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PANEL II

Capacity-building on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Written statement*
submitted by

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“ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED IN BUILDING CAPACITY FOR MAINSTREAMING ATTENTION TO THE GIRL CHILD INTO NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES”

Introduction

1. This paper focuses on a major national initiative to promote attention to the girl child in basic and secondary education in Ghana: the establishment of the Girls Education Unit (GEU) of the Ministry of Education since 1997 and the activities, experiences, achievements and lessons learned by its staff at the regional and district levels.
2. The paper argues that the factors influencing girls' education are multi-dimensional, with socio-cultural and economic considerations playing a key part. Therefore, enhancing attention to girls' education is first, a multi-institutional/stakeholder responsibility. In the Ghanaian public administration system, the implementation of a national intervention is the local or district level, or the level nearest communities and the day-to-day lives of the ordinary people, policies and programmes are intended to assist.
3. The paper interprets capacity as *"the people, institutions and practices that enable countries to achieve their development goals. It involves human skills, institutional and organizational structures and institutional procedures and systems. Effective capacity is the proven ability of key actors, individuals, groups and organizations to achieve socio-economic goals of their own"* (World Bank, 1999). Capacity building is therefore considered to include *"investments in human capital, institutions and practices"*.
4. The paper's understanding of mainstreaming draws on the interpretations given to the concept in relation to gender. Mainstreaming is considered a strategy to achieve equality, ensuring that the relevant perspective (in this case, attention to girls' education) is integral to the range of activities that are undertaken in education delivery at all levels – policy development, legislation, resource allocation and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects, research, advocacy and dialogue.
5. Mainstreaming could include gender-specific or targeted activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Such interventions, which are necessary temporary measures, are intended to combat the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination. One strategy to facilitate mainstreaming is to provide specialized technical support in the form of focal person/unit to provide day-to-day guidance in the implementation of policies, guidelines and programmes developed to promote gender equality.
6. The Girls Education Unit (GEU) sought to provide technical support for mainstreaming girls education by promoting appropriate policy inputs and direction;

preparing the ground for implementation through various interventions; and monitoring and learning lessons for reviewing and improving interventions until gender parity in enrolment and retention is achieved and girls as well as boys derive the full social, economic and political benefits of education. The experiences of its staff responsible for implementation at the regional and district levels are important for reflecting on capacity-building.

Efforts to Promote and Mainstream Girls' Education in National Efforts

7. There are provisions for gender equality, freedom from discrimination and accessible education for all in Articles 35, 36 and 38 of the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution. Article 38 contains the requirements for free, compulsory and universal basic education and equal and balanced access to secondary and other pre-university education.
8. In 1996, the ten-year Free Compulsory Basic Education (FCUBE) Programme for all boys and girls of school-going age was developed and its components included improving access and participation; improving teaching/learning quality; strengthening management capacity; and building efficiency into the education system. The Programme Document recognized the importance of ensuring systematic enhancement of girls' education based on the disparities in enrolment and retention between boys and girls. The document therefore stated "*special attention will be given to promoting access for girls, the poor and rural children to basic education*".
9. Over the past decade, there have been complementary interventions to support girls' education and improving gender-sensitivity by the government, development partners and non-state actors. These include the appointment of a Minister for Women and Children's Affairs (of cabinet rank) and a Minister for Basic and Girl Child Education in 2001. The latter position is no longer operational, however. The Ghana Education Service Act also requires that key community management entities of education such as the District Education Oversight Committees (DEOC) and School Management Committees have quotas for women's participation.
10. The public universities have operated affirmative action policies to get more women into tertiary education. The University of Ghana has its Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) which apart from providing courses in gender studies and undertaking relevant research, also has the mandate to assist the University in engendering its policies, creating gender awareness amongst various categories of staff, building gender capacity in university work and undertaking appropriate outreach activities in partnership with various institutions.
11. Various NGOs have ran credible girl child education support programmes including the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) which is well-regarded for its advocacy efforts to get parents and communities to send their girls to school and identification of the obstacles to girls education. The Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC) has worked in various communities through

interventions like provision of transportation (bicycles) and feeding to support girls' education in deprived areas. Other interventions have provided families (particularly women) with micro-credit to enhance family incomes and reduce the need for girls' labour to supplement their parents' earnings.

