, head teachers and Circuit Supervisors. Pupils narrated how drunken teachers sleep in class instead of teaching, beat and insult pupils at will. At one school in KND, pupils recounted how a drug abused teacher would sleep in class and often beat pupils.

Some of the Link schools had head teachers who were highly motivated because they had benefited from the Link partnership exchange programme which afforded them the opportunity to travel to the UK. They were very excited and thought they learned a lot from the trip. They recounted the training and some of the lessons they learnt about the UK schools and how they had infused them into their schools. At focal group meetings with Head teachers in both districts, non-Link school Head Teachers pointed to the UK visits and exchanges of letters as one of the major benefits of Link schools which non-Link schools were not privileged to.

6.0 The Learning Outcomes of Children

It is still early days to be judging the performance of children and comparing non LCD with LCD schools using performance monitoring trends over the last three years. The LCD evaluation recognized that although there is a high degree of interest in making school change and quality improvements generated after PMT testing results are released through the SPAMs at school, circuit and district level...change takes time particularly in relation to learning outcomes among children. The best international research on the issue of assessing learning outcomes suggests that learning improvements can take up to three or more years when interventions similar to the SPR are put in place (QUIPS Evaluation, 2004). The PMT results from the sampled LCD and non LCD schools indicate that there is a significant improvement in child performance in English at P3 level when comparing LCS with non LCD schools.



In Talensi-Nabdam District, a comparison of the two years of PMTs shows that there was tremendous improvement in performance by primary three pupils in English over the two PMTs conducted (2006 and 2007)¹¹. The figure above shows that there has been remarkable improvement among P3 learners in English between the two rounds of testing. This could be a result of the SPAM meetings between parents and teachers to consult on how school performance could be improved, the stronger supervision by the District Education offices and quality improvements in the school. Interviews with the DDE of Talensi-Nabdam suggested that the results from the 2006 PMT stimulated change at all levels and the District put in several measures to ensure higher degrees of supervision and quality support to teachers.

The differences in performance across the two subjects--English and Mathematics suggests that children in LCD schools were outperforming their non LCD school counterparts. Data analysis reveals that child performance in both mathematics and English was higher in Link compared to non-Link schools at primary three and six levels. Talensi witnessed a consistent improvement in the overall performance of LCD schools compared to non-LCD schools. In 2006, the average performance of LCD school was 32.13% which improved to 35.19%. Comparatively, non LCD schools scored 28.63% in 2006 with the performance level remaining close to the same at 28.60 in 2007. Talensi District has demonstrated that LCD school performance in PMT shows a consistent growth and improvement. The under-performance of non-LCD schools seemed to have stagnated. This could mean that the other interventions which Link schools receive are important supplements to the SPR process on its own. Some of these additional quality interventions include the Head teacher training, the exchange programmes to the UK which motivate the teachers, and the provision of school grants/TLMs.

¹¹ Interesting to note is that there was no difference in performance in the first PMT results (2006) between Link and non-Link schools but a steady improvement by both Link and non Link Schools with Link schools outperforming non Link schools in the district.

BECE Results Trend Analysis of LCD and non-LCD Districts

In evaluating the impact of the LCD programme, BECE results of three LCD districts (Bolga Municipality, TND and KND) and two non-LCD districts (Bawku West and Bongo) were compared. Directors of Education across the Upper East often used the BECE as their main indicator for measuring performance of their districts and pointed to the SPR as a process which was helping them to improve their performance. In analyzing the performance of the districts, the percentage of pupils gaining aggregate 6-30 was used. Individual district annual growth of percentage passes as well as averages over the four year period (2005 – 2008) was considered by the evaluative team analysis.

Bolga Municipality had an overall BECE score of 65% in 2005 however recorded a downward trend registering in (63.2%) 2006 and (46.9%) in 2008. The average score was 56 % with a negative annual growth rate of 10.3%. TND had a weak score of 44.5% but showed consistent improvement and performance growth in learning achievement with 46.1% in 2006, 59% in 2007 and 53.7% in 2008. The district registered an average of 50.9% with a growth rate of 6.5% over the period. The strong performance of KND in 2005 with a score of 53% declined to 46.9% in 2008. The district recorded an average of 50.3% with a negative annual growth rate of 4.0%.

