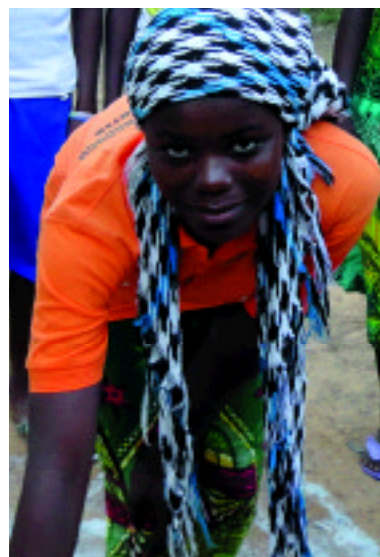


*Action for Children's Rights in Education*  
End of Project Evaluation Report



## Cover images

### Top row from left:

- Exercise books containing PRS Charter distributed to children
- Right to free and compulsory education
- Right to participate
- Girls club in session at Nyerezee Primary

### Second row from left:

- Right to know your rights
- Right 1 Charter
- Using PRA to analyse their issues at a girls' club meeting, Ghana
- Right to a safe and non-violent environment

## Inside cover

### Background image:

- Community sensitization meeting on ACRE

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Some girls from Kudang Lower Basic School, Gambia

## Acronyms

- ACRE:** Action for Children's Rights in Education
- CALID:** Centre for Active Learning and Integrated Development
- CSO:** Civil Society Organisation
- GNECC:** Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
- FENU:** Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda
- HRBA:** Human Rights Based Approach
- KADEFO:** Kalangala District Education Forum
- LRP:** Local Rights Programme
- PRS:** Promoting Rights in Schools
- PTA:** Parent Teacher Association
- RTE:** Right to Education Project
- SMC:** School Management Committee
- UNATU:** Uganda National Teachers' Union



Girl demonstrates a type of school punishment, Liberia

# Section 1

*Executive  
summary*

*Project  
description*

*Methodology  
overview*

# Executive summary

The overall purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the Action for Children's Rights in Education (ACRE) project has started bringing about anticipated changes, to examine which factors have proved critical in helping or hindering change and draw lessons for future programming. The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- 1 Evaluate the output /outcomes and impact of the ACRE pilot project against its four objectives.
- 2 Assess the core project structures, methodologies and capacity development.
- 3 Appraise the project partnership approach (including management structures, communications and relationships) to community implementation, research and advocacy in relation to the project's achievements.
- 4 Assess the project's financial management and value for money.
- 5 Draw lessons for future programming.

In order to respond to the above assessment questions, five separate yet interlinked areas of review were identified and key findings under each are summarised below:

## **A. Relevance:** did we do the right thing in the right way?

The main area of enquiry under this section focussed on the relevance and applicability of the Promoting Rights in Schools' basic premises and approach in practice. Overall, 100% of respondents felt that one of the main areas of value that this approach added as compared to other education initiatives was its emphasis on children's rights to and in education and its capacity to mobilise stakeholders for children's rights throughout the process. The uniqueness of the approach and its capacity to support the application of ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach in practice within the organisation's broader programme of work was also highlighted.

In general, respondents felt that although the project's objectives were pre-determined they were relevant to the context and should the project continue, then it would be preferable to

deepen the focus on the issues addressed during the first phase rather than broaden out to include others. In addition it was widely recognised that, given the indivisible nature of rights, by focussing on three or four, more would also be addressed.

## **B. Impact:** did the project achieve the planned results?

Although this project was only implemented over one year, the evaluation finds that to a large extent, what was planned was achieved, and whilst it has been difficult to measure results due to the lack of a comprehensive M&E system, the majority of activities were implemented in all six participating countries. A summary overview of progress towards each objective follows below:

**Objective 1:** *Increase awareness of rights to and in education by collecting data using the PRS framework with multi-stakeholder groups of children, parents, teachers, community leaders, local education groups, researchers, and teachers' unions*

An analysis of project narrative and financial reports shows that a high proportion of targets have been reached under this objective and 100% of planned activities were delivered in Ghana and Uganda as well as a relatively high proportion in all four Small Grant Countries.

Overall the project has successfully managed to increase awareness of children's rights to and in education. The participatory approach to baseline research, which engaged children, parents, teachers, education authorities amongst others, was universally felt to be one of the key success factors in the project as it supported wider buy-in and engagement at all levels as well as a better understanding of some of the key problems affecting the delivery of free, quality, public education and how to address them.

However, whilst awareness of children's rights may have increased, it is also accompanied by the view that children's rights constitute a threat to adult authority in the home and at school. In

addition, children's own knowledge and understanding of their rights will need to be deepened to maximise their potential for informed and empowered action.

Unfortunately, given the late finalisation of the research and challenges with the complexity of the analysis, there was limited time to respond to and integrate findings into the current project cycle or use them as part of a coherent advocacy strategy with links between the local and national level.

**Objective 2:** *Promote safe and non-violent schools by advocating for adequate and appropriate learning environments including implementation of a Teachers' Code of Conduct and policy provisions*

An analysis of the level of completion of activities shows that Ghana and Uganda completed 100% of the planned activities. Of the four Small Grant Countries only the Gambia worked directly towards this objective and completed around 67% of activities.

Some of the most effective measures taken under this objective included the dissemination of information about current education policies through training and awareness-raising sessions for teachers and parents. All schools visited now have visible copies of the Teachers' Code of Conduct and the majority of adult respondents were aware of the existence and content of the document. Associated to this has been the establishment or strengthening of internal disciplinary procedures to ensure cases of violence against children are appropriately referred through official channels and perpetrators sanctioned.

Work to address corporal punishment was also initiated in Ghana and Uganda, however despite a level of awareness amongst children and parents that the practice should be banned, adults have not been sufficiently equipped with the skills they need to use appropriate alternatives and children continue to be subjected to physical and humiliating punishment.

One area of intervention that was considered an interesting new departure was the focus on the

inclusion of children with disabilities in the learning environment. Whilst training for teachers to identify, assess and support children with mild forms of disability was widely appreciated, more needs to be done to successfully address the root causes of discrimination and exclusion.

Finally, there were some areas of overlap between the right to safe, non-violent environments and the right to adequate infrastructure. Although this was challenging for project teams because 'doing human rights' means moving away from service delivery, the teams in Ghana, Malawi and the Gambia were successfully able to mobilise public resources to bring about targeted improvements to some of the project schools, which constitutes encouraging evidence that the approach works in practice.

**Objective 3:** *Increase transparency and accountability of school management processes by enhancing community and children's participation in decision-making and monitoring education resources*

In Ghana 100% of planned activities under this objective were completed and in Uganda 89%. The majority of expected outputs were also delivered in both countries and in Ghana just over 50% of expected outcomes were achieved, however in Uganda, due to lack of data, it was only possible to assess achievement of outcomes at 7%. None of the Small Grant Countries worked directly on this objective.

Although no specific data was collected to measure changes against this objective, anecdotal evidence suggests the existence of functional SMCs and PTAs and increased engagement and involvement of parents in the life of the school. Children in both countries also commented on the fact that knowing their parents are interested in and supportive of their education motivates and encourages them to do better.

Efforts to encourage meaningful child participation in school decision-making structures have not been without challenges, especially in Ghana. However Uganda, Liberia and Zambia have made headway with children's voices increasingly listened to, especially in Uganda where the head boy and head girl are

invited to attend meetings and contribute to the monitoring of the schools' financial resources.

### **Objective 4:** *Increase the confidence levels, learning abilities and outcomes of girls and children with disabilities*

Ghana, Uganda and the Gambia worked towards this objective, successfully implementing 100% of planned activities and meeting the majority of targets. In Uganda this was particularly pronounced due to the higher than expected number of children reached through training for club members. Again, it is not possible to accurately represent results achieved due to lack of data.

Overall, whilst no specific measures were taken to document change in a comprehensive way, the majority of respondents, children and adults alike felt that girls' confidence had increased thanks to activities such as awareness-raising, workshops and conferences and support from senior women teachers and club matrons. Unfortunately it was not possible to assess whether any changes had come about for children with disabilities and in general it was noted that the majority of children with disability are not in school.

Although the wording of this objective suggests work to increase learning abilities and outcomes, no specific activities were undertaken and no changes were measured.

### **C. Partnerships: working better together**

Whilst work in the four Small Grant Countries was undertaken directly by ActionAid, in Ghana and Uganda funds were disbursed to three partner organisations that took on the responsibility of implementing all project activities with ActionAid staff playing a coordinating role. Given that these organisations were already long-standing ActionAid partners, the project benefited from their knowledge and understanding of the issues and the context and to a large extent partners fulfilled their contractual obligations and ensured the majority of targets were achieved.

Little was done however to engage at national level with Teachers' Unions, Coalitions or other INGOs working on similar areas, which limited the project's potential to achieve advocacy objectives and promote wide-scale buy-in for the PRS approach during the first phase.

In addition, it was observed that the relationship between the ACRE project and the Right to Education Project (RTE) could have been deepened and strengthened to maximise the Human Rights dimension of the PRS approach and facilitate increased learning, dialogue and international advocacy

### **D. Value for money: economy, efficiency and effectiveness**

For ActionAid, value for money encompasses a range of factors including the extent to which the organisation is able to deliver on its promises to rights-holders whilst simultaneously ensuring effective management of costs, guaranteeing efficiency in delivery and using the right approaches. Although broader value for money questions can be addressed by many of the issues raised in the sections on relevance, impact and sustainability, this section sought to focus primarily on those related to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In general, as with many multi-country projects the level of support, management and administrative costs associated with the ACRE project were relatively high (30-70), and although 100% of respondents highlighted the learning and sharing to be gained from multi-country initiatives as an advantage of this approach, concrete examples of learning being put into practice were few. In order to maximise learning and sharing and justify the high proportion of support costs it would make more sense to spread the project over a number of years to increase capacity to achieve impact.

In addition, whilst the two main countries received identical-sized grants, Ghana focussed on implementing activities in six schools whereas Uganda was able to stretch the same financial resources to 30 schools achieving a slightly higher overall percentage of activity implementation and thus, from a purely quantitative perspective represents greater value for money.

Finally, as highlighted in a recent BOND paper on value for money: "unless an NGO can monitor costs and measure outcomes it will struggle to engage meaningfully with Value for Money" (BOND 2012). Although the project did a good job of monitoring expenditure, little was done to



effectively measure outcomes, and so this report cannot fully do justice to the degree of actual impact achieved over the 12-month period.

#### **E. Sustainability: ensuring ownership and lasting change**

There is some evidence already that the PRS approach adopted by the ACRE project was potentially conducive to longer-term sustainability due to the high-levels of buy-in and engagement it encourages from the outset, particularly in terms of its capacity to mobilise civil society and other key education stakeholders in the collection and analysis of data on the implementation of children's rights to and in education.

To sustain this momentum, it will be crucial to continue encouraging buy-in and also focus on developing capacity, skills and understanding of different stakeholders to continue using PRS methods and approaches once funding comes to an end.

Finally, by strengthening links between local and national advocacy work, ideally in association with a strong advocacy partner and by making best use of the available research and policy information consolidated in the baseline reports, fact sheets and policy briefs the project will stand a greater chance of pushing for specific changes to the legal and policy framework to ensure longer term impact.



Children's club advocating for protection of children with disability at Kinyamira primary school, Uganda

# Project description

The Action for Children's Rights in Education (ACRE) project was a one-year initiative, implemented simultaneously in six countries between February 2012 and February 2013. The project was funded by an anonymous donor with a grant of US\$640 000 (£404 453). The main volume of work took place in Ghana and Uganda, however smaller grants were allocated to The Gambia, Liberia, Malawi and Zambia.

The overall goal of the project was *to ensure that girls and children with disabilities gain access to free, quality public education and enable stakeholders to understand the legal implications of and are supported in demanding the fulfilment the right to education*. The project had four specific objectives:

- 1 Increase awareness of rights to and in education by collecting data using the PRS framework with multi-stakeholder groups of children, parents, teachers, community leaders, local education groups, researchers, and teachers' unions.
- 2 Promote safe and non-violent schools by advocating for adequate and appropriate learning environments including implementation of a Teachers' Code of Conduct and policy provisions.
- 3 Increase transparency and accountability of school management processes by enhancing community and children's participation in decision-making and monitoring education resources.
- 4 Increase the confidence levels, learning abilities and outcomes of girls and children with disabilities.

The ACRE project aimed to pilot the implementation of ActionAid International's Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) framework. The PRS framework is based on 10 simply articulated rights derived from national legal instruments, international human rights conventions and uses a rights-based approach which aims to secure free, compulsory, quality public education for all by strengthening the public education system. The 10 rights are as follows:

- 1 Right to free and compulsory education
- 2 Right to non-discrimination
- 3 Right to adequate infrastructure
- 4 Right to quality trained teachers
- 5 Right to a safe and non-violent environment
- 6 Right to relevant education
- 7 Right to know your rights
- 8 Right to participate
- 9 Right to transparent and accountable schools
- 10 Right to quality learning

The participatory nature of the PRS approach helps to empower citizens to hold the core duty bearer, the State, responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling education rights and to explore the role each stakeholder can play in ensuring schools offer good quality education. During its implementation period the ACRE project focused mainly on the promotion of three of these 10 rights, notably:

- The right to non-discrimination
- The right to a safe and non-violent environment
- The right to participate.

To ensure stakeholder involvement in the project ActionAid country programmes engaged stakeholders at different levels to collect evidence using the PRS framework in order to determine the extent to which the ten rights are being fulfilled in schools. Using a participatory methodology and Reflection Action approach to adult learning and social change, stakeholders were brought together and empowered to participate in diagnosing the problem of children's rights in local communities and proposing local solutions by being part of the baseline data collection.

## Images

Top row left: Right to free and compulsory education

Top row right: Right 1 Charter

Second row left: Right to quality trained teachers

Second row right: Right to transparent and accountable schools

Third row left: Right to participate

Third row right: Right to know your rights

Fourth row left: Right to a safe and non-violent environment

Fourth row right: Right to quality trained teachers

Bottom row left: Right to relevant education

Bottom row right: Right to adequate infrastructure

All images © ActionAid



# Methodology overview

This evaluation was conducted between 21st March and 29th April 2013 and included a desk-based document review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions in both Ghana and Uganda as well as Skype interviews with key staff from each of the four Small Grant Countries, ActionAid International and ActionAid USA. Further detail on how these methodologies were implemented follows below:

- 1 Desk Review:** a document map, linking key documents to the main areas of review for the evaluation was drafted and information obtained from documents was mapped against the areas of review/evaluation questions and key data extracted to inform analysis.
- 2 Key Informant Interviews:** in total, 36 key respondents (21M/15F) were interviewed in Ghana, the Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Senegal, South Africa, UK, USA and Zambia. Respondents included ActionAid staff at International and national level, national implementing partner staff as well as RTE staff and Ministry of Education personnel at decentralised level. The table in Annex 1 shows the breakdown of respondents per organisation.
- 3 Focus Group Discussions:** a series 16 of focus group discussions were carried out in the project intervention areas in Ghana and Uganda to gather information to complement the desk-review and key informant interviews. In total, over 200 people including 74 girls, 15 boys, 33 teachers and 86 parents/School Management Committee/Parent-Teacher Association Members were interviewed. See Annex 1 for more information.

## Limitations

Although all efforts were made to meet with and talk to as many relevant respondents as possible during the course of this evaluation, a number of logistical and practical factors prevented this from being entirely successful. Some of the limitations of this evaluation include:

- Due to time constraints, in one school in Ghana and another in Uganda it was not possible to hold Focus Group Discussions with boys as planned.
- As a result of external events such as market days and funerals, fewer women than men were available to participate in focus groups in Ghana and Uganda.
- In Uganda the long distance to travel to reach the project schools limited available time and so a decision was made to merge parents with Parent Teacher Association (PTA)/School Management Committee (SMC) members during Focus Group Discussions. This decision was taken after observing that PTA/SMC members took part in both discussions in Ghana.
- Not possible to visit both implementation sites in Uganda.
- Although there was no time to visit both implementation sites in Uganda, a meeting was organised with KADEFO representatives in Kampala, however this was then cancelled due to internal miscommunication and follow up was done via email using the questionnaire form.

## Section 2

## *Evaluation results*



Some of the girls that were consulted at Matamanda primary school

# Evaluation results

## 1 Relevance: did we do the right thing in the right way?

### 1.1 What value and for whom did this project add, in the context of other education initiatives?

The basic premises of the project is that by operationalizing the Promoting Rights in Schools methodology through a research to action approach that promotes citizen engagement and evidence-based advocacy, the quality of public education will be improved. The Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) manual states that:

*“We believe the process is as important as the outcome. It is only through engaging all stakeholders, from children to parents, from community leaders to NGOs and teachers’ unions in the entire effort, from developing the charter to collecting and analysing the data and debating the findings, that we will promote greater awareness of what needs to change and how. The information collected can then be consolidated into local, district and national ‘citizens reports’ that can be used as a basis for future action including mobilisation, advocacy and campaigning.”* (PRS manual p.1)

Discussions with respondents suggest that the main value added by the project was its capacity to raise awareness of children’s rights to and in education both at community level (amongst parents, teachers and children) as well as amongst a broad range of stakeholders at decentralised level. Indeed around 45% of respondents highlighted this as being one of the key areas of difference between the PRS approach and other education work they had been involved in to date. To a large extent this was guaranteed by the participatory approach of the baseline study in which engaged education authorities, community members, teachers, parents and children in the collection and analysis of the data.