12. However, the work of the Girls' Education Unit (GEU) is national in scope, collaborative and offers insights into the multi-faceted nature of girls' education.

The Girls Education Unit (GEU)

13. The GEU is made up of its Head Office Staff, with responsibilities for policy direction, resource mobilization, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation functions; its Regional Girls Education Officers (RGEOs) and District Girls Education Officers (DGEOs). The functions of the DGEOs are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Functions of District Girls' Education Officers

TASKS	ACTIVITIES
Promoting Awareness of the Importance of Girls Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaising with local institutions Advising colleagues Organising activities for "Girls' Education Week" celebrations Contributing to durbars Attending PTA/School Management Committee meetings Making speeches Using fora for promotion and lobbying
Linking the GEU with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing quarterly reports of activities promoting the participation of girls Conducting outreach Contributing to the GEU Newsletter "Gender Matters" Providing advice to girls and their parents/guardians
Developing awareness of issues relating to girls education within the district office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organising workshops and seminars for colleagues and teachers. Distributing the newsletter "Gender Matters" Working in collaboration with science, technology and mathematics organisers
Taking actions to raise female enrolment and retention rates in schools within the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking national information from GEU Working with colleagues to identify communities with low enrolment Exploring the constraints to girls' participation in education. Adopting and implementing strategies to

	<p>overcome constraints</p> <p>Promoting the establishment of district bye-laws and ensuring their implementation</p> <p>Supporting female teachers in the district.</p>
Monitoring girls' enrolment, retention and achievement rates	<p>Collecting relevant gender-dis-aggregated data.</p> <p>Identifying specific constraints to girls' attendance at schools.</p>

14. Experiences with mainstreaming indicate that clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for identified interventions are important for effective implementation. This must be so, at whatever level the change is being sought. Given the implications of street-level bureaucracy, performance in mainstreaming and capacity-building must be understood as affected by the particular environment the change agents are working in - supportive or otherwise. District Girls Education Officers (DGEOs) who are the implementing agents of the GEU work within particular political-institutional and social environments.

15. The extensive list of responsibilities notwithstanding, the DGEOs have made their presence felt. While assessments of their capacities to perform these functions varied, stakeholders indicated that the presence of DGEOs at the local level initiated processes for promoting an environment in which girls would be equipped for more meaningful participation in local level development and for creating more equitable gender relations in Ghana. Apart from direct work in girls' education, the Unit's staff have undertaken community level gender-related mobilization and advocacy as well as partnered the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in the provision of credit and economic empowerment of mothers and guardians to create an incentive for sending girls to school.

16. The factors identified by the Ministry of Education as hampering girls' education manifest mainly at the community and local levels. They include economic constraints and circumstances of families, small and scattered settlements leading to long distances to and from school, teenage pregnancy, lack of role models, unattractive school environments, socio-cultural and traditional views about educating women, taboos and puberty rites, household chores, sexual harassment, stereotyping and girls' own low expectations of themselves and their prospects (Pomary, 1999).

17. Addressing these factors in a bid to fulfill the rights of girls to education has implications for the work of governmental institutions in rights protection, resource allocation, poverty reduction and provision of facilities, amongst others. They also concern traditional authorities, faith-based organizations and other non-governmental actors. Therefore, the action or inaction of government agencies at the local level and the support (or lack of) of civil society and NGOs could create an enabling or limiting environment for promoting girls' education or the work of the DGEOs and RGEOs.

18. An Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) research conducted in 2005 set out to identify factors that facilitated or detracted from the successful promotion of girls' education and gain insights into the extent of integrated support by districts to girls' education in a consistent, sustainable manner was considered to include programme collaboration and provision of material and political resources.

19. The study also sought to examine the opportunities and challenges for promoting girls education; the relationships various stakeholders had with DGEOs and lessons learned on what works and what does not in promoting girls' education at the local level. The study involved a series of consultative meetings with the Head Office Staff and Regional Officers of the GEU; administration of questionnaires to DGEOs in 110 districts and some qualitative interviews.