Bawku West which adopted some of the LCD strategies showed great inconsistency in their performance recording with 42% in 2005, 57.1% in 2006, 44% in 2007 and 65.3% in 2008. The district registered an average of 52.1% with a strong annual growth rate of 15.8%. Bongo which was not an LCD intervention district but had traces of LCD strategies in its operation had a score of 63% in 2005 but followed a downward trend with 46.4% in 2006, 39% in 2007 and 34.8% in 2008. The average performance over the four year period stands at 45.8% with an annual growth rate of negative 17.9%.

Generally, the Upper East Region shows marginal growth from 42% in 2005, 52.9% in 2006, 47.1% in 2007 to 44% in 2008. The average performance stands at 46.5% with an annual growth rate of 1.6%. Bawku West and TND reveal the strongest positive performance growth in the BECE results of children across the districts.

Access, Enrolment and Gender Parity Trends across the LCD schools and target districts

The evaluation team also analysed the access and enrolment data to compare the trends in LCD and non LCD districts across the Upper East. With an exception of Bolga Municipality, KND and TND have experienced rapid annual enrolment growth ratios of 5.3% and 6.3% respectively. Bolga witnessed a negative growth rate of -3.9%. The negative growth was recorded in 2002 however improved in 2003 and 2004 before losing ground in 2005 and stabilizing in 2006 and 2007. It is significant to note that LCD initiated its operations in 2004 in TND. In KND the annual growth rate is estimated to be 5.2%. It had strong growth in 2002. There was a drop in 2003 but picked up strongly in 2004 and 2005 with a stagnated low growth in 2006 and 2007. It is significant to note that KND has had a longer timeframe of LCD intervention than the other two districts. LCD

intervention in TND was initiated in 2004. Growth rate recorded between 2005 and 2007 stands at 6.3%. There has been a systematic annual growth from 8.4% to 12.1% despite the short gestation of the programme intervention in each district. Enrolment growth improved over the period and could have been influenced by the improvements in quality within the schools as a result of LCD interventions and other Donor / NGO supported programmes in the same districts (e.g. WFP, CRS, etc).

In the three LCD districts, Bolga Municipality, KND and TND, enrolment of children in schools has grown steadily with the girl/boy pupil ratio gravitating to parity. The access data indicates that all the three LCD intervention districts (TND, KN and Bolga) are on the threshold of attaining gender parity in the provision of education. In 2008, the three districts registered an average of 0.98. There is the need to strengthen advocacy particularly in relation to sustaining gender sensitive government policies in education.

7.0 The LCD Organisational Assessment

By 2007 the LCD programme scaled up to the BAK area in Ashanti Region due to the relocation of the LCD head office to Kumasi. As Link grew, so did its staff and funding base with the British Lotto Grant being LCD Ghana's key source of financing between 2006 and 2009. As this funding comes to an end (June, 2009), the organisation has been focused for the last year on developing other funding sources which will enable it to maintain the existing scale of operation and independence in thinking, as well as consolidate the gains made in the districts where they work. Interaction with core staff in the Upper East regional office indicate that LCD is at a critical stage in its organisational development. The challenges in fundraising both within and outside Ghana are forcing LCD to look at its organizational identity and scale of operations.

Several invitations by Government have enabled LCD to gradually build a level of visibility and rapport with key stakeholders within the MOE and the civil society community. LCD has gained a reputation for being a solid, reliable and committed organisation to educational development across the country. Interviews with the National, Regional and District Directors of Education confirmed the respect that senior officials have for LCD based on their professionalism, technical know-how and commitment. More work is needed to imbue in their regional and district staff the same levels of technical professionalism particularly in relation to data management.

LCD is in a critical stage of development. In order to expand its operations in a smooth and planned manner the securing of core financing for staff and management processes is critical. The strategic plans for its fundraising efforts internationally which can ensure that its own vision and approach are continued will be vital in the coming years. Cost sharing agreements and memorandum of understanding should be reviewed by LCD for sustaining its activities at the district and regional levels.