Rather than simply seeking to highlight the value of education, the PRS approach provides stakeholders and beneficiaries with the capacity to understand education as being a fundamental right of all children, to monitor its implementation at all levels

*“It helps children and other stakeholders know their rights and Government is also aware that they know their rights and can claim them.”*

(ActionAid staff, Ghana)

and demand accountability from duty-bearers. Some respondents also highlighted the uniqueness of this model’s capacity to combine Human Rights law and community mobilisation to promote citizen action and engagement:

*“It is using human rights law and collecting evidence from community based models to demonstrate if duty-bearers are following through on their commitments (...) PRS and ACRE have served as an experimentation as to how this approach works with the education sector. It’s exciting to see how this works in education and I am not aware of other initiatives quite like it (...) there are a multiplicity of approaches but this could bring it all together.”*

(Right To Education project staff)

In addition around 50% of respondents emphasised their appreciation for this project’s focus on children’s rights noting that previous work failed to engage children directly but that this approach contributed to empowering and enabling children themselves to challenge traditional perceptions of their capacity and role within society:

*“It is an empowering framework. Now we have children (...) asking teachers ‘why are you not teaching?’ We had a meeting for parents and SMCs and the agenda was charged. Children had a report and they presented it. I believe this project empowered the children so they can participate. SMCs now know their roles and responsibilities (...) before the project, children didn’t know they had rights.”* (NGO forum staff, Uganda)

This increased awareness was also verified at field level during discussions with children, teachers and parents and explored in greater detail under the section on impact on page 18.

In addition, whereas previous work may have focussed on ensuring access to education, the PRS approach takes a holistic perspective and focuses on what actually goes on inside schools. For around 20% of respondents, the emphasis on issues related to non-discrimination was also a new and exciting area, which had not so far featured prominently in their work and would merit being explored further.

*“We have worked with ActionAid for 11-12 years and done so much in education. This is the only project that directly focuses on children with disabilities. In the past parents knew that there is a need to send all children to school but tended to downplay children with disabilities and foster children and prefer boys. This project let us look at children and non-discrimination against particular children.”* (CALID staff, Ghana)

The project’s capacity to engage with a broad range of education stakeholders, including civil society organisations and education authorities was to a large extent is attributable to the collaborative approach. This was particularly highlighted in the Gambia where the ACRE project provided an opportunity to bring together key Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) focusing on education to work together on issues affecting the achievement of quality public education for all children.

However evidence also shows that the approach is not without challenges and whilst the baseline research adds value to the project both in terms of the process, as well as the depth of qualitative and quantitative information it provides, country teams experienced difficulties in implementation. These included: lack of expertise in data collection and analysis; needing to bring in external consultants to support with the process (and deal with associated additional costs) and struggling with low quality of some of the reports.

Nevertheless, it was felt that overall the project’s approach and methodologies contributed to consolidating staff capacity to better understand how to implement Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) in practice with some staff noting that even further advantages could be gained if the approach were seen to be applicable beyond the education sector alone:

*“The added value of the PRS approach is the collection of evidence and the use of Human Rights concretely rather than just rhetoric. Also in terms of raising awareness about rights, not just the value of education, if only amongst ActionAid staff, it brought the start of a new culture in ActionAid in terms of awareness of rights.”*

(Right To Education project staff)

In terms of the project’s capacity to put ActionAid’s Theory of Change in practice it is clear that during the first year progress was made towards empowerment and rights awareness, however more needs to be done to mobilise different stakeholders for effective advocacy and campaigning in solidarity with national-level networks and coalitions.

**ActionAid’s Theory of Change includes three core components:**

- 1 Empowerment:** working with rights holders to promote awareness of rights, consciousness building, mobilisation and addressing immediate needs.
- 2 Campaigning:** targeted at duty bearers this includes advocacy and mobilisation for changes in policy and practice.
- 3 Solidarity:** working through networks, coalitions and alliances to strengthen the voice and power of the poorest.

## 1.2 Did this project answer real needs in the intervention areas?

The challenge of achieving quality basic education remains a reality in all six countries taking part in the project and whilst top level figures may show significant overall progress towards the achievement of Education for All goals over the past 10 years findings from the baseline studies conducted as part of the ACRE project’s activities reveal some of the inequities and gaps in provision at school level including: exclusion; violence; discrimination; lack of children’s participation; low parental engagement and poor infrastructure.

Because the baseline study was implemented as one of the key activities of the project itself, rather than as a preliminary step in the process and because the proposal was developed at international level, rather than being based on priorities identified by the target communities there was a clear feeling that the project was prescriptive as the main areas of focus had already been identified in advance.

Nevertheless respondents felt that the issues the project sought to address were coherent with needs on the ground and that the collaborative nature of the baseline survey allowed community members and other stakeholders to gain a clear view of the extent to which some of children’s most basic education rights are failing to be met at school level.

This promoted local buy in to the project’s areas of focus and garnered support from the school-level upwards to mobilise around the issues. It is also important to note however, that had the project undertaken an initial needs-assessment at community level it is likely that infrastructure and resources would have emerged as the most pressing priorities identified by children and adults alike.

*“There was a baseline study and talking to women, youth, SMC, PTA, teachers, parents and children we really saw that the issues were relevant to the community. We saw the need.”*

(Ghana Education Service staff, Ghana)

During focus group discussions, when asked what a second phase of the project should focus on, all participants in Ghana and Uganda cited the following issues in order of priority: latrines (75%); classrooms (37.5%); books (37.5%); potable water (37.5%) and teachers’ quarters (31%). With school buildings nearing collapse, a lack of adequate sanitation facilities, insufficient teachers, over-crowded classrooms and a lack of teaching and learning materials it is hard for project beneficiaries to appreciate an initiative that aims to promote less tangible, more ‘abstract’ issues such as rights:

*“When we were talking to communities we were focussing on the three rights (participation, non-discrimination and safe non violent environment but when we looked at safe environment we found that communities were talking about infrastructure, which was not the focus of the project.”*

(ActionAid staff, Small Grant Country)

The right to adequate infrastructure is one of the 10 key rights in the PRS model, and without this it is understandably hard to ensure quality education for children in a safe, protective learning environment. However as ActionAid moves away from service delivery model to an approach that seeks to

increase the capacity of rights-holders to claim their entitlements from duty-bearers, it is important to consider how to ensure all 10 rights are met without engaging in massive school construction initiatives. By strengthening advocacy for adequate allocation and use of public funds for education and using successful, costed models as examples, the project can contribute to tackling both infrastructural issues as well as ‘softer’ components associated with the right to quality education.

### **1.3 Has this project taken adequate steps to redress imbalances in women’s rights/gender inequality?**

Women’s Rights and gender equality are at the heart of ActionAid’s HRBA approach and the ACRE project specifically sought to focus on girls’ rights to education. Around 95% of respondents felt that the initiative had successfully begun to bring about improvements in this area through awareness-raising and other activities such as the girls’ clubs, which aimed to increase girls’ confidence in their own abilities.

This perception was corroborated through discussions in Ghana and Uganda with girls themselves citing their increased confidence to talk in front of others, be serious about studies and take on leadership roles as a result of the project. Apart from the training work for Senior Women Teachers in Uganda, project activities were not specifically targeted at women, but sought to engage with them as part of broader activities aimed at teachers, parents and SMC/PTA members. Nevertheless, in Ghana, some parents directly attributed changes in interactions between men and women to the work of the project:

*“We found it difficult to imagine that a woman could sit with her husband and take decisions together about the family. As a result of this project the women are seated here (in the meeting place) otherwise they would be outside and the men would take the decisions and inform them later. Now with this project we feel safe to sit with men and discuss.”*

(Mother, Ghana)

However, whilst this point was reiterated by several other women during discussions it must also be noted that ActionAid and CALID have been working in these communities for a number of years so although the project took women’s rights and gender equality into account during implementation,



such significant changes in behaviour and attitude are unlikely to be attributable to this project alone.

#### 1.4 Are the project objectives still relevant given achievements so far?

Changes to knowledge are relatively easier to achieve than changes to attitudes, practice and policy and whilst the ACRE project has succeeded in raising awareness of education rights and the PRS approach both within ActionAid and amongst other stakeholders, much remains to be done. Overall, key respondents felt that should the project continue it would do well to continue working on the same issues, with 30% of respondents arguing for a deeper focus rather than a wider scope of work during a potential second phase.

*“We should continue working on these issues. It was just one year so some issues have just been uncovered. I feel strongly that those issues are key to the local context so it would be better to continue for a reasonable period and see the impact.”*

(ActionAid staff, Ghana)

The first year has allowed the project to raise awareness and begin identifying potentially successful strategies for addressing issues of discrimination, lack of participation and violence in the learning environment and there is a need to begin to dig deeper into the issues in order to see real results.

#### Relevance: highlights

Although the core aims and objectives of the project had been determined prior to the completion of the baseline study, the issues it sought to address were largely considered to be relevant by all those involved including ActionAid and partner staff as well as rights-holders at the community level. The project’s main areas of added value were broadly seen to be its focus on children’s rights to education and its capacity to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the analysis of the situation on the ground from the outset. Despite challenges involved in putting theory into practice the project managed to successfully raise awareness of education as a right demonstrating the validity of the core premises of the PRS approach in practice and contributing to improved understanding about the operationalization of a Human Rights-based approach to development work.



Using PRA to analyse their issues at a girls’ club meeting, Ghana

## 2 Impact: did the project achieve the planned results?

The sections below seek to assess progress made against each of the project’s four key objectives. The emphasis is placed on achievements in Ghana and Uganda, however mention is also made of contributions made by the four Small Grant Countries: The Gambia; Liberia; Malawi and Zambia.

**Objective 1:** *Increase awareness of rights to and in education by collecting data using the PRS framework with multi-stakeholder groups of children, parents, teachers, community leaders, local education groups, researchers, and teachers’ unions.*

To a large extent the project has been successful in increasing awareness of children’s rights to and in education. An analysis of project narrative and financial reports shows that a high proportion of targets have been reached under this objective and, as illustrated by the diagram below, 100% of planned activities were delivered in Ghana and Uganda as well as a relatively high proportion in all four Small Grant Countries.

The indicators selected for this objective are largely output rather than outcome indicators and therefore, since most activities were carried out, the majority of outputs were also realized (Ghana 98%, Uganda 71%). A small number of outcome

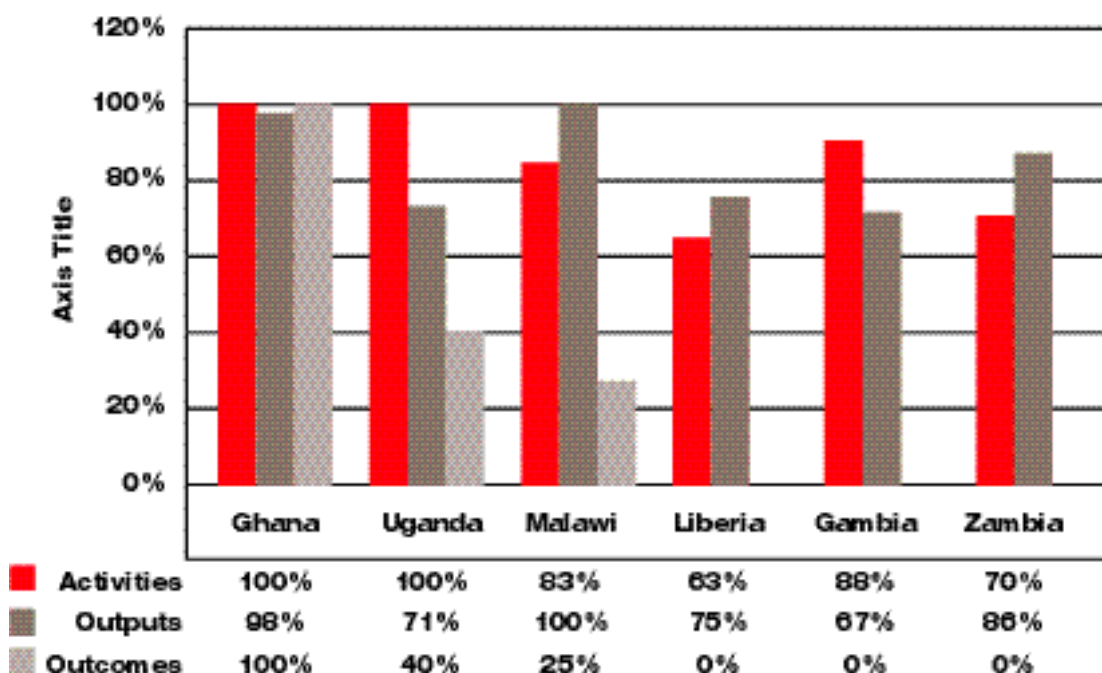
indicators were also established in the M&E framework and available data suggests that 100% of these were achieved in Ghana and 40% in Uganda. Data on outputs and outcomes achieved was not available from any of the Small Grant Countries except for Malawi where PRS has been fully integrated into the country programme’s education work.

### Process

As noted on p 10, one of the key areas where this project managed to add value as compared to other education initiatives and make the most lasting change during its relatively short implementation period, has been in its capacity to increase awareness of children’s rights to and in education. This was largely attributable to the use of an inclusive methodology for the baseline study and the creation of advisory committees at various levels to advise and guide the project’s progress and mobilise communities around the issue of children’s rights to and in education.

*“The way we did the baseline to bring all stakeholders on board by creating advisory committees and multi-stakeholder groups helped generate buy-in. We shared the questions and contextualized them with the communities. This supported increased awareness of SMCs and PTAs. Now parents, especially mothers are aware of the role they can play in supporting their children’s education.”* (ActionAid International staff)

### Objective 1



Through engagement in the baseline research over 140 people including teachers, SMC members and children were trained on the principles of PRS across all six countries, however whilst the aim was to engage community-members directly in the entire process, data analysis was considered challenging. Indeed, four out of the six country programme teams opted to recruit external consultants to support with data analysis and report writing and in Liberia a consultant was hired for the entire process limiting community members' role to that of observers. Naturally, this approach came with added cost implications and although Ghana was able to obtain the support of researchers at the University of Development Studies in Tamale virtually free of charge due to their involvement on the multi-stakeholder advisory committee and the team in Zambia benefited from support provided by People for Change volunteers, this was not the case in other countries where consultancy fees consumed a large part of the available project budget.

Given the project's intention to produce a series of national reports to be used for advocacy and campaigning work and also to consolidate findings into an international report this approach is to an extent understandable that teams felt the need to bring in external expertise, however in the long-run it is unlikely that this approach can be sustained without specific funding allocations. Moreover, if there is an expectation of wider buy-in to the PRS approach, community data collection and analysis of the right to education should not be seen as something that can only be done by a professional researcher but rather a routine stage in any project M&E cycle. Country Management Team members in Uganda noted that all projects in ActionAid are currently required to do baseline analyses however, interviews with staff suggest that the practice of undertaking such detailed, participatory baseline studies engaging such a wide range of stakeholders was relatively new:

*"The most important activity was the baseline data collection because we included indicators we had never researched before. Getting that much detailed information on schools was very, very important and our future campaigning work will be based on that document, so that was a significant achievement."*  
(ActionAid staff, Small Grant Country)

ActionAid staff recognized the value of the practice, which allows for a more comprehensive collection of detailed quantitative data than the usual PRRP

process, which tends to collect more qualitative information and as such is hoped that this marks the start of a more rigorous programming practice within the organisation.

## Results

Discussions with stakeholders and community members alike in Ghana and Uganda revealed an appreciable level of awareness of children's rights to education, however it is also important to note that concepts of children's rights are perceived to go against the grain in socio-cultural contexts where children are expected to behave in a submissive manner towards adults with very little scope to voice their opinions. This issue was raised during focus group discussions in both countries:

*"Some of these rights give children a headache...for example, it is making children difficult. They actually misbehave and refuse to do what their parents tell them at home and at school..."*

(Male teacher, Uganda)

The need to consider how to discuss issues of children's rights in such contexts requires considerable thought in order for community-members to see the advantages that knowledge about their children's rights and entitlements to education can bring to their children as well as the wider community, rather than a threat to authority. Collaboration and discussion between teachers, parents and others shows that there is already evidence of some adults with a strong grasp of the empowering potential of this knowledge:

*"Rights are universal but tradition is not, so in households girls and boys experience different treatment and get assigned different responsibilities. Rights have no gender but we have to think about how we marry issues of rights and tradition and how you convince a boy that sweeping will not make him a girl or that a girl can be a prefect (...). The ACRE project gave us ideas on how to get parents on board so that the home setting also respects children's rights."*  
(Male teacher, Ghana)

*"People see (children's rights) as something foreign rather than being part of their every day lives. We have discussions where we share and debate issues and we have been able to break some of the myths here and help people understand that rights are nothing but part of our every day lives."*

(ActionAid staff Small Grant Country)

One of the key PRS rights is the Right to Know Your Rights and whilst adults, regardless of their view on the matter, demonstrated some level of awareness about children’s rights, the same cannot be said of the children interviewed for this evaluation. Although both girls and boys in Uganda were able to comfortably identify a range of rights and schools had visibly displayed examples of the PRS charter as well as other awareness raising materials created by the schools, in Ghana such materials were not visible in schools visited and children were not familiar with the language of rights, necessarily limiting their capacity to understand and take empowered action.

As noted above, one of the key purposes of the baseline data was to inform advocacy work however around 10% of key informants interviewed for this evaluation noted that this had not been the project’s strongest point. Little was done to create solid links between district level work and national level advocacy. In part this may have been due to the relatively short implementation timeframe however there was also a lack of effective stakeholder analysis and engagement with key partners at national level including Education for All coalitions, Teachers’ Unions and other INGOs working on children’s rights to education, protection and participation.