20. The key stakeholders were identified in a preparatory meeting as including school authorities, the district education directorate, district education oversight committees, the local authority (district assembly) and its committees such as the social services, women and children, works and finance and administration sub-committees.

21. Relevant decentralized sector agencies at the local level were identified as including the Department of Social Welfare and Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). Other actors were non-governmental organizations engaged in children's rights, education and social services delivery. Others were social institutions such as the family, the girls themselves, traditional authorities and leadership of faith-based groups/religious organizations.

The Issues and Findings

22. A little over half of the DGEOs had worked in the Ghana Education Service for more than 11 years. Close to a quarter had worked in the Service for 20 years. These had implications for effectiveness and credibility in the district level environment as compared to other gender officials (like gender desk officers and focal persons) at the district level. They had a clear institutional mandate; were part of a professional service and therefore had clear and assured conditions of service; and were on average, older and had been in longer service than gender focal persons, for instance.

23. More than two-thirds of the respondents considered they had promoted awareness on the importance of girls' education to a high extent (rating themselves 3 and above on a scale of 1 to 5). Similar proportions had linked the national office to the communities. Again, they had performed well on taking action to raise female enrolment and retention in schools (more than two-thirds scoring themselves 3 and above). However, they did not score themselves so highly on developing awareness of issues relating to girls' education within the district – scoring themselves quite low on organizing seminars for their colleagues and distributing their newsletter.

24. Relations with the stakeholders varied. The district education offices were required to provide the staff for the District GEU, financial and logistic support and monitor the DGEOs. Again, they were expected to provide moral support for their programmes. School authorities and heads of institutions were to support efforts to promote girl-friendly school environments, organize the girls for educational activities and support the enrolment of girls. Though most DGEOs indicated that they received some level of support from school authorities, a few heads were not committed. They apparently expected female heads of institutions to be more understanding and supportive of girls' education issues. This had not turned out to be the case and DGEOs and RGEOs were frustrated by "the uncooperative attitudes of some female heads of institutions" (*Focus Group Discussion*).

25. The local authorities (district assemblies and their committees and the regional coordinating councils) were expected to offer support for needy girls like scholarships and other logistics. They were also expected to contribute finances, transport and other resources to support the annual Science, Technology and Mathematics (STME) workshops for girls. There were arrangements in some regions and districts where the local authorities actually provided office equipment, stationery and transport to DGEOs for their activities, particularly monitoring.

26. The work of other government departments and agencies was important for the DGEOs in less direct ways. There had been opportunities for collaboration in terms of protecting and safeguarding the rights of girls on issues like rape, forced marriages, child maintenance, child labour and trafficking. There had been collaboration in organizing advocacy programmes. Networking with these entities had provided invaluable information and entry points.

27. In the face of limited resources, vehicles and logistics available to the decentralized departments had been shared with the DGEOs. Other interventions, particularly economic, had been targeted at women so that they could afford their daughters' fees and free their girls to go to school.

28. Some collaboration with traditional authorities had yielded results. Traditional authorities had issued directives to ban young people from late night shows and wakes (wake-keeping as part of funeral rites), in an effort to protect them. There were instances where traditional authorities had provided DGEOs with platforms (traditional durbars, council meetings and festivals) to undertake critical advocacy on modifying negative traditional practices. Chiefs with educational endowment funds had supported girls. Similar support had been gained from the faith-based organizations – namely scholarships for girls, economic empowerment of women and platforms for advocacy with parents on girls' education.

29. Development partners such as UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), bilateral partners such as DANIDA and international NGOs including Care International, Action Aid Ghana, Catholic Relief Services and the World University Services of Canada and FAWE had provided support for capacity building, advocacy,

girl-friendly school environments (urinals, toilets, water, girls' dormitories, books, wheel chairs and libraries). Local NGOs had supported scholarships, uniforms and advocacy support.

30. Private sector entities such as financial institutions had provided scholarships, logistical support, credit facilities (savings and loans support for indigent women) and capacity building. Macmillan had provided support in kind.