Human Resource Development Systems

The evaluation team found that there was recognition by LCD staff, that LCD as an organisation was at a stage of expansion and scaling up but sometimes at the expense of having the proper management and operational systems in place. Interviews with core programme staff in the Upper East Region revealed a strong recognition that decisions to use the financing for more than the specified project districts under the District Education Development Project (DEDP) had stretched LCD's capacity to implement its current program. However, at the same time the expansion process and low levels of financing had resulted in districts finding ways to support the LCD efforts through their own financing. For instance, during the last SPR (2008/09) Talensi-Nabdam and Kassena-Nankana districts had both made significance financial and human resource contributions towards the SPR roll out since LCD was not able to provide all the financing. The LCD staff along with the District Education Officers had worked together to ensure that the 2008/09 SPR programme was implemented at the district and community level despite the limited financing.

The interviews with core LCD programme staff indicated that some “unplanned” expansion had stretched the staff to their limits and more planning was needed to maximize these efforts in future. Staff also suggested that more regular retreats to reflect on practices and to build their competencies and capacities were needed. Core project management staff suggested that they needed more training in the following areas to enhance their performance;

- Management information systems and data management
- Updated software training for data analysis (e.g. SPSS)
- Financial management training

An interview with the LCD Programme Director indicated that systems are being put in place to formalize the HRD systems within LCD. He described the staffing systems as open and informal with contracts coming to an end without proper procedures for renewal. He explained with the planned changes within LCD to expand operations, there would be a need to formalize staffing procedures and ensure that all staff were given proper contracts with a time horizon based on the project duration. He also mentioned that an international staff handbook laying out procedures and policies was also developed and that Ghana staff would be consulted in the near future on how this applied in country.

Management Information Systems

One of the weakest areas of the entire Organisational Assessment of LCD is management information systems particularly at a regional and district level. Although the Bolga offices demonstrated some capacity to find the data which was requested by the evaluation team, very little SPR data was readily available at the LCD offices in the Northern Region. Part of the reason for this gap has been that the LCD has made efforts to build the capacity of district offices to store and manage their own data sets but this has led to loss of important data which will be needed if LCD is to demonstrate impact in

the long run. Evaluative information audits at the district education and the LCD offices demonstrated very weak storage and retrieval systems by District Education Offices particularly when it came to the Performance Monitoring Data for the last three years. Talensi-Nabdam district was in a better situation to provide the team with copies of data sets generated during the two cycles of their SPR processes but Kassena-Nankana District could not produce the following core data sets: PMT data, copies of the EMIS data generated and analysed and copies of the school based SPR forms. Given the culture of data management in Ghana, it is essential for the LCD office in Bolgatanga to keep all relevant copies of the documentation in order to back stop and ensure that this valuable data bank is well kept for future usage.

Strategic Planning and Organisational Expansion

LCD has several different planning activities which help to guide their operational activities including an annual operational planning workshop which brings together LCD staff from across the country on a regular basis... *“The annual operational plans are developed at the organizational level. Then it is presented at management meetings for deliberations corrections, addition and acceptance. Staff then prepare individual terminal plans (based on LCD self evaluation responses from PD).”* One of the important strengths of LCD’s work in Ghana has been their ability to “plan for activities based on experiences and lessons learnt from other sister countries”. A good example of this is the development of the SPR process which originated from South Africa, was refined in Ghana, and then reintroduced in other African countries (Ethiopia).

Over the last year LCD has developed a strategic planning document linked to its fundraising efforts which will help LCD Ghana and its international partners source longer term financing. The proposal which was developed to secure core financing for 2009 to 2014 provides the direction and activities to build the organizational capacity of LCD to expand and develop. The proposal is to assist LCD International source support for “unrestricted” funding in order for LCD to build its capacities and prepare for a larger scale programme. The idea is that core financing would be raised up to around 300,000 USD in order to secure staff salaries, training and offices while other fundraising efforts would support specific projects targeted at districts level. This would also assist LCD “leverage funding” if bids demand co financing arrangements as do some USAID grants. Interviews with senior LCD staff also suggest that future work with SPR at the district level will require matching funds by DEOs to support their efforts in order to ensure ownership and sustainability over the long term. These efforts demonstrate that LCD has been attempting to find ways to build a long term vision and secure financing for its activities over the long term.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The findings from the evaluation suggest that monitoring of the programme was being driven by activity based reporting and more work was needed to ensure a logical framework and results based system of reporting was put in place. The activities of LCD were planned on a terminal and weekly basis with the main thrust of activities in the field

being focused on the SPR roll out and the Link schools. There was no visible approach to monitoring school level performance apart from the circuit supervisors monthly or quarterly reports which were not available at the LCD offices. No evidence of regular monitoring could be found apart from the visits of LCD staff to the district education offices to attend the SMT meetings, support given to capacity building programmes, and the visits made to LCD schools to deliver letters and other information when the need arises.