Nevertheless, strong district-level engagement with Education Authorities contributed to awareness, buy-in and action and, potentially, onward sustainability and their involvement from the outset led to a range of immediate and concrete results

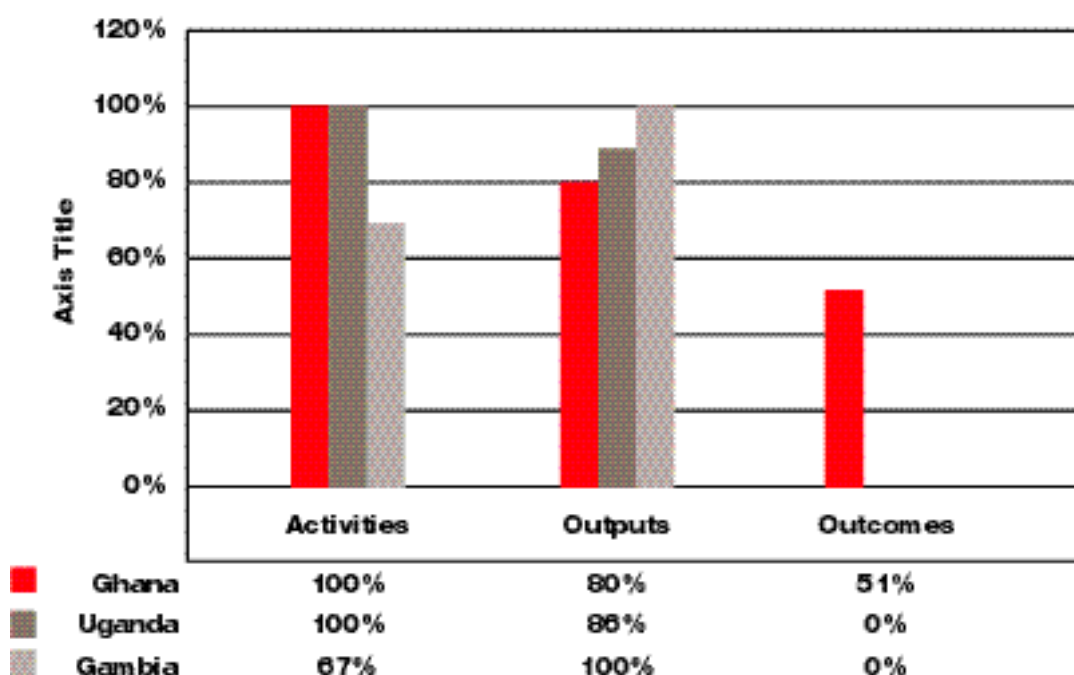
including: construction of school blocks in Ghana and Malawi; provision of training for teachers in Ghana and Uganda; placement of female teachers in rural schools in Uganda, monitoring of teachers’ conduct in schools in Liberia and the adoption of more rigorous school-level data collection and record-keeping in Malawi. These successes can definitely pave the way for stronger advocacy work and many of the steps already taken to begin initiating change in policy and practice can be followed up on and strengthened in the next phase of the project.

Finally, although four out of the six baseline reports were drafted by external consultants, not all are of high enough quality to be published without further review. In addition, the fact that some of the reports are significantly limited in terms of the size of samples used limits their statistical relevance and credibility for use in future advocacy work all of which raises questions regarding value for money. The importance of baseline studies for the project implementation process as a whole needs to be given greater recognition by ActionAid and partner staff alike to ensure effective programming and impact.

**Objective 2:** *Promote safe and non-violent schools by advocating for adequate and appropriate learning environments including implementation of a Teachers’ Code of Conduct and policy provisions.*

By using information consolidated in the baseline reports as well as the country fact-sheets produced

**Objective 2**



by the RTE project, the project aimed to take a range of measures to improve the safety and protectiveness of the learning environment for boys and girls including the differently-abled. An analysis of the level of completion of activities shows that Ghana and Uganda completed 100% of the planned activities. Of the four Small Grant Countries only the Gambia worked directly towards this objective and was able to complete around 67% of planned activities.

Indicators established under this objective were a combination of output and outcome indicators, however, whilst it is possible to see that the majority of outputs were achieved, lack of systematic data means it is difficult to measure impact.

Evidence gathered during the baseline studies demonstrate that factors such as corporal punishment, violence and discrimination constitute very real problems in schools in all six of the project countries. Despite the existence of a range of policies aimed at encouraging education for all, promoting inclusive education, limiting the use of corporal punishment and prohibiting sexual harassment and abuse of pupils in schools policies are in many cases not implemented. As one respondent stated:

*“Most of the problems this project is seeking to address are centred around non-adherence to policies. So if teachers can be trained and updated on current policies then that will help address some of the gaps. It is unfortunate that NGOs have to do this, but the MOE has no resources...”*

(ActionAid Ghana staff)

A more in-depth analysis of the activities, particularly in Ghana and Uganda reveal that despite the short time frame the project already started to make a difference to the safety of school environments both in terms of policy and practice both of which are crucial to longer term change and sustainability.

By prioritizing work with teachers and parents the ACRE project has been able to change teachers' knowledge, awareness and (in some cases) practices within the classroom to increase safety and reduce violence against children at school. Whilst the project was not successful in collecting specific, measurable data against many of the set indicators, anecdotal evidence collected during

focus group discussions, key informant interviews and observations reveal that change in the following areas:

### **School-based policies**

In Ghana and Uganda and the Gambia 215 teachers were trained on the Teachers' Code of Conduct and examples were available to see in the schools visited for this evaluation. Teachers interviewed in Ghana and Uganda, were conversant with the contents of the code as were some SMC members and parents.

*“One rule is that some teachers chase school girls and some female teachers want to ‘befriend’ school boys – this is an offence. And one other thing: some teachers may ask children to help them with household chores; that should not be done, especially if a girl is going to work for a male teacher.”* (Male SMC member, Ghana)

In Liberia it was noted that there is currently no national-level Code of Conduct but thanks to issues raised during the baseline study, the project has already begun to generate awareness about the need for such a document and the District Education Officer in Gbarpolu has established a team to monitor teachers' conduct in schools an initiative which the team hope will lead to the creation of a Code of Conduct further down the line.

Whilst for the most part, children interviewed were not aware either of the existence of the Code of Conduct or its contents many (especially in Uganda) were aware of the School Rules. It is worth noting that whereas School Rules exist in primary schools in Uganda as a norm, this was not the case in Ghana. These were created by ACRE project staff in collaboration with children and teachers in the six target schools with the expectation that buy-in from the Ghana Education Service will potentially lead to review, adoption and generalized roll-out across a much wider number of schools in the future.

In Uganda, both boys and girls were able to cite school rules and these were visibly pasted in the Head Teachers' offices in the schools visited. In Ghana, perhaps due to their relative novelty, most children interviewed had not heard of them, though one group of girls did say that they knew they included issues such as: no stealing; no fighting and no playing during lessons.

### **Corporal Punishment**

Corporal punishment remains widely used in schools across all six countries an issue that was highlighted in the baseline reports. This is largely due to reasons including: lack of awareness of clear laws and policies prohibiting the practice; lack of training for teachers in alternative forms of classroom management and the principles of positive discipline; absence of clear, transparent disciplinary procedures and referral and reporting mechanisms at school level.

The project attempted to tackle this issue by rolling out training workshops for teachers in Uganda, reaching a total of 120 teachers. Focus Group Discussions in Ghana and Uganda show that there is a general level of awareness amongst teachers and parents that corporal punishment should be avoided:

*“In terms of discipline what we do now is to counsel and advise, and then if a child repeats then we give the child a task like weeding or sweeping. Then rarely and sparingly we use the cane.”*

(Male teacher Ghana)

Whilst the responses of children and adults in both countries suggested that some alternatives to caning and other forms of physical and humiliating punishment are in use in schools, many of these such as sweeping or slashing the compound and digging the garden are not constructive and take children out of the school environment, a fact not lost on one parent:

*“Corporal punishment is best. At least that way they get caned and it’s over with and then they can go back to class. If they are set to digging and weeding and sweeping they will miss out on what is being taught whilst others are in class.”* (Father, Ghana)

In both countries, it was clear that there was an awareness of the need to move away from corporal punishment, with some parents supportive of alternative methods of discipline, however it was also clear from discussions with children that it continues to be used in schools:

*“Sometimes they cane us or make us pull on our ears. Sometimes we have to kneel down.”*

(Girl, Ghana)

As the quote below suggests, it will take more than awareness-raising to change deeply rooted beliefs and practices about discipline.

*“Actually (...) even me I still cane them. If you counsel a child and there is no change, you become annoyed. It is wrong, you should not cane, but when you cane a child only twice it is not corporal punishment.”* (Male teacher, Uganda)

Further work is needed to ensure effective classroom management and positive discipline techniques are incorporated into teachers’ practice and that there is a solid understanding of children’s rights to protection from all forms of violence and abuse. This should include ongoing capacity development in collaboration with Ministry staff as well as collaborative advocacy for changes in policy at national level.

*“For me as a parent, I really appreciate the issue of children’s rights. When I was growing up these things did not exist. We could be beaten and treated like slaves and no-one seemed to care, but now children are aware and it is preventing parents beating their children.”* (Father, Uganda)

### **Referral and Reporting mechanisms**

Amongst other planned outcome under this objective the project aimed to ensure that all schools had disciplinary procedures in place to encourage more effective reporting of cases of violence and abuse against children in schools. One of the most common problems with such cases, particularly those perpetrated by teachers is the failure to report or follow them up through formal channels. As noted by a member of the Ghana Education Service:

*Official disciplinary actions exist, but communities don’t even report such things. If they do report, GES has its rules, which are in the Code of Conduct, but the communities don’t make it known. Sometimes they come in and you sympathise with this fellow, you don’t want him to lose his job, but you are forgetting about the life of the girl child... We have to follow disciplinary procedures through. Dismissal is the severest penalty at the GES level. The criminal aspect is followed up by the police.*

(Ghana Education Service staff, Ghana)

Whilst indicators were established in the project’s M&E framework, no specific data was collected to

measure changes in awareness or practice, however, hard copies of Teachers' Codes of Conduct were available in all schools visited for this evaluation and teachers, parents and SMC/PTA members were largely aware of both the existence and the contents of the documents. Moreover, when asked about disciplinary procedures that would be applied at the school level most respondents were able to outline some form of process:

*"We agreed that if a teacher runs after a girl pupil, the teacher should be referred to the Education Authorities who will then refer to the Code of Conduct to see what sanctions should be prescribed."* (SMC member Ghana)

However this was not coherent throughout and seemed to vary from school to school with varying degrees of use of the formal procedures:

*"It should first be reported to the PTA chairman, then to the chief's palace, no, I mean first it should go to the Head Teacher, then the PTA chairman, then the chief's palace. If it goes beyond the chief then at last it should be taken to the police."* (Father, Ghana)

It is crucial that the procedures are clearly understood and known by all: teachers; parents and children alike, and that in cases of abuse, disciplinary as well as criminal proceedings are followed through.

### **Children with Disabilities**

*"Children with disabilities should go to school. It is better because even such a child can become an important person in the future regardless of the disability."*

(Boy, Ghana)

Baseline data identified children with disability amongst others as being discriminated against with regards to education as a result of multiple factors including negative beliefs, attitudes and practices, lack of facilities and trained teachers all of which result in children with disability being kept at home, denied their right to education and, in extreme cases, being killed.

A series of activities were planned to address this including training and sensitization for teachers on

the detection and support for differently-abled children in the learning environment and sensitization for community members (e.g. through *Reflect* circles) on the rights of children with disabilities. Although the project did not systematically collect data on this in all countries, during the course of the evaluation it was clear that a number of children with different forms of disability at the project schools and several parents attested to this, openly admitting that they themselves had children with physical or learning disabilities who attended school and there was a generalized acknowledgement that education could be advantageous even to children with disabilities:

*"It is important that children with disabilities (...) go to school. Once I saw a dumb boy who was working as a shoe-shine and I asked him, 'how do you tell someone how much he has to pay you?' The boy wrote it down. Then I said, 'what if the person cheats you, what do you do?' and he wrote, 'I leave it up to God he will resolve the matter'. So, if that boy had not gone to school, how could he have told me all of this?"* (Father, Ghana)

In Ghana the training aimed at improving teachers' capacity to identify and support children with disabilities in schools was widely considered to be a success by both ActionAid and partner staff as well as teachers, resulting in changes in teaching practice that were recognized by parents and children alike:

*"I have one (child with hearing impairment) in my class. I brought him to the front to make sure he understands and go through the lesson to help him understand and help him be somewhere where he will not be disturbed by the others and prevent them from bullying him."* (Male teacher, Ghana)

*"After teaching, the teacher sits by the boy and repeats what he has said. We also have a way to assist them by helping them with exercise books and pens."* (Girl, Ghana)

Despite these successes all respondents stated that there are far more children with disability who are not attending school and much more remained to be done to address the root causes of discrimination against children with disability, including further awareness raising as well as advocacy for increased allocation of resources.

*“Some are still at home. Sometimes I make home visits to encourage parents, but they fear...they fear that their children cannot do anything or they fear that the children will be bullied. We have been lobbying for a wheelchair so that the disabled one can come to school. Even one teacher here has a wheelchair. The education department provides canes for the blind and wheelchairs for cripples.”*  
(Male teacher in charge of special needs, Uganda)

Although the Disability Act in Ghana and ministerial directives in Uganda exist to ensure public buildings are accessible, and despite the existence of inclusive education policies, some of the schools visited were barely standing and had no latrines, much less accessible facilities or special equipment. Moreover, teachers already struggling to manage classes of 80 pupils simply do not have the skills, resources or time required to cater for children with more severe disabilities. As a result this goes beyond simply ensuring schools have ramps for wheelchairs, and the situation for individual children is unlikely to improve if attitudes to disability are not changed, if their parents cannot afford the mobility equipment they need, or if teachers are not adequately trained and supported with appropriate teaching and learning resources and materials to suit different abilities and needs.

### **Additional policies**

In addition to what has already been mentioned it is worth noting that by virtue of its focus on a wide range of education rights and its capacity to identify gaps, contradictions and opportunities for pressure, the project served to support the implementation of a broader range of existing laws and policies in each country. In Uganda for example, specific measures were being taken up at district level to support the implementation of the national Universal Primary Education Policy. This included work towards the passing of a local by-law to hold parents accountable for ensuring all children of school-going age are attending school. Also in Uganda, the baseline revealed a lack of women teachers in the majority of schools outside the district administrative centres, so measures were being taken to transfer them. This of course has not been very well-received by the women in question as conditions are lacking in the remote, rural schools to which they are being sent. Advocacy to ensure teachers can work with appropriate conditions and support should accompany such initiatives.

**Appropriate learning environments:** whilst the ACRE project sought to focus primarily on the right to a safe, non-violent environment there was some overlap with the right to adequate infrastructure. The difficulty of concentrating primarily on ‘software’ was not lost on the teams involved:

*“In one of the communities when we were explaining the right to safe environment one of the children called me and showed me the classroom and showed me the huge cracks and said if we want to talk about safe environment we need to solve this problem first. So when you are explaining safe environment they use that. They don’t want to hear anything else. But there is no support for infrastructure.”*  
(CALID staff, Ghana)

Although project did not have specific funds for large-scale infrastructure work in target schools strategies in Ghana and Uganda were developed to encourage the use of decentralized funds to bring about a range of improvements. As a result the following achievements were reported:

**Separate changing facilities for girls:** in Uganda separate changing rooms for girls have been identified in 24 out of 30 schools and separate wash rooms installed in all 30 schools as well as separate offices for senior female teachers and 40 female teachers were trained how to produce sanitary pads from local materials. Both these activities made a significant difference to girls, particularly during their menstrual period and whilst no data was gathered to demonstrate changes in attendance rates, respondents claimed that girls were now more regular in school thanks to these changes and girls themselves attested to the difference it had made in their lives:

*“I used to fear even touching sanitary pads, but now I can even train other people on how to use them and I can talk about them in front of boys.”*  
(Girl, Uganda)

**Infrastructure:** in Malawi the District Council allocated local development funds towards construction of school blocks in two districts and one school is being upgraded to a full primary school. In Ghana, one school out of the six has built additional washrooms and the Tamale Municipal Assembly has committed to construct separate sanitary facilities for girls and make public schools disability friendly in future. In the Gambia, three



project schools built perimeter fences to protect children from intruders.

Such achievements mark a success for the project and efforts to step up advocacy for appropriate use of state funds for education in improving educational infrastructure needs to be continued. However it is important to bear in mind that it will remain difficult to engage constructively with communities will be difficult if such needs are not addressed:

*“We are talking about rights and the aim is to get the Assembly to intervene (on infrastructure improvements) but this is a bit slow as a result of demands and lack of resources and nothing materialises. Communities try and nothing happens, they feel that if you can’t provide and the Assembly can’t provide they don’t know where to go.”*

(CALID staff, Ghana)

**Objective 3: Increase transparency and accountability of school management processes by enhancing community and children’s participation in decision-making and monitoring education resources.**

Around 20% of respondents felt that one of the areas where the project had made most progress was in terms of its emphasis on child participation at the school level and around 14% felt that some of the most significant changes brought about by the project during its relatively brief implementation

period were in terms of its capacity to engage parents in their children’s education and the life of the school.