31. Stakeholders were rated according to the type of collaboration they had provided. Almost all the stakeholders were rated highly for implementing programmes with DGEOs. An irony was that the local authority (assembly) had extended these goodwill gestures to 83% of DGEOs but their sub-committees where most of the work was done had done so for only 17%.

33. What had been the achievements?

- High levels of awareness of girls themselves on their rights and capabilities. This has translated in some instances to young girls standing their ground and resisting early marriages
- An improving culture of return of teenage mothers and out-of-schools to school. Some officers had personally assisted some of these girls when resources were lacking.
- Alliances with stakeholders on the relevance of girls' education. While the initial collaboration had been a means to an end, these alliances could be deployed for other purposes such as paying attention to other aspects of gender inequality; providing practical and strategic resources for women (life/health skills and civic education through savings clubs).
- More role models at the community level; more educated young women.
- Higher levels of community interest in school management.
- Increased levels of parental support for girls' education.

34. What worked that had surprised RGEOs and DGEOs and are available as opportunities?

- The availability of financial and material support from partners, private sector and philanthropists;
- The availability and efficacy of the platforms of NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and government departments and agencies for advocacy.
- The guidance and counseling units in schools that could assist in strengthening girls' self-esteem, sense of purpose and direction.
- The new wave of traditional authorities and opinion leaders interested in education and endowment funds.
- The interest of the girls themselves and their readiness to take responsibility for their development.

- The clear interest of the Ministry of Women and Children's in promoting girls' education. This is evident in the MOWAC Strategic Implementation Plan (2005 to 2008) which has prioritized the total application of the Children's Act (Act 560) of 1998, enforcing the Ghana Platform of Action on the Protection and Elimination of Child Labour, regular meetings, carry out sensitization and advocacy campaigns in collaboration with the GEU and monitoring enrolment, retention, completion and parity indices.

35. What had not worked so well and could constitute challenges for the future?

- There had been a general problem of lack of adequate funding. Initiatives and opportunities could not be followed through. What was available was often released late. Field monitoring especially of remote areas had been limited by lack of transport.
- The general handicap of logistics including office equipment and stationery. DGEOs had used their ingenuity and sometimes benefited from resources and events belonging to other institutions. This was hardly a standard practice and possibly depended on the personal relationships that could be formed at that level.
- Training as capacity-building for and by DGEOs had not been consistent as would have been desired.
- The opportunity to contribute to the GEU Newsletter "Gender Matters" had not been taken up by DGEOs and RGEOs; they had also not been successful in establishing distribution channels for the newsletter;
- Reports were submitted late, due to various constraints (including motivation) thus limiting the RGEOs and the GEU from taking timely intervention on matters.
- Gender disaggregated data and reporting had generally not been readily available. This had had implications for monitoring enrolment, retention and achievement rates of girls as compared to boys.
- Support (mobilization and equipment) to female teachers who would play the critical part of role models had been limited.

36. Other challenges were from the larger socio-economic environment. After almost a decade of promoting girls' education, respondents also noted a backlash of sorts describing it as a "sudden negative publicity given to programmes aimed at promoting girls education. For instance some heads of institutions and politicians were complaining that too much attention was being paid to issues concerning girls to the detriment of the boys" (*Focus Group Discussions*).

37. High levels of poverty in rural areas, low opinion of the results of girls' education (the value-added) and the persisting influence of negative cultural practices made progress very slow. In particular, when girls perform badly at Basic Certificate Examinations, there is no incentive to continue or very few success stories to cite. Another related impediment is general illiteracy in the community.

38. There was insufficient gender awareness and gender analytical capacity amongst the public agencies that worked with children, such as the Departments of Children and Social Welfare. They lacked tools in gender planning, analysis, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation tools.

39. Local authorities were also lagging in their support to children – very few had actually established the Child Panels as required by law. Some assemblies had established women and children’s committees and had included support to girls’ education in their district medium term plans. However, it was not clear the extent to which adherence to these provisions were monitored and integrated into ongoing assembly considerations. Gender analytical capacity is lacking in district assemblies.