8.0 Sustainability and Cost Effectiveness

The LCD evaluation found evidence that the SPR process would be sustained in the districts which had recognised the value of performance monitoring data to enhance accountability and performance systems from the bottom up through the demand by parents for better quality education. For instance, in Talensi-Nabdram and Bawku West both District Directors of Education were using terminal examinations as a means to tracking progress among children at the primary level. LCD support had enhanced their understanding and recognition of the power of using performance testing to hold their teachers, and Circuit Supervisors accountable for school performance. These directors were finding ways to finance the terminal common examinations by placing a fee for each child in the district. Less sustainable were the other aspects of the SPR data collection processes including the EMIS annex and quality observation data tools which did not appear well utilized at the district planning and supervisory levels. Several other management and accountability processes which were introduced and supported by LCD were taking root in the TND district: these included the need to fuel Circuit Supervisor motor bikes to ensure constant monitoring of the schools; more systematic reporting by the CSs to the DEO' offices and regular senior management meetings to review the overall problems and challenges in the district.

At the community level it appeared that the SPAM process was a successful aspect of conscientising communities and parents concerning the performance of their schools and holding teachers and head teachers accountable. The TND district had continued the SPAM process by encouraging their heads to hold regular PTA meetings on a terminal basis to release information about child performance. There were also some indications that the enhanced capacity of the District Offices to generate the SPR reports was enhancing district performance monitoring but it was fragile due to the concentration of this capacity within a few EMIS/ statistics officers. The main weakness in relation to sustaining the SPR process were related to data /information management in order to ensure long term analysis and retrieval. Although District Offices were expected to store the main SPR data sets this was proving challenging since the infrastructure and process of proper data storage was limited. LCD should take more time to ensure proper storage and archival procedures are put in place for preserving this valuable data set.

The evaluation did find that the districts were beginning to finance specific aspects of the SPR program by themselves. Over the last year a significant portion of the SPR budget had been supported by the District Education Offices due to the financial constraints of LCD. For instance District Education Offices were financing the transport of their own

staff to participate in the data collection exercise (fuelling and TNT) and providing logistical support in the generation of the instrumentation to be used during the exercise and after in order to generate the SPR reports for each school (e.g. paper and ink for printing). There was also evidence that the SPR process could be financed by the District Education Offices with minimal support by LCD if DEO's factored the SPR into their budgets and work plan. Analysis of the approximate costs of the SPR on a per school basis suggests that the program was highly cost effective; the SPR costs were approximately 10,000 Ghana cedis to cover 50 schools within a district which included all aspects of SPR including the data collection and SPAM phase of the process¹².

9.0 Lessons learned and Key Recommendations

Lessons learned

The evaluation found that the LCD work was very effective in complementing and enhancing accountability systems and in helping to improve school quality and performance in District Education Offices where leadership is in place to hold Circuit Supervisors accountable. Within the Talensi-Nabdam district, where strong measures have been taken to ensure performance and accountability of district education officers and teachers, the LCD approach was instrumental in improving quality and ensuring higher levels of learning achievement among children. This was attained through a variety of combined good governance and management approaches such as:

- Strengthening of the SMTs and management structures at DEO level
- Stimulating effective measures for monitoring CS work at the district level
- Ensuring CSs were reported regularly on their work
- Strengthening community demand for quality education, involvement in monitoring performance of children, and holding teachers and heads accountable for their work
- Head teacher reports on absent and late teachers;
- Systematic and regular training of newly appointed head teachers and teachers;

The evaluation also suggests that more strategies and inputs are needed to build accountability beyond District Education Offices in order to hold top education management accountable in districts which are “non-performing”. More LCD support is needed to build structures (e.g. DEFATs and DEOCs) which help to hold DEOs accountable for their performance and continue to strengthen the demand from the bottom up community level at the same time. Additional strategies could include: the initiation and strengthening of the District Education Oversight Committee and at the community level more work is needed to bring the SMC's and PTA's into closer association for the purposes of information sharing and strengthening their power base to lobby at the district level (e.g. Civic Unions and District and Circuit based associations of SMCs and PTA's).