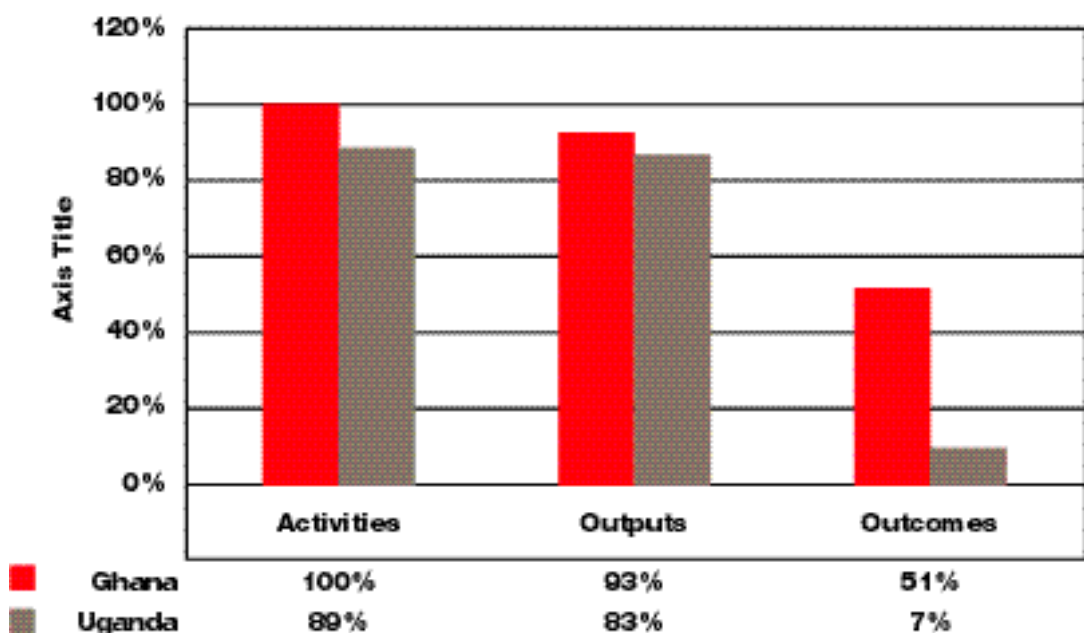
The project sought to improve transparency and accountability of school management processes through a variety of different activities including training for SMC/PTA members, parents more generally (e.g. through *Reflect* circles) and children to understand children’s rights to education as well as their own roles and responsibilities in ensuring these are met whilst simultaneously taking steps to improve school governance and management processes.

In Ghana 100% of planned activities were completed and in Uganda 89%. The majority of expected outputs were also delivered in both countries and in Ghana just over 50% of results were achieved, however in Uganda, due to lack of data, it was only possible to assess achievement of results at 7%. None of the Small Grant Countries worked directly on this objective.

**Community Engagement**

A total of 360 SMC and PTA members took part in training workshops that aimed to support improved school management, increased parental awareness of the Code of Conduct and their role in its implementation as well as increased participation of parents in monitoring their children’s learning and performance. Whilst no specific M&E data was collected to attest as to whether this was actually happening, informal discussions in the field indicate

**Objective 3**



*“Our parents come and check on us at school and we feel happy when they do. At times when they come to monitor how we do, my father sees how well I answer questions in class and then I feel excited that he can see me performing well.”*

(Boy, Ghana)



ActionAid

Children of Ngarun primary with the external evaluator, Ghana

that SMC and PTA structures are functional at the school level:

*“Parents visit the school regularly and are even aware when exams are coming up. The other day after exams a parent came to look at the questions that had been set and said that they were relevant. They also helped us to repair the desks and will often just come and sit to chat with us.”*

(Male teacher, Ghana)

Parents also noted a change in their own attitude and approach to their children’s education:

*“Personally I’ve gained a lot from the experience. I’ve come to learn that children need time to do their homework...before the project, when the children came home I used to take them to work with me on the farm so they had no time to do their homework, now I don’t do that any more (...) I am also able to tell if my children are in school or not because I go and check.”*

(Father, Ghana)

*“We used to make our own children go to school and leave foster children at home, now we bring the foster children to school too.”*

(Mother, Ghana)

Whilst this is an encouraging sign, given the economic realities and the dependence of families on children in general (but in particular on fostered girls) for labour the project should develop some way of monitoring whether these children are indeed attending school.

Children were also universally appreciative of parents’ involvement and interest in their education with all of those interviewed stating that it makes them feel encouraged and supported when their mothers or fathers come to school to check on their progress. In Uganda, the project incorporated school-feeding

activities into its work as a strategy to promote increased community engagement. This was somewhat of a challenge in Nebbi, where only nine out of the 20 project schools benefited from these activities, and of those some struggled to sustain activities beyond the initial period due to factors including lack of parental capacity to provide food and the choice of slow-yielding crops for school gardens.

As a result in one school visited for this evaluation, cooking pots lay unused in the Head-Teachers’ office.

In Kalangala district however the school feeding projects were credited with having motivated parents to take a greater interest in their children’s education and initiatives such as the poultry project and school gardens helped support some of the most vulnerable pupils with scholastic materials.

Overall however, the ACRE project’s approach to school feeding emphasised parents’ responsibility for providing school meals for children, however given the disparity of results it is unclear whether this can be sustained in the long-term or what the impact will be on the poorest and most marginalized children’s rights to education. In future, the position of ActionAid International and ActionAid country programmes on school feeding should be harmonised to ensure coherence of campaigning and advocacy messages. Moreover, further research into the actual capacity of families to provide school meals for their children as well as impact of this policy on children’s attendance, retention and learning outcomes should be undertaken in Uganda to assess whether it is realistic to demand that the onus of school feeding be placed on parents or whether the State needs to step up its responsibility. The full text of the School Feeding Charter can be found in Annex 5.

**Children’s participation**

The ACRE project, particularly in Ghana and Uganda but also in some of the smaller grant countries such as Zambia and Liberia had aimed to strengthen children’s participation in school management and decision-making processes, primarily through ensuring their inclusion on SMCs or PTAs. In Ghana this proved challenging as there was resistance from teachers and parents:

*“Initially our thinking was to get children fitting into the PTA/SMCs, however this did not go very well. The plan was to have some children be part of the PTA at meetings on the executive, but it did not work because parents and teachers resisted. But children can ‘package’ and share their issues in advance of meetings, this has been more successful and the school prefect passes them on to the teacher.”* (CALID staff, Ghana)

In Uganda however attempts were more successful and discussions with teachers, parents and children in Uganda show that there was an agreement to allow children to be represented and consulted during SMC meetings:

*“One of the things I have been doing is to attend meetings and follow how the money is spent at school and then report back to the other pupils.”* (Head Girl, Uganda)

Some of the Small Grant Countries also experienced a degree of success with this initiative and in Zambia two schools agreed to include children on the SMC and in Liberia one school has

begun to consult children. The formalisation of children’s participation on SMC executive committees is not unheard of and the ACRE project may be interested to learn from the example of Côte d’Ivoire where the text governing SMCs clearly stipulates that executive committee must include two children indicating that this goal can realistically be achieved as long as adequate support is provided to ensure real participation rather than simple tokenistic representation.

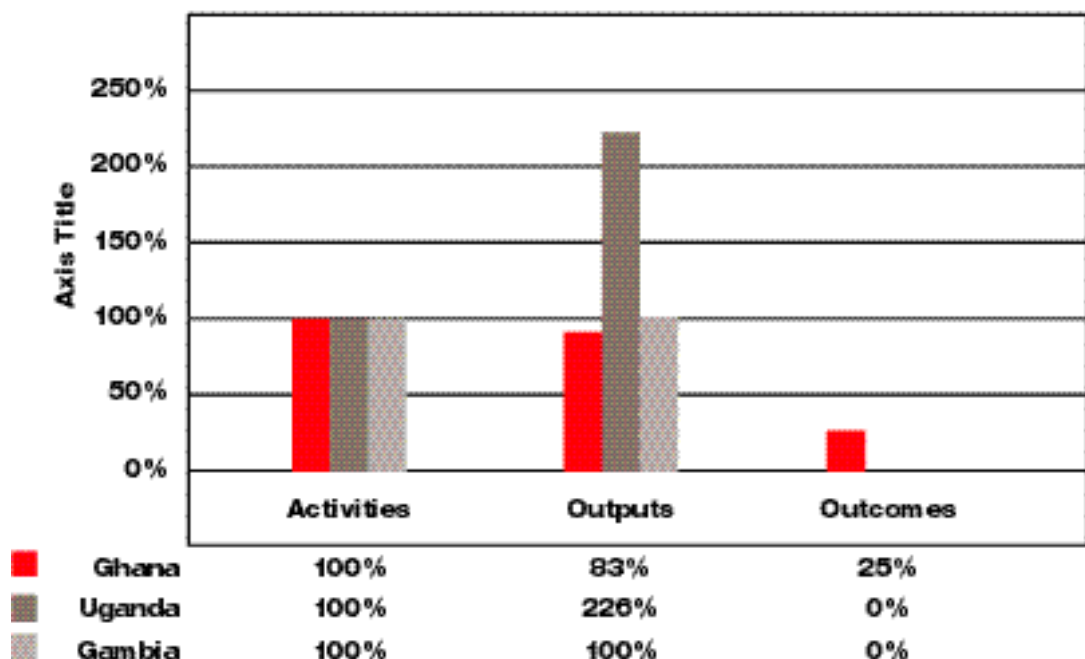
**Monitoring Education Resources**

This work appeared to be a particular focus of project in Uganda where the implementing partner Nebbi NGO Forum already had a track record of carrying out initiatives aimed at encouraging community engagement in monitoring education resources. Details of funds allocated to schools under the Government’s Universal Primary Education policy were visibly displayed in all schools visited and as mentioned above, children themselves were involved in tracking usage though to what extent these activities can be attributed to the ACRE project or to previous work is unclear. Moreover, no specific M&E data was collected to enable an assessment of impact as a result of these activities.

**Objective 4: Increase the confidence levels, learning abilities and outcomes of girls and children with disabilities.**

In order to achieve this objective a series of strategies were adopted including provision of

**Objective 4**



training for children's clubs members reaching a total of 750 girls in 30 clubs in Uganda, 300 girls in eight clubs in Ghana and 25 girls from six clubs in Liberia.

Ghana, Uganda and the Gambia worked towards this objective and all three implemented 100% of planned activities and meeting the majority of targets. In Uganda this was particularly pronounced due to the higher than expected number of children reached through training for club members. Again, it is not possible to accurately represent results achieved due to lack of data.

### Girls' Confidence and Leadership abilities

*"I think it is a good idea to have a girl leading us. We used to have boys as senior prefects. She is doing well; we are fine with it. We elected her."* (Boy, Ghana)

Over 20% of respondents felt that one of the main areas where the project had made a difference was in terms of girls' confidence, largely as a result of the establishment, training and support to school-based clubs. Discussions with boys and girls provided a sense of some of the issues the clubs discuss with support from their mentors, which included drama, songs as well as advice on health and behaviour, which it was felt, have led to positive changes in behaviour and attitude:

*"When I am in my room, I hear the girls outside discussing a lot after their club meetings and what they have learned. If we are serious about these girls' clubs, we will have our girls climbing higher."* (Father, Ghana)

Adults and children mentioned the changes that training workshops, exposure visits and other activities had brought about in the girls:

*"Before joining the club we were so shy and didn't answer questions. Now we are able to contribute to discussions and we have done away with shyness at school and at home."* (Girl, Ghana)

*"One big change with the girls is that they used to play around and now you hardly see them doing that. What I have observed is that after their meetings they discuss amongst themselves and then go and share with their friends."* (Boy, Ghana)

The project also sought to encourage girls and children with disabilities to take on leadership roles in their school and whilst schools in Uganda routinely have a head boy and a head girl, this is not the case in Ghana, where the election of a girl to as the role of senior prefect in one of the project schools was considered to be a considerable achievement:

*"I am a former pupil from this school and from then until the ACRE project, no female pupil was made school prefect. Now a girl is a senior prefect of this school. It is really important and marks a change in the way we do things. I really wanted to raise this."* (Male SMC member, Ghana)

Respondents mentioned initiatives taken by club members to encourage their peers to return to school and whilst, again, no systematic evidence was tracked to attest to this, a number of anecdotal incidents were referred to:

*"There were girls in P4 and P6 who were going to be sent to be head-porters, but this club has reduced that. It has given girls more confidence; we even have a girl who is senior prefect. She is a role model."* (Male teacher, Ghana)

In one of the schools visited in Ghana the commitment of the teacher appointed to support the girls' club was evident from both the girls' testimonies as well as those of other teachers:

*"I would like to make special mention of the girls' club matron and how she has supported the girls, even coming here on weekends sometimes. Now you can see a real change in the girls, even in the way they dress."* (Father, Ghana)

Whilst in Ghana the clubs are for girls only, in Uganda the decision was taken to involve boys too, an approach, which appeared to have contributed to improve relations between girls and boys as attested to by girls and boys alike during discussions. This marks a productive step and one that if supported by good training and support for girls and boys on sexual and reproductive health as well as negotiation, communication and conflict-resolution skills can help ensure better, healthier relationships for adolescents as opposed to the more simplistic and counter-productive 'stay away from boys' messages that girls in Ghana stated they were learning in their clubs.

### Confidence of children with disabilities

As observed on page 7 around 15% of respondents felt that one of the areas in which the project had made most progress was in terms of its capacity to highlight the issue of disability, an area that for many marked a new departure and the section on page 23 discusses some of the achievements in terms of awareness amongst adults and children of the rights of children with disability in greater detail. Although this objective also sought to improve the confidence of children with disabilities there was no evidence that this had been achieved and no children with disability were noted to have taken on any leadership roles during the project implementation period.

### Learning abilities and outcomes

The overall premises of the PRS approach is that by ensuring all rights are respected, children will be able to access free, quality public education. The fourth objective of the ACRE project includes a specific aim to improve learning abilities and outcomes for girls and children with disabilities, however activities related to this were not undertaken and therefore it has not been possible to assess whether learning abilities and outcomes of girls and children with disabilities have changed as a result of the project.

### Impact: highlights

Despite the relatively short time frame the project teams managed to implement close to 100% of activities under all four objectives. Although there was little systematic tracking of data to measure progress towards outcomes the project has contributed to raising awareness about children's rights to and in education and support their implementation through increased parental engagement, knowledge of key school-level policies, improvements in the inclusion of girls and children with disability, district-level advocacy for infrastructural improvements and higher levels of confidence amongst girls.

Some of the activities considered to have been most successful in bringing about changes included: the provision of training for teachers on how to identify, assess and support children with disabilities in class; the establishment and support for school-based girls' clubs and training for teachers on the production of sanitary pads using local materials.

On the other hand, work with Teachers' Unions (especially at national level) and children's effective engagement on the executive committees of the SMC/PTA (especially in Ghana) were considered to have been less effective during the period in question. In Uganda, school-feeding initiatives to promote community engagement met with mixed results, and whilst in Kalangala they were credited with mobilising

parents around children's education and supporting vulnerable children to stay in school, in Nebbi they somewhat struggled to take off. In addition, and crucially, it is vital that ActionAid Uganda revise its advocacy standpoint on school feeding so that it harmonises with the wider organisation position, which clearly stipulates that school feeding should be the responsibility of the Government.

Overall, respondents felt that the project had made slower than anticipated progress in terms of its advocacy, a factor which can largely be attributed to late completion and under-use of information in the baseline studies, fact sheets and policy briefs, failure to undertake a comprehensive stakeholder analysis and the failure to establish partnerships with strong national-level advocacy organisations to link district-level work to national level advocacy in collaboration with other actors. Finally, in Ghana it was felt that more could have been done to tackle the cultural barriers to issues such as children's rights, child participation, girls' education and the education of children with disabilities and foster children. Given that this is an area of work that takes considerable time, it will be important to build on existing successes to identify workable strategies and appropriate measures for tracking progress towards change in these areas during the second phase.

### 3 Partnerships: working better together

A range of partnerships at international, national and local level were planned as part of the original ACRE proposal document and a summary of the different working relationships, successes and challenges is outlined below.

#### 3.1 Local Implementation Partners

In Ghana and Uganda, partner organisations were largely responsible for project implementation and MoUs were established with local NGOs who already had long-standing relationships with ActionAid and who had been working on the delivery of ActionAid's programme of education work in the implementation districts for a number of years. Funds were disbursed to these organisations and ActionAid played an oversight and coordination role.

*Center for Active Learning and Integrated Development (CALID):* CALID has been working with ActionAid Ghana for around 12 years and thanks to an in-depth knowledge of the intervention area, was able to pick up the project very quickly despite the late start. As a result, all planned activities were implemented. In addition they were able to make use of contacts and networks to implement some activities more effectively and at reduced cost. Examples of this included bringing in research department of the university to support the data collection and analysis, collaborating with Ghana Education Staff on training for teachers and making use of strategic opportunities to lobby for infrastructural improvements to target schools. Community members also appreciated CALID's dynamism and constant presence on the ground:

*"I would like to commend CALID for their hard work here with the community and their commitment to working with us to find solutions for our problems."*  
(Male PTA member Ghana)

*Nebbi NGO Forum:* formed in 2001 and with a membership of 146 CBOs and NGOs, the NGO Forum has worked with ActionAid Uganda for a number of years. As with CALID (above) the partner also had a good knowledge of the intervention areas and key district level stakeholders, however this project marked a different working approach for

them in many respects with many new elements to incorporate. Whilst there was a feeling of general satisfaction with the work delivered by the partner, they themselves considered they could have done better:

*"No we can't say we have fulfilled 100%. At least maybe 70% because we didn't work with Reflect as expected (...) also there were some gaps in the work with the SMC members where some members were trained and some were not and then we also had the problem that SMC tenures came to an end so the people we trained were replaced."*

(Nebbi NGO forum staff, Uganda)

Nevertheless they managed to successfully engage with District Level Education Authorities and mobilise communities around the issues the project was tackling, a factor that was appreciated:

*"We owe it all to them because without their implementation and mobilisation skills it would not have been possible for us to achieve what we did."*

(ActionAid staff, Uganda)

*Kalangala District Education Forum (KADEFO):* as an education-focussed organisation, KADEFO has been working in partnership with ActionAid for several years and have successfully influenced the government to pay hardship allowances for teachers working in difficult circumstances and to provide boarding facilities for children. KADEFO has also been monitoring teachers' performance, and transparency and accountability in public primary schools. The partners' performance as part of the ACRE project was largely considered to be satisfactory and they made the most of their experience and expertise to successfully deliver on planned activities.