40. What were the key lessons learned?

- Community involvement in identifying problems, solutions, planning and implementing interventions was useful and created opportunities to use the collective resources that communities had to support girls;
- Training of local facilitators to assist the DGEO in work periodically also fostered and sustained community interest.
- The girls themselves had to be actively involved in the promoting girls’ education; to make a case for themselves, appeal to their peers and identify critical entry points and not-so-obvious constraints.
- A gender focal person needs to have critical lobbying, advocacy, networking and collaboration skills because the work is qualitative, intuitive and does not always pursue rational lines.
- Supervision, monitoring, evaluation and reporting are useful tools for the district level officer. While these have traditionally been viewed as punitive, when they are administered in ways that allow the DGEO to be part of the process, they are able to build on their performance and learn lessons better.
- Regular stakeholder analysis is useful for identifying and revising the range of possible actors to work with and in what different ways (for instance rural banks were not traditional partners nor were the private sector);
- Opportunities to share promising practices by DGEOs (even such as the conduct of this research) could help DGEOs learn from their different experiences.

Conclusions

41. Lessons from the World Bank publication “Building State Capacity in Africa” (2005) indicate that capacity-building must take into account the fact that public administrations are embedded in a complex, interdependent system consisting of the bureaucratic apparatus as well as political, social and economic institutions. Therefore, while building relevant administrative capacity, the institutions that strengthen government accountability to citizens must also be fostered. While these were general observations, they are applicable to mainstreaming attention to girls’ education.

42. Again, it is important to focus on ensuring coherence in all aspects of the assignment – adequate resource flows to support girls’ education, institutionalized checks and balances to see how the innovations in the school environment, homes and communities are working, mapping the trends and lessons and integrating this into policy review.

43. From the experiences shared, issues of leadership capacity (of local authorities, district education directorates) to identify, track and address gender issues in education arise. So do issues of political and institutional commitment and mandate. Clearly, some of the key factors that work include

44. Committed, top-level leadership amongst stakeholders – government at all levels, civil society including traditional authorities and faith-based entities and non-governmental bodies- prepared to address resistance to change

45. A sustained partnership between government and committed civil society actors

46. A virtuous cycle of education, implementation, community involvement and participation, monitoring for lessons and integrating the lessons into refining the approaches.

47. Implementing efforts to mainstream girls’ education is most critical at the local level and it goes beyond the district education office. To this end, efforts to enhance girls’ education must be more clearly integrated into the business of local authorities. While many assemblies have provided scholarships for girls’ education and have provided support for the organization of Science, Technology Mathematics Clinics, their roles and contributions should be more structured in a strategy plan that includes other players.

48. Another factor is to identify clear roles for civil society partners and the bid to ensure horizontal accountability. In the existing political and administrative arrangements, there is a range of possibilities. For instance, where there are quotas for the representation of women, these must be followed up and alliances built with them as natural partners. In the Ghanaian case, the provision in the Education Service Act for women’s representation on supervisory bodies is one opportunity. The women on these bodies must have their capacities for gender analysis built and provided with appropriate information to push for attention to girls’ opportunities on one hand; and to contribute important insights into what is happening on the ground.

49. The World Bank (2005) also advocates empowered parent-teacher school management committees involved in monitoring resource allocations. It also advocates community schools. These are important recommendations for promoting girls’ education. The experience shared shows that resource constraints were the greatest handicap the DGEOs faced. With sensitized parents and teachers, advocacy for more gender-sensitive budgetary allocations both at the national and local levels would be possible. Community schools would facilitate an opportunity to provide support to girls’ education including availability of appropriate facilities, the curricula and policies provide a supportive learning environment for girls.

50. Sequencing and sustaining capacity-building is critical. Therefore, it is essential that the country reviews are regular and provide information on promising practices on promoting girls' education and these are disseminated widely. That information should also provide insights into capacity needs for various categories of actors and who has had which kinds of training. Innovative efforts that have been made, relevant training and information-sharing for the different actors; the incentives and drivers of change in various localities and circumstances must be made widely known.