¹² This is as of April 2009 when the cedis was about 1.35 cedis.

The evaluation team found that LCD was improving enrolment and retention particularly in Link schools where inputs and strategies for improving quality complemented the SPR approach of strengthening accountability mechanisms. Schools were becoming centres for community development and attracting parents since the provision of TLMs and small grants had made a difference in solving immediate school problems. The LCD support had also strengthened SMC/PTA management and ownership through a combination of interventions including training, sensitization and fundraising.

Management structures and capabilities at the District Education Office were enhanced through a series of responsive support by LCD to mentor and finance areas of need which eventually were taken up by Districts including non LCD districts (e.g. West Bawku and regional level). LCD was becoming recognized as an NGO with technical capacity to assist DEOs improve their management capabilities. Progressive DDE's across the Upper East were asking for LCD assistance to reengineer and improve their own district structures such as Senior Management Teams and putting in place CS accountability structures.

As a learning organization the collaboration between the VSO and LCD was helping to spread these best practices across the Upper East. Through the placement of VSO management officers and teacher support officers' best practices were gradually becoming embedded in the districts under review and other non LCD program districts.

The evaluation found that there is no question that the SPR process was an effective strategy for improving education quality across the districts in Ghana. The only limitation was in relation to where this strategy was best implemented; the strategy was based on long term experimentation, best practice and was gradually being refined as a responsive tool with slight modifications depending on the technical capacities of the district. For instance, districts with strong statistical and analytical capacity were able to produce the SPR reports themselves. However, in districts with weaker human resources other mechanisms were needed including more support by LCD staff themselves to both implement and produce the SPR reports for the district.

Child performance was gradually improving in the LCD and non LCD schools where strong leadership and accountability structures for CS performance had been put in place (e.g. TND). Educational quality improvement was evident where the SPR was in full force and well implemented. More work was needed to ensure that it was more fully embedded in the planning processes of Government and District Education Offices in order to maximize its impact. For instance, in future, LCD should ensure that circuit supervisors facilitate the production of circuit development plans which are used to develop the District Implementation Plan (DIP). The DIP should not be replaced by the Annual District Education Operational Plans (ADEOP) as the planning report for SPR since this may not reflect the needs at the community/school level and the findings of the SPIPs and SIPs in each school.

LCD has an opportunity to use a bottom up approach to planning which can eventually enhance the planning processes which are currently in place at the district and national

levels including the DESP and ADEOP. What is needed is an interim approach to bottom up planning based on the SPR, and SPAM process which can help districts develop their own District Improvement Plans which can then inform the ADEOP in future.

Key Recommendations

The LCD self assessment instrument for Organizational Development revealed that some systems are needed to ensure that LCD is able to continue to grow and sustain their efforts in relation to improving quality at district level:

- There is an urgent need to put in place information management system for LCD in order to preserve data at the school, district and national level which can be used over time and as a fall back to district information storage systems. Districts also need to enhance their abilities to ensure proper data storage, back up and retrieval systems in soft and hard copy.
- More infrastructure support is needed for MIS systems and data analysis systems for SPR at the LCD office and District office levels; as the project scales up the attention to computer infrastructural needs of districts requires more attention.
- There is the need to put in place better financial systems and hire a part time accountant in the UE and full time accounts person in southern Ghana.
- The strategic plan of LCD should include more fundraising strategies with a focus on core financing; at least one part time fundraising person for Ghana may be needed.
- Operational manuals related to SPR and capacity building processes should be refined and developed to help districts implement and take ownership of the processes.
- A more comprehensive system for lesson learning, monitoring and evaluation should be established by LCD in order to increase their own support to the districts. This could begin by using the District School Improvement Plans as the starting place for M and E systems.
- A program log framework and results based management framework needs to be developed in order to improve overall LCD monitoring and evaluation systems;
- MOUs with districts should be enhanced and pursued in districts which have not negotiated these in order to ensure sustainability and cost sharing arrangements are outlined.
- Procedures and guidelines for District Education Offices should be developed.