#### 3.2 Strategic National Partners

The project proposal suggested that a range of other partnerships would also be engaged in at the national level, e.g. with the national education coalitions and Teachers' Unions however in practice this did not take place.

##### Education for All Coalitions

*Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC):* although the proposal

clearly stated that ActionAid Ghana would work with GNECC, in practice this engagement did not go beyond the organisation's support for the national-level launch of the PRS framework. This was recognised as a weakness by ActionAid staff at international and national level and GNECC alike:

*"I would say that there should be both national and local level partnerships. The impact has not been felt much at national level whilst policies are influenced at national level. In future, local level partners can inform national level partners to facilitate national level work more effectively."*

(GNECC staff, Ghana)

*Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU)*: again, as with Ghana, the project proposal stated that ActionAid Uganda would be working in collaboration with FENU on strategic advocacy issues, however information from the Project Manager reveals that in fact there was no engagement with FENU at national level.

*Teachers' Unions – Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)*: the original proposal also indicated that ActionAid Ghana would be collaborating with GNAT and it had been hoped that this work would include collaboration on the review of the Teachers' Code of Conduct and its dissemination however this did not work out as planned:

*"The review of the Code of Conduct got stalled. We tried to revive the discussion but we couldn't get it moving. We even offered to help them bring everyone together, but even then one cannot tell what the problem is that stalled them. So we are using the old version."* (ActionAid staff, Ghana)

In the event, the project implementation team ended up collaborating with the GNAT representatives at district level to roll out training for teachers using the unrevised version of the Code of Conduct, an initiative that went well given the availability and level of awareness of the code in project schools.

*Uganda National Teachers Union*: although ActionAid Uganda has been working with UNATU for six years, there was no significant engagement with them during the course of this project, particularly at national level. Staff in Nebbi noted that there had been some engagement with UNATU members at district level but that this was, as in Ghana, limited to training delivery.

### 3.3 International Partnerships

At International level the ACRE project also had a working relationship with the Right to Education project that benefited from funding under the same overall grant.

*Right to Education Project (RTE)*: the RTE Project has been undertaking international advocacy, information sharing and capacity building of local partners since 2000. The original proposal suggested a working relationship between the two initiatives with RTE project staff playing a role on ACRE's international advisory committee to design the project, participating in international workshops and national level meetings and supporting countries on particular areas of work as identified including capacity development on human rights to education and production of policy briefs and other information to support country teams' advocacy work.

However, both RTE and ActionAid staff felt that more could have been done to promote a closer collaboration that would benefit both initiatives. Challenges highlighted included the relatively 'light touch' support offered by RTE due to staff and resource limitations (e.g. limited face-to-face contact), limited communication and information-sharing, late delivery of capacity development (e.g. training was provided at the project review workshop in November) initial difficulties for country programme teams to fully understand and incorporate the human rights law component into their work, and failure of ACRE project staff to use the fact sheets to their full potential in advocacy work.

If these issues are not addressed there is the risk that the ACRE project could lose its Human Rights focus and becoming another 'community development' initiative. Moreover, it is also important that ACRE project staff at national level appreciate the extent to which they are experimenting with an innovative model that can have much broader implications and affect the work of other stakeholders by building bridges between the Human Rights sector and the Development sector, encouraging learning on both sides and adding new perspectives to the current discourse on quality basic education.

#### Challenges

Discussions with different stakeholders sought to analyse challenges and lessons learned related to

work in partnership as part of this project and it was found that these were, to a large extent, common across both Ghana and Uganda.

- 1 Pre-existing commitments:** because both local partners were already working with ActionAid on the implementation of the organisation’s broader education programming work, at times this distracted them from the project. This was largely addressed through planning meetings and reminders of the need to prioritise the project given its short time-frame and key deliverables.
- 2 Planning and reporting:** timeliness of reporting and to some extent, capacity for strategizing and planning specific activities, especially where these marked a new area of focus for partners, such as the school-feeding initiative in Uganda also presented challenges that were dealt with through ongoing support from Project Management Teams.
- 3 Lack of engagement in proposal development:** both ActionAid and implementing partner staff acknowledged the difficulties partners’ faced with having to pick up, understand and implement a proposal that was centrally drafted and which they had not really contributed to, however in general and as can be seen by the overall % of implementation achieved this challenge was largely overcome.

### Partnerships: highlights

Overall there appears to be a high level of satisfaction with the work delivered by the partners on the ground and despite the late start of the project, the majority of planned activities were implemented in a satisfactory manner. Wherever possible, implementing partners’ should be supported to develop their knowledge and capacity on *Reflect*, children’s rights, child protection, child participation and positive discipline to enable them to roll out project activities as effectively as possible. More needs to be done during the second phase of the project to promote effective links with key national-level stakeholders including the Education for All coalitions, Teachers’ Unions and other organisations working on Human and Children’s Rights to increase the potential for achieving objectives through concerted advocacy work.



Celebration of the International Day of the African Child, Ghana

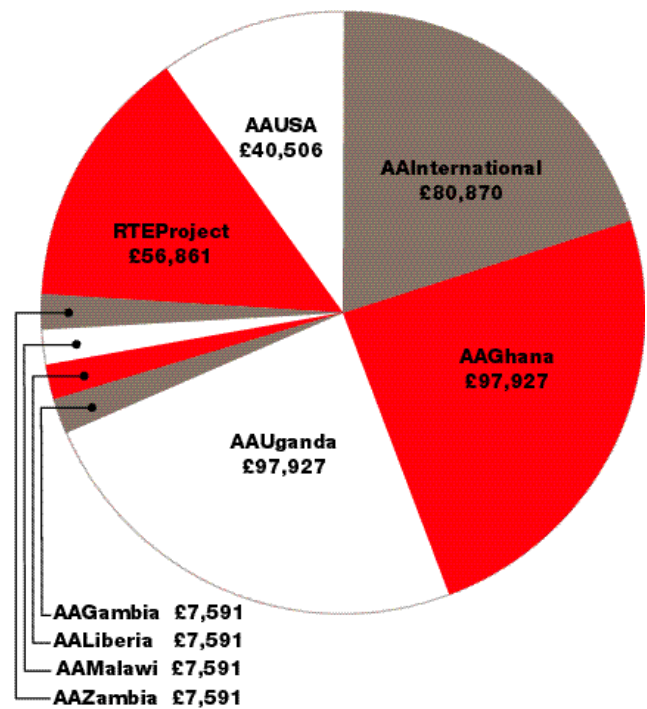


## 4 Achieving value for money: economy, efficiency and effectiveness

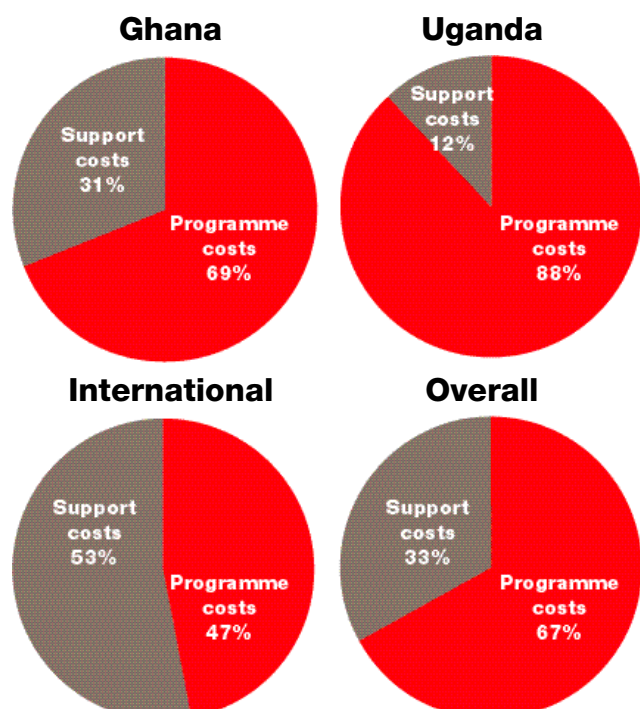
For ActionAid, measuring cost effectiveness was approved in September 2010 as part of the new Global M&E System Requirements and was to become a core component of monitoring of all programmes from 2013. Being able to demonstrate cost effectiveness in a way that upholds the organisation’s mission and values should help make the case that ActionAid programmes represent value for money. For ActionAid the term ‘value’ is viewed in terms of what stakeholders, most notably rights-holders, value in terms of what the organisation has promised to deliver and covers a range of issues such as: how to manage costs; improve efficiency and demonstrate that the right thing is being done in the right way. Whilst broader value for money questions can be addressed by many of the points highlighted in the sections on relevance, impact and sustainability, the section below seeks to focus primarily on those related to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

### 4.1 Economy: what is the value-added of a multi-country project vs. its transaction and other costs and to what extent have the resources allocated enabled the project to achieve results?

The total grant received from the donor was £404 453 (US\$640,168) and the figure top right shows the way these funds were allocated to ActionAid International, ActionAid Ghana, ActionAid Uganda and the Small Grant Countries as well as the Right to Education Project. In addition 10% of the total grant was set aside to cover ActionAid USA’s grant management fees.



This evaluation does not take into account an analysis of the RTE’s broader performance as the project operated independently of the ACRE initiative and as such the information above is provided simply to ensure a full overview of the grant. The remainder of the analysis will concentrate primarily on information from ActionAid International, ActionAid Ghana and ActionAid Uganda. The diagrams below show the ratio of programme to management cost allocation in Ghana, Uganda and at International level (N.B. the small grants are included in the pot of funds allocated to ActionAid International):



A broad analysis of the budget shows that around 30% of the total amount was allocated to support, and 70% to programme activities. Although ActionAid and partner staff felt that this allocation was justified due to the potential for learning and sharing associated with multi-country projects, it would be more justifiable if the project was spread over a longer period. Indeed, whilst 100% of key respondents cited shared learning as the main value added of multi-country projects, in reality concrete examples were limited and there were no specific shared learning activities, outputs or outcomes written into the project proposal to encourage this.

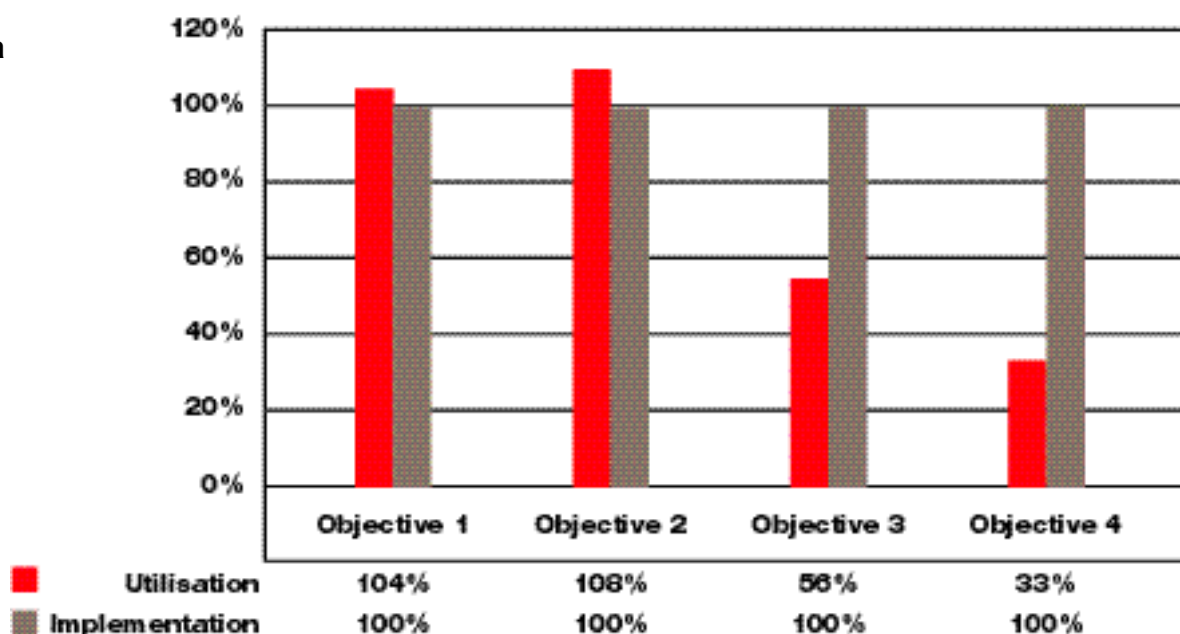
Another interesting factor to note is that despite having identical sized grants, the split between programme and support costs differs widely between Ghana and Uganda. In Ghana, the ratio of

programme vs. management costs was roughly 70% to 30% whereas in Uganda only 12% of the total grant was spent on management and support costs, leaving 88% for direct implementation.

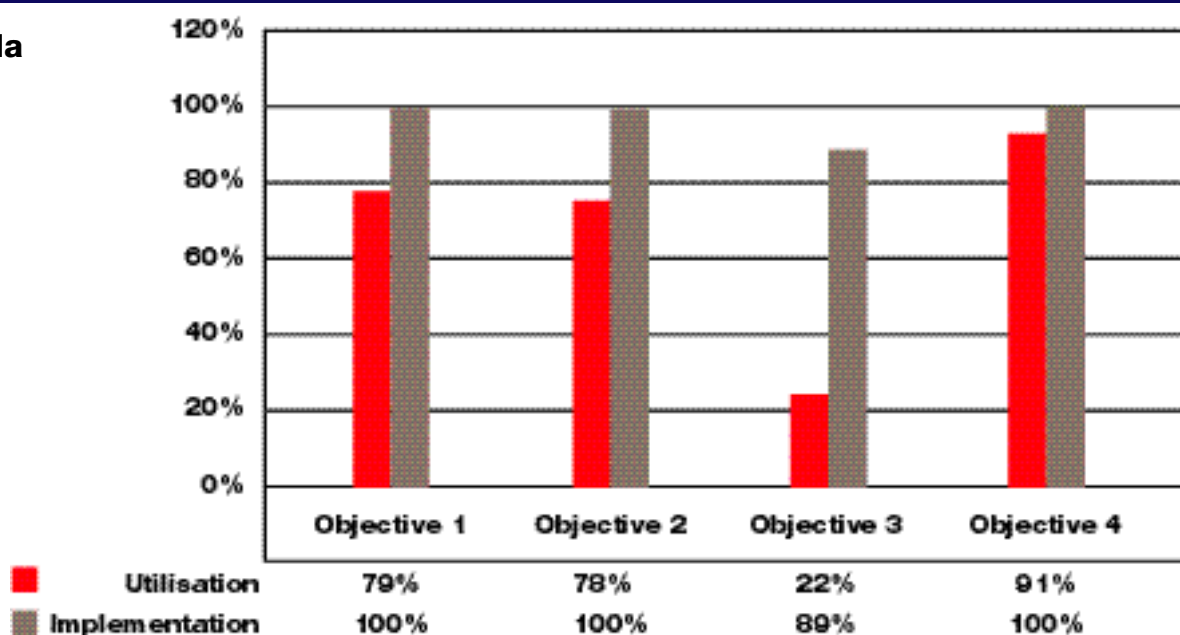
A closer analysis of the situation in Uganda reveals that the allocation of such a significant proportion of funds to programming was possible because the grant did not contribute significantly to operational costs either at Local Rights Programme (LRP) level or to the partner organisation. In addition management support from LRP staff was also not factored in thus constituting 'free' assistance to the project thus allowing the team to use the majority of the grant funds for direct programme interventions.

Although the project did not come up with a single, standardised unit-cost that could be used to

### Ghana



### Uganda



compare value for money across the different countries (especially Ghana and Uganda) one key question that arises is the fact that for the same grant amount of £97 927 the programme team in Ghana covered six schools in one district reaching around 3000 beneficiaries whereas in Uganda the funds were stretched to activities in 30 schools across two different districts reaching over 6350 people. Moreover, the general ‘package’ of activities delivered in schools in Ghana and Uganda was not so different and comprised of initiatives such as training for teachers and SMC members, establishment and training for girls’/children’s clubs and (in the case of Uganda) support to school feeding programmes.

As highlighted in the section on ‘Impact’, evaluating the extent to which the project was able to transform available resources into results is challenged by the lack of comprehensive M&E data. Nevertheless a simple analysis of the two main grant countries’ capacity to transform the available budget into activities is captured in the charts below. This reveals that both Ghana and Uganda were able to successfully implement all planned activities under Objectives 1 & 2 although whilst Ghana slightly overspent in the process, Uganda managed to do so at roughly 80% of available budget. With Objective 3, Ghana implemented around 100% of activities at just over 55% of budget whereas Uganda achieved 90% implementation using only 25% of the available funds. Finally, under Objective 4, where Ghana implemented 100% of planned activities using a third of the funds available whereas Uganda was achieved the same level of implementation 100% using 90% of the budgeted amount.

What this suggests is that, from a purely quantitative perspective, given the level of achievement, the scope and reach of the project and the cost-savings made and the relatively high ratio of programme vs. management funds allocation, Uganda offered better value for money during the first year.

#### **4.2 Efficiency: what measures were taken to ensure effective financial implementation, monitoring and reporting?**

The majority of respondents both within ActionAid and partners highlighted the delay to implementation associated with this project and the

fact that this meant that catch-up plans and were required as well as a two-month no-cost extension at the end of the project to ensure the work plan could be implemented to its fullest, but even then not all activities were fully realised in all of the countries.

*“There were delays. The money came in April. We started activities late and we were not able to catch up and did not finish.”*

(NGO forum staff, Uganda)

The complexities and lack of efficiency of ActionAid’s internal financial transfer procedures were highlighted by some respondents as being partly to blame for the time it took to get funds to country programme level as well as the fact that country programme teams themselves did not realise that in some cases funds were actually waiting in their bank accounts. Other challenges included the late submission of financial reports and low levels of grant utilisation.

Support from the International Education Team’s finance staff in the form of reporting templates and guidance was largely appreciated as was ad-hoc advice and capacity development provided by ActionAid to partner finance staff during reporting periods. Although no specific training or capacity development was provided to partners as part of this project, the organisations received annual capacity development as well as ad-hoc support from ActionAid finance staff at national level.

#### **4.3 Economy: what measures were taken to ensure cost-effectiveness in procurement and implementation?**

The project teams in Ghana and Uganda made a range of efforts to ensure cost-effectiveness during the project’s implementation and highlighted the fact that ActionAid’s financial and procurement policies and procedures were used by partners as well to ensure value for money in procurement of equipment. Cost-saving measures taken during recruitment included decisions by ActionAid and implementing partners to second existing staff to cover the project rather than going through lengthy and expensive recruitment processes and to use existing materials and equipment. In addition, partners’ contacts and networks on the ground allowed them to maximise the use of funds to

increase outputs for the same amount of money. Finally, given that CALID and NGO Forum were both implementing other work for ActionAid, combining field trips and monitoring visits to sites also allowed them to make cost savings/rationalise fuel costs.

#### **4.4 Efficiency: to what extent did grant management requirements support the delivery of results?**

The project's grant management requirements were not especially complex or demanding and were largely based on ActionAid's own internal requirements. This was largely due to the fact that the donor had no specific requirements other than an end of project report.

#### **4.5 Efficiency: to what extent did the management, decision-making and relationships structures of the project support the successful implementation of the project?**

A range of management and decision-making structures were established at international and national levels to support successful implementation of the project.

This included, the International Project Accountability Team at international level that served as an advisory body with oversight of the grant implementation. At national level, there were a series of other structures, including; in Ghana a Project Management Team and Advisory Committee at District Level that brought together different external stakeholders as well as ActionAid and CALID staff; in Uganda a Project Management Committee was formed of representatives of ActionAid Uganda and partner staff and board chair of Nebbi NGO forum; in Ghana the Advisory Committees were useful but the caveat was that there was an expectation of remuneration from committee members. The International Project Accountability Team met quarterly and was considered very supportive, however although the International Project Coordinator tried to set up regular Skype calls with all six countries, this was not feasible in practice due to conflicting schedules and poor lines of communication.

#### **4.6 Efficiency: how well did the project predict and react to risks?**

A risk matrix was developed for the project, however not all staff were aware of its existence. Most of the major external risks predicted but did not occur (e.g. civil unrest during elections in Ghana). The major factors that ended up impacting on the project's progress were internal and concerned the effect of staff turnover on the management of activities. In Uganda for example, the departure of the Project Manager partway through the project period had implications for the work and increased the pressure on LRP staff to step up the coordination and management and although there were enough funds available from the exchange gains to cater for staff salary during the no-cost extension period, these were not used. Staff turnover also affected the implementation of work in Zambia.

#### **4.7 Effectiveness: how has our approach to monitoring, data collection, and learning affected the overall impact of the project?**

A Monitoring & Evaluation framework was developed for the project however this document primarily captured specific outputs and outcomes that were relevant to the International Management team and Ghana and Uganda. Indicators related to expected contributions of the RTE project were not included in this framework and although Small Grant Countries' targets were required to refer to the framework, they had not established or measured progress against specific targets making it difficult to get an overall sense of achievements both in terms of outputs and outcomes.

Because the project's objectives were not SMART, measuring change becomes difficult and whilst a multitude of indicators were developed and included in the framework, and the more indicators, the harder tracking becomes. In addition given the absence of specific tools to enable teams to collect and analyse information and assess progress at the end of the project period this was not done anyway. These challenges were noted by project staff:

*"There was an M&E framework but there was little attempt to develop data collection tools to operationalize it which rendered it redundant. This limited our ability to assess impact and much of the*

*achievements we are talking about are based on observations, not evidence.”*

(ActionAid staff, Uganda)

Baseline data is key for tracking progress and it would have been good to take advantage of the availability of such information to create specific data collection tools and measure progress against initial figures at the end of the project period. In addition, comprehensive information from each school including key disaggregated education indicators should be collected to ensure changes are tracked successfully throughout the lifetime of the project.

#### 4.8 Effectiveness: how did the project ensure accountability to beneficiaries?

Beneficiaries were involved in the project from the outset, as part of the baseline research and were also involved in community-level stakeholder committees. Information about the project in general as well as ongoing progress and key research findings were shared with beneficiary groups at regular intervals.

#### Value for money: highlights

The foundation of any approach to value for money are systems for organisational and programme management, and unless an NGO can monitor costs and measure outcomes it will struggle to engage meaningfully with value for money. Whilst the project established a range of effective project management systems at international and national level and financial monitoring was generally effective, the main weakness was its failure to establish a functional M&E system to allow for the measurement of outcomes. In addition, little account seems to have been taken of the fact that with the same size grant Uganda was able to reach 30 schools and invest 88% of the grant into programme activities, whilst in Ghana the funds only stretched to six schools with a ratio of 70% of the budget to programmes and 30% to support costs. Finally, the failure to build specific cross-country learning deliverables into the project proposal also raises questions about the value added of multi-country projects given the relatively high level of administrative costs these entail.



School committee being consulted during PRS at Matamanda



Teachers' houses at Chitunda primary school in Ngokwe



Office at Chitundu primary school being worked on as a result of an action point



The only permanent school block at Matamanda, Malawi

## 5 Sustainability: ensuring ownership and lasting change

### 5.1 To what extent will activities be sustained by local beneficiaries/partners after the funding comes to an end?

*“If you as an organisation are taking up something and you don’t involve other people, sustainability becomes a problem, buy-in becomes a problem. But once you get other people to be involved from the outset, they can make the issue their own. We had a lot to learn from working with others (...) if they take your message for you then you have a whole host of people on board and they can sing the anthem for you where you are not. That is the beauty of working together.”*

(ActionAid Staff Small Grant Country)

There is some evidence already that the PRS approach adopted by the ACRE project was potentially conducive to longer-term sustainability due to the high-levels of buy-in and engagement it encourages from the outset, particularly in terms of its capacity to mobilise civil society and other key education stakeholders in the collection and analysis of data. The Gambia’s experience was especially successful in this regard as they were able to form a ‘PRS team’ composed of ActionAid, FAWE Gambia, the Child Protection Alliance and the Teachers’ Union all of whom have committed to working together in future and integrating PRS into their work. This was also considered to be crucial in ensuring longer-term sustainability once funding comes to an end. Discussions with ActionAid and partner staff also demonstrated that there was a growing understanding of the need to integrate PRS into their broader programme of work:

*“We are beginning to absorb it into our normal work, even when the project ends there is so much to do on PRS. Given the 10 rights, you realise that if you address even half a lot would have been changed in terms of attitudes, knowledge and practice.”*

(CALID staff, Ghana)

This enthusiasm also stretched to Education Authorities in several countries:

*The Primary Education Advisers already think it is brilliant and will use the PRS indicators in their work and stakeholders will also continue to monitor the indicators even if funds run out.*

(ActionAid staff, Malawi)

*“We are very grateful for the collaboration with GES, it has been immeasurable. This project has allowed us to do the things that we are responsible for but we cannot do for lack of funds. It as allowed us to perform our roles even better. We pray for more opportunities to do this kind of work.”*

(GES staff, Ghana)

In order to sustain this though, 40% of respondents felt that it was crucial to continue encouraging buy-in and focus on developing capacity, skills and understanding of different stakeholders to continue using PRS methods and approaches once funding comes to an end. In Ghana, Education Authorities suggested the need to build-in specific activities targeted at senior staff in order to enhance collaboration and longer-term sustainability.

### 5.2 Did the project result in any policy reforms at local or national level?

Although national-level was considered a weakness of this project due to a lack of engagement with national coalitions and other key stakeholders, at district and even school level considerable progress was made and can potentially be built on and further developed during a second phase. In Ghana for example, the initial work on the development of School Rules could potentially lead to the revision and wider implementation contributing to greater transparency about school discipline and in Uganda, the formulation of local by-laws will support the roll-out of the Universal Education Policy at decentralised level.

Overall though, during the first year, the main successes in this area have been the project’s contribution to raising awareness about existing laws and policies and contributing to their

implementation at school-level thanks to training for teachers, parents and children. By making strategic use of baseline data, country fact sheets and policy briefs the country teams should be able to develop targeted advocacy strategies to tackle specific gaps and contradictions in existing frameworks.

### 5.3 Which elements of the project could be replicated/scaled up elsewhere?

Interviews with respondents showed that the project's approach was widely applicable and that there was a potential for wide learning across/between countries. The flexibility and adaptability of the PRS framework was recognised, as was the fact that given the interconnected nature of rights, even by just focussing on a limited number, the scope for touching on several issues was considerable.

#### **Sustainability: highlights**

By successfully mobilising a range of education stakeholders at district and local level, the ACRE project has managed to lay the basis for potential sustainability and buy-in to the PRS model amongst a range of education actors. This has been demonstrated by initial enthusiasm and uptake of specific elements of the model by implementing partners, education authorities and other civil society organisations. More work remains to be done however in order to ensure this potential is built on during a second phase. Strategic advocacy using evidence from the baseline research and other resources can help sustain work towards policy change if done in collaboration with others.



Girls reading anti-VAG statement to stakeholder audience, Liberia

# Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations

## Conclusions

The 12-month ACRE project served as an opportunity to experiment with the operationalization of the PRS framework in six different African countries with a view to building on lessons learned and promoting a broader roll-out of the approach in future. On balance, despite the relatively short implementation period, it is clear that the basic premises of the PRS is valid in practice and that broader stakeholder engagement in participatory process promotes an improved understanding, buy-in and action for children's rights in education.

Although pre-determined, the focus areas of the project were largely considered to be relevant at all levels and progress was made in all six countries towards the achievement of the project's four objectives. Overall some of the projects main areas of achievements were felt to have been in the areas of awareness raising on children's rights to and in education (including the rights of children with disability) achieving stakeholder buy-in and beginning to tackle some of the root causes of violence and discrimination against children in education by disseminating policy documents such as the Teachers' Code of Conduct and training teachers on alternatives to corporal punishment. In addition anecdotal evidence suggests that school-based clubs have contributed to increasing confidence levels of girls' and boys and promoting their engagement in school management. Although the project proposal stated its aim to improve learning outcomes and abilities for girls and children with disabilities no specific activities were undertaken to promote this and no concrete data exists to assess whether any changes occurred.

To consolidate gains and promote wider impact and sustainability more remains to be done in areas of advocacy, primarily by building on initial successes achieved and linking work being undertaken in the implementation areas to the national level through strong partnerships. Closer collaboration between the ACRE project and the RTE project can support this work and also raise the profile of PRS at the international level.

For future work it is essential that the project team strengthen its approach to M&E, using clear outcome indicators and developing simple tools to collect data (including key education indicators) and track progress towards objectives on a regular basis.

As with most multi-country projects, this project comes with a relatively high proportion of support costs relative to implementation costs, which may be more justifiable over a longer period, especially if efforts are made to really maximise learning and sharing across countries in practice. In addition, where countries are given identical amounts of money, it will be important to assess the breadth and scope each country can achieve with the sum allocated and understand the reasons for any significant differences. Developing a basic unit cost model that can be adapted to real costs in each context can support this analysis.

Longer-term sustainability should be promoted by continuing to encourage buy-in of key beneficiaries at local, national and international level and emphasising collaborative advocacy work both internally with other sections of ActionAid as well as externally.

## Lessons Learned

The section below aims to provide more detail on some of the key lessons learned during the course of the project:

**Children's Awareness of Rights:** one of the 10 rights outlined in the PRS manual includes the Right to Know Your Rights which highlights the importance of ensuring children are aware of and are able to claim their rights and that life-skills and human rights are taught in a child-friendly way. Although ActionAid Ghana has an internally produced manual for supporting training for club patrons and members it would seem that messages are not reaching children, which has implications for their capacity to understand and claim their rights.



**Corporal Punishment:** it is essential to continue working with teachers and parents to ensure adults are better equipped to discipline children both at home and at school without the use of violence. At the same time, advocacy for revision of existing policy directives and the incorporation of comprehensive pre- and in-service training for teachers is required to ensure the practice is abolished completely.

**M&E and baseline:** the PRS process is viewed to be as important as the outcomes, and constitutes a key factor in delivering the outcomes and ensuring long-term capacity to bring about quality education by strengthening CSO and people's capacity to demand accountability from duty bearers. However, to assess its impact a robust M&E system is needed to allow a realistic set of outcome indicators to be measured in a systematic way. This should include indicators that will measure overall changes in the quality of education including retention, pass rates and acquisition of key skills, knowledge and values. A small number of outcome indicators linked to the PRS framework and tied to baseline figures need to be identified and tracked systematically throughout the lifetime of the project.

Also whilst the project focussed on learning abilities of girls there were no specific activities or indicators aimed at improving or measuring changes in learning abilities. School profile sheets using school records data (disaggregated) on enrolment, attendance, completion, drop out etc. need to be created. Moreover, if there is an expectation of wider buy-in to the PRS approach, community data collection and analysis of the right to education should not be seen as something that can only be done by a professional researcher but rather a routine stage in any project M&E cycle.

**Multi-Stakeholder engagement:** in Ghana in particular, the establishment of a multi-stakeholder advisory groups at district level comprised of local education authorities, teachers' union representatives, district level education coalition members, university staff and youth representatives served as an advisory board which provided guidance and expertise during the project implementation period. The choice of participants proved strategic in ensuring key support during specific activities (e.g. baseline analysis) however, one of the challenges was that representatives expected remuneration for their time, which had not

been factored into the project's budgets.

**Partnerships:** some of the main lessons learned about successful partnerships during this project include:

- 1 The need for greater stakeholder analysis and collaboration, particularly with other organisations focusing on similar areas of work as well as Teachers' Unions and line ministry representatives.
- 2 Increased emphasis on advocacy and the establishment of strong links between local, district and national-level advocacy work.
- 3 In the context of research work, the importance of identifying quality researchers and allocating sufficient funds to cater for the associated costs.
- 4 The importance of working with partners who have a mandate to work on education and a strong level of expertise, knowledge and understanding of the issues and context.
- 5 The value of strong, multi-sectoral project management and oversight committees to support effective planning and input during implementation.
- 6 Improved collaboration between RTE project and ACRE project staff guided by a Terms of Reference outlining communication mechanisms and clear set of deliverables.
- 7 The appointment of a dedicated staff member with a strong grounding in Human Rights to support the project and ensure the Human Rights perspective is maintained throughout.

**Prioritisation of Education:** although Education is an enabling right and has always been the cornerstone of ActionAid's work, funds for education were limited in both Malawi and Zambia. If education work in general and the promotion of the PRS approach continues to be a priority for ActionAid, strategies need to be developed to identify increased sources of funding that will allow both for the continued roll out of the approach in the field as well as support national and international-level advocacy on PRS as a mechanism for ensuring quality education in the lead up to 2015 and beyond.

**School Feeding:** the constitution in Uganda states that education is the responsibility of both the State and parents and as a result ActionAid Uganda in general and the ACRE project in particular have

been lobbying parliament to amend the Education Act, 2008, Act No 13 of 2008 to require parents and guardians to make a mandatory financial contribution towards the provision of lunch for all children at school. However this is in direct contradiction with ActionAid's broader position on school-feeding. Formulated as part of the international Hunger Free campaign this states clearly that School meals must be free for all children they are a right and not charity and they are the responsibility of government.

**School Rules:** although developed in a participatory way, the School Rules piloted by the ACRE team in Ghana are not linked to the PRS rights, whereas in another Small Grant Country this was the approach taken. In addition, the Ghana school rules refer to the GES directives, which continue to allow the use of corporal punishment. It would be interesting to explore how these rules can be more rights based whilst also linking rights to responsibilities in order to tackle misconceptions and demonstrate how awareness of rights should lead to increased respect for others rather than indiscipline and abuse of entitlements.

**Stakeholder analysis:** on issues such as children's rights, child participation and ensuring safe learning environments, internal and external stakeholder analysis should be done to ensure that the project is taking maximum advantage of connections with others already working on these issues for learning and impact. There are a range of other organisations working on these issues in all six countries including Save the Children, Plan and (in Uganda) Raising Voices. It would also be interesting to assess where Handicap International or others are active and working on inclusive education and consider collaboration. In order to strengthen the dialogue between the Human Rights and Development sectors, discussions with organisations such as Amnesty International could also be useful. At local level, it is essential to continue working with teachers and parents to ensure adults are better equipped to discipline children both at home and at school without the use of violence and incorporate the principles of positive discipline into future training work. At the same time, advocacy for revision of existing policy directives and the incorporation of comprehensive pre- and in-service training for teachers is required to ensure the practice is abolished completely.

## Recommendations

### 1 Relevance

- Deepen the focus on issues already identified during the first phase of the ACRE project rather than widening the scope.
- Ensure consultations with rights-holders (including children) inform the focus of project objectives and activities.
- Ensure ActionAid's Theory of Change is built into the project rationale/learning hypothesis during phase 2 and that ActionAid and implementing partners are fully aware of its significance and implications for their work.