LCD has been in a learning mode for the last three years since the SPR was piloted in the Upper East Region. They have been capturing some of the lessons learned through staff meetings and annual consultations/reports but more team reflection is needed to ensure its sustainability and better strategic planning. There were several examples of how LCD has been refining its SPR approach and developing ways to allow districts to take more ownership and financing of the SPR. Some of these approaches which should be given priority include: the development of a District Bank Account for LCD work; the development of an SPR task force at district level to assist with the implementation; and

an overall need for DEOs to begin costing the SPR process into their ongoing GES budgets.

As other programs begin to scale up the SPR process (e.g. VSO TENI), LCD will have to carry out a management audit of its current staff and their roles and responsibilities. Currently, if the SPR process is scaled up in new districts, more staff will have to be trained on how to manage, implement and sustain this process. Scaling up will also require stronger systems for cost sharing between LCD and Districts in order to ensure ownership.

10.0 Lessons for the TENI Programme

Several approaches which LCD uses will be essential for the TENI programme to consider as it begins working with LCD in the three focal districts across northern Ghana. The commitment of the district educational and assembly leadership to educational change processes and school improvement will be essential to the success of the SPR strategies and support by LCD. In scaling up to new districts a leadership audit/assessment will be an essential step in district selection in future TENI programmes.

With the existing districts which have been selected, a Memorandum of Agreement outlining key management, accountability and leadership principles which must be put in place to ensure the success of the project will be essential. This may include clauses which point to the need for:

- Monthly Circuit Supervisor reporting;
- Increased levels of supervision concerning the performance of CSs themselves;
- Increased staffing to supervise the schools across the district;
- Rewards and punishment for non performing Circuit Supervisors;
- Monthly Senior Management meetings;
- Weekly CS meetings with the AD of Supervision and other senior management;
- and
- Provision for the fuelling for motor bikes of all CSs who demonstrate ability to visit three schools per week

Another major lesson learnt for TENI is the need to ensure that all the schools are covered under the SPR and PMT process in order to avoid problems in comparing data from year to year. Conducting the SPR in 50% of the schools in a district makes it very difficult to track progress of schools over time. Impact should be felt across all the schools and all the schools should be able to participate in all aspects of the SPR to ensure large scale impact. Selecting a portion of schools will make the TENI mentoring and evaluation work very difficult.

Finally a major lesson from the LCD work over the last few years is the need to work on building sustainable structures at the district level to respond to the needs and demands for better quality provision of education services. There were several aspects of LCD's

work that could be sustained even after a change of district directorship given that these structures are in place:

- Regular senior management meetings
- The systems of accountability and performance for CSs to ensure that they provide quality supervision at the school level (e.g. their monthly reports, school visit reports should follow an acceptable guideline and template)
- Capacity building among CSs to know their roles and responsibilities towards the schools
- Regular training of Head teachers and SMC chairpersons to ensure that the school is make efforts to improve the quality of education.

One of the most important findings from the evaluation suggests the need to ensure that community ownership of schooling is supported through both the usage of performance appraisals of children and fundraising activities. Several LCD and non LCD schools demonstrated a degree of commitment, interest and ownership of their schools because they had made a substantive investment in the school, the teachers or their children. Fundraising activities should be an integral part of the TENI programme which builds the spirit of community ownership and empowerment which will result in more monitoring by partners and key community representatives (SMC and PTA).

Conclusions

The LCD evaluation team found that there is no question that the SPR process was an effective strategy for improving education quality across the districts in Ghana. It was generating increased demand for quality education among parents and helping improve the quality of supply in services by the District Education office. The only limitation was in relation to where this strategy was best implemented—in districts with good governance and leadership interest in education at the top levels; the strategy was based on best practice and was gradually being refined as a responsive tool with slight modifications depending on the technical capacities of the district.

As the Ghana government searches for effective strategies to improving the quality education so needed in rural Ghana, non state interventions which complement and work along side state actors such as the District Education Office at the same time stimulating demand at the grassroots level should be investigated. The LCD model demonstrates a cost effective strategy for future state and non state collaboration in bringing about educational change and quality improvement particularly in deprived districts of Ghana.