### 2 Impact

#### *Advocacy:*

- Undertake a strong stakeholder analysis, establish partnership agreements with national-level advocacy partners and ensure active links between national and local advocacy work.
- Strengthen working relations with the RTE and ensure Human Rights elements are better embedded into the delivery of the project.
- Empower children (girls and boys, including the children with disabilities) to engage meaningfully in advocacy work at all levels and use effective child participation work to support this.
- Promote internal links with other programme/project work and campaigns (e.g. governance and women's rights) and ensure coherence of advocacy asks.
- ActionAid International and ActionAid country programmes should harmonise their positions on school feeding and ensure that any advocacy demands are informed by research and contribute to fulfilling the right to education of all children, especially the poorest and most marginalized.
- Draft realistic, feasible advocacy plans that are clearly linked to project objectives and baseline findings.
- Ensure use of baseline research, fact sheets and policy briefs to inform advocacy and are accurate regarding human rights standards.

#### *Children's participation and empowerment :*

- Ensure child-friendly training and materials on children's rights is made available for children and club mentors and are visible and available

in schools.

- Draw on existing training manuals and materials covering issues such as child rights, life-skills, child protection produced by organisations including Save the Children, RTE, Plan, UNICEF, FAWA and others and use these in training workshops for teachers and children.
- Ensure child-friendly versions of school rules are posted in each classroom.
- Develop the capacity of ActionAid and partner staff as well as teachers and parents to understand the principles of children's rights and child participation and how to integrate these into daily life, utilising RTE as a key resource.
- Encourage greater dialogue between children and parents and work with parents to encourage them to support their children's education.
- Ensure children's participation in school management and decision-making is not limited to tokenistic representation but that real contributions are being made and taken into account.
- Link to other organisations with an expertise on children's rights and child participation (Plan, Save the Children) to facilitate learning, sharing and capacity development and work more closely with RTE to devise strategies for better incorporating children's rights.

### *Children with Disability :*

- Explore opportunities to work in partnership with Handicap International or other organisations working on inclusive education/disability issues.
- Continue to undertake awareness-raising and mobilisation work on the rights of children with disability to tackle negative attitudes and perceptions and promote their inclusion in school.
- Build on initial success and continue to equip teachers with the skills to assess and include children with mild forms of disability in class and support the referral of those whose needs cannot be met at school-level.
- Work with others to advocate for improved implementation of inclusive education policies and increased resource allocation.

### *Infrastructure :*

- Continue to explore local level advocacy opportunities for accessing funds for infrastructure improvement and school

construction ensuring this takes issues related to gender and accessibility into account.

- Link education work to other areas such as ActionAid's campaigning on tax justice to increase increasing scope of advocacy for increased allocation of public resources to education at national level.

### *Learning Outcomes :*

- Continue to engage parents in their children's education through *Reflect* circles, training, awareness-raising and other activities to ensure parents provide children with the time, space and support they need to learn effectively.
- Develop activities aimed specifically at improving children's learning outcomes and work in collaboration with RTE to advocate for a rights-based approach to measuring and assessing performance.
- Collaborate and dialogue with the Ministry of Education and other organisations working on Learning Outcomes to promote a rights-based approach to assessment and performance.

### *Safe, non-violent environments :*

- Work in collaboration with other organisations with expertise on tackling corporal punishment (Save the Children, Plan, Raising Voices) to develop strong training packages for teachers and parents on positive discipline at home and in schools.
- Ensure that Codes of Conduct for teachers are known and understood by teachers, children and parents alike.
- Ensure teachers, parents and children are clear on reporting and referral procedures for cases of school-based violence and abuse and work in collaboration with Education Authorities/Teachers' Unions to create simple posters outlining procedures to be followed.
- Encourage girls and boys to engage in joint activities (e.g. through children's clubs) and build on existing good practice on working with boys (e.g. in Ghana) to ensure boys become 'champions' for girls' rights.
- ActionAid is a member of the Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children (which takes a human rights approach to tackling the issue), take advantage of this for advocacy and campaigning purposes and make use of the wealth of research, training resources and data on their website to inform training and advocacy work.

### 3 Partnerships

- Ensure technical capacity development for partner organisations to ensure quality programme implementation especially on issue such as: children’s rights; child participation; child protection; gender-based violence and positive discipline.
- Strengthen the links between the ACRE and RTE ensuring capacity development and face-to-face meetings to keep Human Rights are better integrated into the delivery of the project and promote shared learning.
- Seek stronger engagements with Human Rights organisations such as Amnesty International and others working at national level.
- Consolidate partnerships with National Education Coalitions and link to ANCEFA at regional level.
- Engage constructively with Teachers’ Unions at decentralised and national level to promote buy-in and support for children’s rights to education.



Girls during the PRS exercise in Jareng, Gambia



Children demonstrating a sprayer for agriculture sessions at Mulabana primary school, Uganda

### 4 Value for money

- Establish a unit cost for the project and use this to compare value offered by different approaches/different countries/overall.
- Ensure key ‘cross-country deliverables’ are written into the next phase of the project to ensure concrete examples of shared learning are put into practice to maximise value.
- Build baseline analysis into the project cycle as a matter of course to ensure that data is available for tracking progress and that stakeholders and beneficiaries are engaged.
- Create a simple yet effective M&E system for the project that will allow teams to collect key data and assess progress towards outcomes on an annual basis.

### 5 Sustainability

- Ensure ActionAid’s Human Rights Based Approach and Theory of Change are being fully implemented throughout the project to promote ownerships, capacity development and sustainability.
- Target specific activities at senior level education authorities at district/national level to promote awareness and buy-in to the PRS approach.
- Set aside funds for capacity development for implementing partners and education authorities as well as other key stakeholders to encourage up-take once funds come to an end.
- Build on good practice from Ghana’s multi-stakeholder Advisory Committees to ensure strategic support during the implementation period and increase likelihood of onward sustainability/adoption of PRS approach after project closure.

## Section 3

# *Management Response to Project Evaluation Report*



# *Management Response to Project Evaluation Report*

The ACRE project team agrees that the end of project evaluation report captures the progress so far made and agrees with the majority of the findings and recommendations. This response serves to outline the team's reaction to specific points raised in the report and highlight commitments to undertaking specific recommendations to improve future PRS projects.

## **Progress towards outcomes**

Over all it is encouraging to note that although the project was only implemented over one year, the evaluation found that to a large extent, what was planned was achieved, and whilst it has been difficult to measure results due to the lack of a comprehensive M&E system, the majority of activities were implemented in all six participating countries.

The Consultant's assessment based on analysis of project narrative and financial reports shows that a high proportion of targets have been reached under Objective 1 (increase awareness of rights to and in education by collecting data using PRS framework with multi-stakeholder groups of children, parents, teachers, community leaders, local education groups, researchers and teachers union) and 100% of planned activities were delivered both in Ghana and Uganda as well as a relatively high proportion in all the four small Grant Countries. One of the key success factors have been the participatory baseline processes that encouraged buy-in from key stakeholders. Unfortunately, the late finalisation of the research, challenges with the complexity of the analysis and the limited time to respond to and integrate findings into the current project cycle affected the use of the findings as part of a coherent advocacy strategy with links the local and national level. It is anticipated that in a possible second phase, the findings would be integrated in the advocacy activities to ensure local to national linkages. It is also agreed that advocacy activities must be implemented with civil society coalitions like the national education networks in order to increase the potential of achieving lasting impact.

Even though a lot of awareness on children's rights has been created, the team agrees that there still remains the issue of implementation of children's rights being seen as a threat to adult authority both at home and at school. The project staff would have to work hard to ensure that there is attitudinal change in this respect and the rights of children would be promoted and fulfilled. Subsequent activities would target the education of parents as well as children in the communities where we work in within the wider organisation as we integrate PRS.

On objective 2, ( Promote safe and non-violent schools by advocating for adequate and appropriate learning environments including implementation of a Teachers' Code of Conduct and policy provisions), the project staff worked hard to support the creation of safe environment including the dissemination of Teachers Code of Conduct. Again analysis shows that in both Ghana and Uganda, 100% of planned activities were achieved and many schools visited by the consultant have copies of Teachers code of conduct. Other activities included training for teachers to identify, assess and support children with mild forms of disability. Although this was widely appreciated, more needs to be done to successfully address the root causes of discrimination and exclusion.

The project team agrees with the recommendation on addressing the root causes of discrimination and exclusion and recognises that more awareness should be created in subsequent implementation of PRS to address the issue. Under this objective, the creation of safe environment poses a challenge; that is implementing human rights based approach without getting into service delivery. Much more needs to be done under this objective to get government departments to live up to their responsibilities as has been done in Ghana, Uganda and Malawi. The team agrees with this and is something project staff will work on in future.

The evaluation assessment revealed that it was

more difficult to achieve all planned activities and outcomes under Objective 3 (Increase transparency and accountability of school management processes by enhancing community and children's participation in decision-making and monitoring education resources). Making an in-road into children's participation in decision making by participating on school management committees requires a lot in work in all the countries especially Ghana as existing policies do not make provision for that. However, in places like Uganda, Liberia and Zambia, there was some head way in making the voices of children heard by the management committees. Meaningful child participation of children would be pursued in the implementing countries in the next phase.

The team agrees to the findings on objective 4, (Increase the confidence levels, learning abilities and outcomes of girls and children with disabilities). Although all planned activities were conducted, the team agrees with the findings that no specific activities were undertaken on learning abilities and no changes were measured. This objective was too ambitious to achieve within the time frame. As a one year project, it was too early to see changes in learning abilities. In a much longer term implementation, efforts would be put in place to measure medium term changes in learning abilities. Nevertheless, the report serves as a useful reminder to the team to place increased focus on measurement of learning abilities as part of ensuring quality education for all.

### **Way forward**

Taking it forward, project teams must work urgently to address the problems by collaborating with other like-minded organisations especially the education network to support parents and teachers to use alternative forms of discipline at home and in school and simultaneously lobbying for changes in law and policy and/or their effective implementation wherever they exist already. In case of Ghana for example it might include closer relations with the national coalition which is already piloting a positive discipline pack together with ACTIONAID Ghana.

Although the report commends the significant progress made against all four project outcomes, it has also identified that the change achieved is not always reflected in the data represented. This is due to a number of challenges both internal and external to the project.

The first challenge has to do with collection of accurate data during the baseline survey using a participatory approach recommended in the PRS resource, something which has not be done before in the six countries. In Liberia and Malawi, a consultant was hired to do the assessment with little involvement of key stakeholders. Training stakeholders in the community to undertake data collection takes time and in most cases cumbersome. In future, implementing countries must initiate the data collection process early enough and provide ample time to train the children, teachers, parents and community leaders for their effective involvement and ownership of the process. Data collected must be used to produce an action plan for a strategic advocacy engagement for change.

Secondly, even though an M&E framework was developed for both Ghana and Uganda and the small grant countries, project teams were not sufficiently conversant with it and therefore indicators to help track progress against outcomes were not effectively monitored. Other monitoring processes and procedures faced logistical challenges in all countries. Accurate data collection and analysis is key to tracking progress towards outcomes. It is also important that data is collected from all schools in project areas, so that it is possible to obtain a complete picture of what is happening and the changes that the project is helping to bring about in lives of children. Consequently, the project team will ensure that the colleagues and partners are familiar with the M&E framework and can therefore use it to provide accurate report that can give a clearer situation of the progress in the fields both at programmatic and advocacy levels.

Thirdly, child participation is key if the rights of children in school will be respected, protected and fulfilled. Children's participation in school committees was slightly improved for Uganda, The Gambia and Zambia by getting their voices heard. However, it is important that project staff educate children on their rights and responsibilities and involve them in activities that concern them so as to change policies to get them to sit on School management committees to enhance their participation.

In the second phase, the project teams will have to look seriously at improving collaboration with the

Right to education project as well as partnership with human rights organisations in country to enhance human rights aspects in the programme. The teams will have to train staff and partners on the human rights standards for a better understanding of all the implications of the governments' commitments in terms of rights to education and how to take action.

Work on corporal punishment and alternate forms of discipline, reporting and referral systems on violence has just begun and must be prioritised and integrated in the program work in order to address in a more strategic way community and national level advocacy work for both behaviour and policy changes. In the second phase, the team will ensure that sustainable action plan is produced together with key actors such as national coalition, teachers unions, community leaders, school management committees, and the children themselves and the global initiative to end corporal punishment, to tackle the root causes. We will ensure that children's are empowered and their voices are heard through their active participation along side with adults to promote inter generation dialogue and the community acceptance of the children as rights holders.

The report makes an assertion that the school feeding project as implemented by ACRE in Uganda is not sustainable and also against the organisation's stand on Hunger Free campaign, where school meals are seen as a right for the children and not charity. The team agrees with this assertion and will use the existing situation for future advocacy to get government to provide a lead in ensuring school feeding happens, something that is already one of the key calls being made by the Quality Public Education working group for which ACTIONAID Uganda is part. ActionAid charter for free school meals will support this advocacy action aimed at informing ACTIONAID partners as well as challenging the government.

It is exciting to see that the report highlights some significant progress made by the project within the year as well as highlighting some key challenges that remain to be addressed. In conclusion, we will endeavour to ensure recommendations are acted upon in future projects in order to ensure the project's objectives and outcomes are achieved.



Children's club at Kinyamira primary school, demonstrating some of their rights in education to teachers and their fellow pupils, Uganda



**Section 4**

*Annexes*



## Annex 1

# Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS		
Country/level	Organisation	N°
International	Right to Education Project	2
	ActionAid International	3
	ActionAid USA	1
GHANA	ActionAid Ghana	4
	CALID	4
	GNECC	1
	MoE	2
UGANDA	ActionAid Uganda	8
	NGO Forum	4
	KADEFO	0
	MoE	2
GAMBIA	ActionAid Gambia	1
LIBERIA	ActionAid Liberia	1
MALAWI	ActionAid Malawi	1
ZAMBIA	ActionAid Zambia	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

Country	Location	Respondents	Male	Female
GHANA	Ngarun	Teachers	6	3
		Parents	5	15
		SMC/PTA	6	0
		Girls		26
		Boys	7	
	Kpene	Teachers	8	2
		Parents	8	8
		SCM/PTA	6	0
		Girls		10
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>46</b>	<b>64</b>
UGANDA	Pmvuga	Teachers	9	2
		SMC/PTA/parents	10	3
		Girls		27
	Oruu	Teachers	3	0
		SMC/PTA/Parents	17	8
		Girls		11
		Boys	8	
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>47</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Subtotals</b>			<b>93</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>208</b>	

## Annex 2

# Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

The overall purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the Action for Children's Rights in Education (ACRE) project's activities are beginning to bring about the anticipated change set out in the project. It also aims to examine which factors are proving critical in helping or hindering change and draw lessons for future programming. Each stakeholder can play in ensuring schools offer good quality education.

During its implementation period the ACRE project focused mainly on the promotion of three of these 10 rights, notably: the right to non-discrimination; the right to a safe and non-violent environment and the right to participate.

To ensure stakeholder involvement in the project ActionAid country programmes engaged stakeholders at different levels to collect evidence using the PRS framework in order to determine the extent to which the 10 rights are being fulfilled in schools. Using a participatory methodology and *Reflection Action* approach to adult learning and social change, stakeholders were brought together and empowered to participate in diagnosing the problem of children's rights in local communities and proposing local solutions by being part of the baseline data collection.

The ACRE project partnered with Universities and research institutes in the countries and these supported the project implementation by facilitating and making inputs into the design and data collection of local level baseline studies in the LRPs. Baseline survey reports and policy briefs on the three rights are therefore available for Ghana, Uganda, Gambia, Malawi, Zambia and Liberia. In addition a comparative study of all the reports has also been completed.

During the implementation, a detailed cross-country Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was designed with inputs from project staff from Uganda and Ghana to provide a basis for measurement of analysis of the progress, outputs and outcomes of the project.

### Purpose of the Evaluation

As stated above, the overall purpose of the evaluation is to determine if the ACRE project activities are beginning to bring about expected changes and assess the factors that are crucial to producing (or preventing) changes happen and draw lessons for future programming. Specifically, this evaluation aims to:

- 1 To evaluate the output /outcomes and impact of the ACRE pilot project against its four objectives.
- 2 To assess the core project structures, methodologies and capacity development.
- 3 To appraise the project partnership approach (including management structures, communications and relationships) to community implementation, research and advocacy in relation to the project's achievements.
- 4 To assess the project's financial management and value for money.
- 5 To draw lessons for future programming.

### Areas of Review/Evaluation Questions

In order to respond to the above assessment questions, five separate yet interlinked areas of review have been identified and are outlined below. These have been revised in collaboration with the International Project Management team.

#### A. Relevance: did we do the right thing in the right way?

- 1 What value (and for whom) did the project add relative to other education initiatives?
- 2 Did the project respond to real needs in the intervention areas/at national level?
- 3 Are the project objectives coherent with national policies and targets?
- 4 Given progress to date, are the project's objectives still relevant?
- 5 Has this project taken adequate steps to redress imbalances in women's rights/gender equality?
- 6 Did the project put ActionAid's theory of change into practice?

## **B. Impact: did the project achieve the planned results?**

For each project output/ outcome the consultants should review how effective project activities have contributed to achieving the outcomes. This should be undertaken through a desk review of project performance from the M&E framework, reports from all countries, project review reports and field review exercises with key stakeholders-parents, girls, boys, teachers and schools in the main grant countries – Ghana and Uganda. Review from the small grant countries can be assessed through the activity plan review reports. Consultants should advise whether the current set of outcomes for the project are still relevant and appropriate, and whether revisions are necessary as the project moves forward, bearing in mind the need for baseline data if this option is recommended.

- 1 To what extent was progress made against the four key objectives?
- 2 Are there any areas where progress towards objectives was slower, and why?
- 3 Which activities have been the most/least effective in bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes and practice and why?
- 4 Have there been any unintended/unexpected outcomes?
- 5 What has been the overall/lasting impact of the project to date?

## **C. Partnerships: what lessons can be learned for the future?**

Review communications and relationships with partners in relation to community implementation, research and advocacy in relation to the project's achievements. The consultant should assess effectiveness of partnerships with lead implementing NGOs in Ghana and Uganda and make recommendations to improve our partnership in future. For example:

- 1 How well has each partner fulfilled its obligations and contributed to the project's achievements?
- 2 How have the different partnerships (advocacy, community, research) helped or hindered the achievement of project objectives and delivery of lasting change?
- 3 What have been the key challenges among the partnerships and limitations among the partners? What approaches have, or could in future, best mitigate those challenges?
- 4 What lessons can be learned from the partnership approach of this project?
- 5 How effectively has the project developed the capacities of the different partner organisations?

## **D. Achieving value for money: economy, efficiency & effectiveness**

- 1 *Economy*: what is the value added of a multi-country project vs its transaction and other costs?
- 2 *Economy*: what measures were taken to ensure cost-effectiveness in procurement and implementation?
- 3 *Efficiency*: what measures were taken to ensure effective financial implementation, monitoring and reporting?
- 4 *Efficiency*: was financial management capacity of partners adequate for accurate budgeting, forecasting and reporting of the project? Was capacity development provided and to what effect?
- 5 *Efficiency*: to what extent did grant management requirements support the delivery of results?
- 6 *Efficiency*: how well did the various activities transform the available resources into results?
- 7 *Efficiency*: to what extent did the management, decision-making and relationships structures of the project support the successful implementation of the project?
- 8 *Efficiency*: efficiency: how well did the project predict and react to risks?
- 9 *Effectiveness*: to what extent have the resources allocated enabled the project to achieve the planned results (i.e. what did we get for our money)?
- 10 *Effectiveness*: to what extent did the project deliver the expected results (see section 2)
- 11 *Effectiveness*: did the project put ActionAid's theory of change into practice (see section 1)
- 12 *Effectiveness*: was value created by this project and for whom (see section 1)
- 13 *Effectiveness*: to what extent did the methodologies support the achievement of results?
- 14 *Effectiveness*: how has the project's approach to monitoring, data collection, and learning affected the overall impact of the project? (for example, to what extent was learning from baseline incorporated into the project's implementation plan to achieve change?)
- 15 *Effectiveness*: how did the project ensure accountability to beneficiaries?

## **E. Sustainability**

- 1 Which elements of the project could be replicated/scaled up elsewhere?
- 2 To what extent did the project enable local participation and ownership of the project's

objectives and achievements?

- 3 Did this project result in any policy changes/reforms at local/national level?
- 4 To what extent will activities be sustained by local partners/beneficiaries once the funding comes to an end?

## Key deliverables

The key deliverable expected at the end of the evaluation is a final evaluation report that should not exceed 25 pages (excluding appendices) and should include:

- A. An executive summary (3 pages)
- B. A project description (1 page)
  - Short description of the project – overall objectives and indicators, expected results and budget
  - Short description of the planning, implementation and monitoring processes
  - Short description of the management structure
  - Short description of the human resource allocation and any partner organisations

- C. A review methodology overview (0.5 page)
  - Short summary of the evaluation process, timeframe, methodology, objectives, team etc.
- D. Evaluation results (15 pages)
  - For each objective outline the indicators and the results and the analysis
- E. Conclusions, lessons learnt recommendations. (5 pages)
  - Conclusions – insights into the evaluation findings, reasons for successes and failures, any innovations
  - Lessons learnt – suggestions for integration into future projects
  - Recommendations.

Technical details should be confined to appendices, which should also include a list of informants (with their permission) and the evaluation team's work schedule. Background information should only be included when it is directly relevant to the report's analysis and conclusions. Case studies, photos, quotes and stories should be provided as much as possible.



Pupils participating in the discussion of the survey findings, Malawi

## Annex 3

# Example key informant interview sheet

Location:

Date:

Time:

### Introduction

Hello, my name is Asmara. I am working as a consultant for ActionAid, to support an independent end of project evaluation of the Action for Children's Rights in Education initiative. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out how well the project has achieved its objectives and what lessons can be learned for the next phase of the project. I will be conducting interviews and discussions with various people who have been involved in the project at national and international level. The findings from these discussions and other sources will be written up into a report to be used by ActionAid and the donor. This interview will cover five main areas: relevance; impact; partnerships; value for money and sustainability. Although I will be asking your name, the information will be confidential and your name will not be linked to anything you say in the final report. I understand you are probably very busy and I hope this will not take much more than one hour. I really appreciate your willingness to answer my questions but please be assured that this is entirely voluntary so if there is anything you don't want to answer or if you need or want to stop this interview at any time, just let me know.

0.1 Name:

0.2 Full Job Title:

0.3 Length of time involved in project and role:

### 1 Relevance

1 Given your knowledge of other education initiatives, what would you say is the added value of this particular project and for whom?

Probe: PRS approach

2 In light of the project's achievements to date, do you think it would be relevant to continue working on the same issues?

Yes/No

Why/Why not?

3 Do you think the project managed to enhance the rights of women or girls in any way?

Yes/No

If so, can you give any examples?

3 Which activities do you think were most effective in

bringing about changes to people's knowledge, attitudes and practice as part of the project and why?

4 Do you think there were any activities that were not particularly effective?

Yes/No.

Which ones and Why?

5 Have there been any unexpected or unintended outcomes as a result of this project?

Yes/No

Can you give any examples?

6 Although this is only a one-year project, what would you think the most lasting change or changes have been as a result of its implementation?

### 2 Impact

1 To what extent would you say the project has made progress towards the achievement of its four key objectives? Do you have any specific examples to illustrate this?

Probe: learning outcomes, participation, discrimination, measuring reduction in violence.

2 Are there areas where progress towards the four objectives was slower?

Yes/No

Which ones and why?

### 3 Partnerships

1 To what extent would you say the different partners (advocacy, community, research) have fulfilled their obligations in this project?

Probe: did the project work with all the partners outlined in the proposal?

2 How has each partner (advocacy, community, research) contributed to the achievement of the project's objectives?

- 3 Have there been any challenges working with any of the partners?  
Yes/No  
If so, what, and how did they impact on project implementation?
- 4 What was done to address those challenges?
- 5 What would you recommend to mitigate them in future?
- 6 Do you think there are any lessons to be learned from this project about successful partnership work either in general or on advocacy, community, research work specifically?  
Yes/No  
What might these be?

#### 4 Achieving value for money

- 1 What would you say are the advantages or added value of a multi-country project? Are there any specific advantages for this project in particular?
- 2 The management and support costs for this project were around 30% of the total. Is this outweighed by the advantages?
- 3 What measures were taken (e.g. in procurement, recruitment, implementation etc.) to ensure cost-effectiveness during the implementation of this project?
- 4 What was done to ensure effective financial implementation, monitoring and reporting during this project? (Prompts: reporting templates and guidelines, meetings, monitoring visits, workshops, support etc.)
- 5 How efficient was the flow of funds (e.g. from ActionAid India to ActionAid Ghana/ActionAid Uganda or partners)? Were there any delays to implementation? If so, why/what effect did this have?
- 6 How frequently did the team meet to discuss progress/challenges? Was this effective?  
Yes/No.  
Why/Why not?
- 7 What (if any) challenges did partners have with regard to budgeting, forecasting and reporting on this project?
- 8 Was any capacity development provided to partners support effective financial implementation, monitoring and reporting of this project?  
Yes/No  
If yes, how useful was this?
- 9 What kind of management and decision-making structures were put in place to support the project implementation and how helpful/supportive were these structures?
- 10 To what extent was the project able to react to risks? Can you give an example? **Prompt: look through Risk Matrix**

- 11 Do you think the project satisfactorily delivered what it set out to achieve with the funds available?  
Yes/No  
What makes you say that?
- 12 Do you think there is any way the same results could have been achieved for less?  
Yes/No  
How?
- 13 Which of the methods used in this project do you think were most effective and why?
- 14 How effective would you say the project's approach to M&E data collection and learning and what impact has this had on the project's capacity to achieve its results?  
**Probe: collection of school based data/collection of data against agreed indicators at end of year?**
- 15 To what extent was learning from baseline incorporated into the project's implementation plan and what, if any changes occurred as a result?
- 16 What approaches did the project take to ensure accountability to beneficiaries?

#### 5 Sustainability

- 1 Do you think the project's approach would be relevant elsewhere?  
Yes/No  
Why/Why not?
- 2 Are there any elements of the project that could potentially be scaled up? How? To what level? Can you foresee any challenges?
- 3 What did the project do to specifically encourage local participation and ownership? To what extent was this successful?
- 4 Did the project achieve any changes in terms of policy reforms at local or national level? Which were they?
- 5 Do you think any of the project's activities will be carried on by local partners/beneficiaries after the funding comes to an end?
- 6 What might be needed to support this?

*Those are all the questions I have for the moment.  
If you would like to add anything important that has not been raised in the discussion please feel free.*

## Annex 4

# Example focus group discussion guide

Country:

Location:

School:

Date:

Time:

Number of participants (M/F)

### Introduction

*Hello, my name is Asmara. I am working as a consultant for ActionAid, to support an independent end of project evaluation of the Action for Children's Rights in Education initiative. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out how well the project has achieved its objectives and what lessons can be learned for the next phase of the project. I will be conducting interviews and discussions with various people who have been involved in the project at national and international level. The findings from these discussions and other sources will be written up into a report to be used by ActionAid and the donor. During our discussion we will be talking mostly about your own experiences of involvement in the project and I am keen to hear about any changes (positive or not) that have happened here in the school over the past few months. Although I will be asking your name, the information will be confidential and your name will not be linked to anything you say in the final report. I understand you are probably very busy and I hope this will not take much more than one hour. I really appreciate your willingness to answer my questions but please be assured that this is entirely voluntary so if there is anything you don't want to answer or if you need or want to stop this interview at any time, just let me know.*

Go around the circle and ask participants to introduce themselves, stating their NAME, ROLE and one thing they LIKE ABOUT THEIR JOB. Recap on ground rules for the focus group and ensure everyone feels comfortable and is aware everyone has a chance to speak and that there are no right/wrong answers.

### 1 Relevance

The ACRE project was implemented in Ghana, the Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia, and in all those countries its aim was to ensure that children's rights to education are respected, especially focussing on the rights of girls and children with disabilities.

- Who here was actually involved in the project directly?
- Can you tell me a bit about what you did?
- How relevant do you think the project's aims were relevant here in xxxx?
- Do you think you have gained or learned anything as a result of being involved in the project?

### 2 Impact

#### Awareness of rights

- The project focussed a lot on raising awareness of children's rights to education, especially for girls and disabilities. What reactions have there been to the issue of children's rights here in the community/school? What are your views on children's rights?

#### Safe, non-violent environment

##### Probes:

- What about in the classroom? What happens when children misbehave in class? What kind of discipline is administered here in the school?
- Is there a Code of Conduct here in the school? Can anyone briefly describe what it covers?
- Are pupils and parents aware of it?
- What happens when a pupil is hurt or abused here in the school?
- Have there been any such incidents recently? Can anyone tell me what happened? Probe: disciplinary processes



## Girls and children with disabilities

The project aimed to benefit ALL children but especially girls and children with disabilities.

- Are there any children with disabilities here in the school? How many?
- What kind of disability (visual, hearing, physical, other)
- Have they been here for long or did they recently enrol?
- Has the school taken any specific measures to improve enrolment and performance of children with disabilities? Can anyone tell me a bit about them?
- What has been the result? Probe: any changes in performance or confidence
- What about girls? Have any measures been taken to improve their enrolment and performance?
- Can anyone tell me a bit about them?
- What has been the result? Probe: any changes in performance or confidence
- Are there any issues that are still preventing girls or children with disabilities from attending school here? What are they?

## Safe, non-violent environment

- Would you say this school has enough clean, safe toilets for teacher and pupils?
- Is everyone able to access them? Probe: girls, children with disabilities

## Transparency and accountability

- Can anyone tell me about the way the SMC functions here in the school?
- Who is involved in the SMC?
- How much are parents involved in school affairs?
- Are there any children involved?

### Probe: Boys/Girls/CWD?

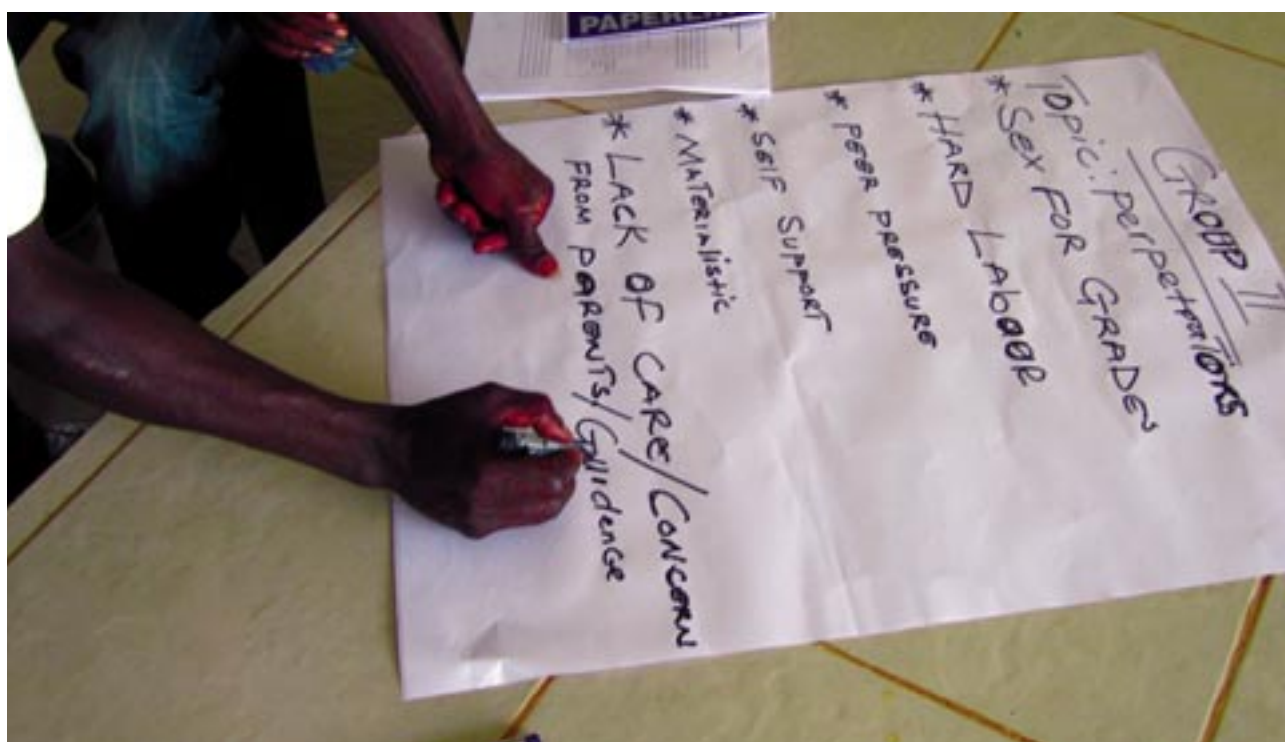
- Has the SMC taken any actions recently to bring about improvements in the school? Can anyone give any examples?

## 3 Sustainability

- If this project should continue, what kind of thing do you think it should focus on?
- What kind of support would be needed at school level to ensure children's rights are respected?

*Those are all the questions I have for the moment.  
If you would like to add anything important that has not been raised in the discussion please feel free.*

Thank you very much for your time and attention.  
ActionAid will get back to you with feedback from this evaluation.



Baseline report validation exercise, Liberia

## Annex 5

# School Feeding Charter

ActionAid

CHARTER FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

This charter is an advocacy and monitoring tool for education activists, parents associations, school management committees, teachers, children and other stakeholders to ensure that states are providing free hot meals in schools and that the standards set in this charter are being adhered to.

At least one hot meal a day is essential for the development of the child, states therefore have the obligation to provide hot and nutritious meals to children in schools.

- 1** School meals must be free for all children – they are a right and not charity – and they are the responsibility of government.
- 2** Meals must be nationally or locally sourced/procured with a view to strengthen local livelihood and the local economy – not based on dumping of food aid or procurement from large contractors.
- 3** Budgets should be managed by school management committees and their capacity must be built to manage these transparently.
- 4** The teachers must not be made into cooks or shoppers and nor should children.
- 5** The programme must guarantee a proper, nutritious hot meal – culturally adapted to local standards – not biscuits!
- 6** Budgets must be additional to any existing education spending – must cover administration and management cost of delivery of FSM and should be closely tracked.
- 7** Pre-school children (0-6) should be covered by the free school meal programme in age appropriate ways – good nutrition is essential to prevent problems in early child development.
- 8** Gender stereotypes should be challenged in all aspects of free school meals.
- 9** Discrimination should be challenged – all children should eat together.
- 10** The programme must be independently monitored to avoid out of date food/ corruption in sourcing/problems such as children not being fed at home etc.

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WAXBARASHO చదువు ମାନ୍ୟତା KWAN Griaó Duc  
 Kakaran 799CT ଶିକ୍ଷା DZIDZO MmUTA  
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 تعليم शिक्षا  
**EDUCATION**  
**A RIGHT IN EVERY LANGUAGE** Opram  
 MAPHUNZIRO adzesua Ninqen atche we Uddannelse

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