

# Education Out Loud Case Study: School for Life

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OUT LOUD.**



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## Introduction

This case study is part of a larger body of work funded by the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) Education Out Loud (EOL) programme. It explores the advocacy and policy influencing (API) activities of School for Life, an organisation receiving funding from EOL, and the process, results and impact of action research project they conducted in partnership with MDF/ Australian Council for Education Research (ACER), an EOL 'Global Learning Partner' (GLP).

EOL is the GPE's fund for advocacy and social accountability. The fund aims to support civil society organisations (CSOs) to be active and effective in shaping policy for the communities which they serve, particularly those that are vulnerable or marginalised. As part of EOL's strategy, they have engaged a number of GLP to enhance the evidence base for effective API and crucially support the CSOs they fund (grantees), to develop their API strategies and become more effective. The MDF/ ACER consortium is one such GLP. They worked closely with a number of grantees in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia to develop action research projects, to test key assumptions in their programme theory of change (ToC). The aim of this was to support grantees to engage in adaptive management practices and ultimately improve the effectiveness of their API activities.

## Case Study Context

### Education Out Loud Context

It is well documented that there is a global learning crisis. UNESCO UIS (2018) estimates that 617 million children and adolescents are not proficient in either reading or mathematics. Two-thirds of these children are actually in school or were in school but dropped out. 258 million children, adolescents and youth are unable to access formal education (UNESCO UIS, 2019). The Covid-19 pandemic has further disrupted education and affected over 1.5 billion students across 190 countries, deepening inequalities in learning, especially for the most marginalised and disadvantaged children (EC, 2023).

GPE works with international partners, governments, and other organisations to address this challenge and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4: "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". GPE 2025 strategic plan (2022) is aligned with SDG 4 and aims to "accelerate access, learning outcomes and gender equality through equitable, inclusive, and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century".

Civil society plays a very important role in GPE country-level work by contributing to the development and monitoring of education sector policies and plans. GPE has been providing funding to CSOs since 2009 and currently supports CSOs through its Education Out Loud (EOL) programme (GPE, 2023; EOL, 2023). As stated, the aim of the EOL programme is to support CSOs to be active and effective in shaping policy for the communities which they serve, especially those that are vulnerable or marginalised. It does this by providing training opportunities, access to national and international networks, and crucially funding.

Since GPE has been active in this area, there have been significant advances in access to education, especially for girls (CGD, 2022). However, further action is needed to address the learning crisis and achieve SDG4. This is particularly true for girls in marginalised communities or with other forms of disadvantage, because gender

remains a multiplying factor when it intersects with other forms of disadvantage such as girls who also have a disability or come from a lower socio-economic background (UNESCO, 2022). It is within this context that this research project operates and tries to make a meaningful contribution towards the achievement of SDG4.

## Action Research Project Context

The research project explores civil society's contributions to advancing equity and improving learning through different approaches and methodologies for education API. It focusses on how CSOs engage in API to improve equitable learning outcomes, particularly in relation to gender, intersectionality, and social inclusion. The main objective of the research is to investigate, review and learn from three EOL grantees' education API efforts, with the aim to identify strategies and practices that have proved effective in instigating change at local, regional and system levels, and shed some light on the conditions that have contributed to their effectiveness.

Actionable learning agendas were co-produced with the selected grantees, to jointly examine the conditions and reasons as to how identified strategies and practices have been effective. Through engaging in the action research process, grantees and their associated partners generated evidence on the effectiveness of their API practices, which allowed them to engage in adaptive management practices and enhance future effectiveness. Whilst the project was conducted jointly with grantees, MDF/ ACER provided overall leadership of the research and quality assurance. Nevertheless, this was very much a collaborative process, in which the MDF/ ACER guided the research by providing advice, tools, and feedback, and facilitated critical reflection. In summary, the research examines:

- Effectiveness of API strategies and practices
- Different approaches, methods, strategies, and tools of API
- The processes related to the development, design and implementation of evidence-based lobby and advocacy in education
- Organisational and partnership capacities to implement API
- Organisational capacities for implementing actionable learning agendas and adaptive management in the field of API

The grantees MDF/ ACER partnered with as part of this action research project are IID (OC2, Bangladesh), School for Life (OC2, Ghana), and the GEAR Alliance (OC3, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). They are all recipients of EOL grants, from either OC2 or OC3. All the organisations worked with in the project are members of the Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 56 diverse nations around the globe. The commonwealth has its roots in a shared history, which has left its mark on the political structures and institutions of the countries in the study and ostensibly produced a number of commonalities between the contexts. These include: presidential and multiparty systems; constitutional frameworks; independent judiciaries; regular elections; respect for the rule of law; a free press and active civil society; and the English language. Nevertheless, all contexts have their own distinct political history, culture, and challenges. As such, this mix of commonality and diversity means the contexts present a fascinating dynamic in which to explore effective API strategies.

## Grantee Overview

Children living in remote rural parts of Ghana experience inequality in basic education, in terms of both access and outcomes. This issue is particularly acute in the north of the country and for girls. For example, 30 percent of children in the north have no school nearby and 20 percent will never enroll. Furthermore, transparency and

accountability within Ghana’s education system is weak. Generally, information is not disseminated in a way that is accessible to most citizens (for example it is not produced in a local language), which means they are denied the opportunity to understand and engage with the education system and, in turn, hold officials to account. It is within this context that School for Life, and the associated CLEAR project operate.

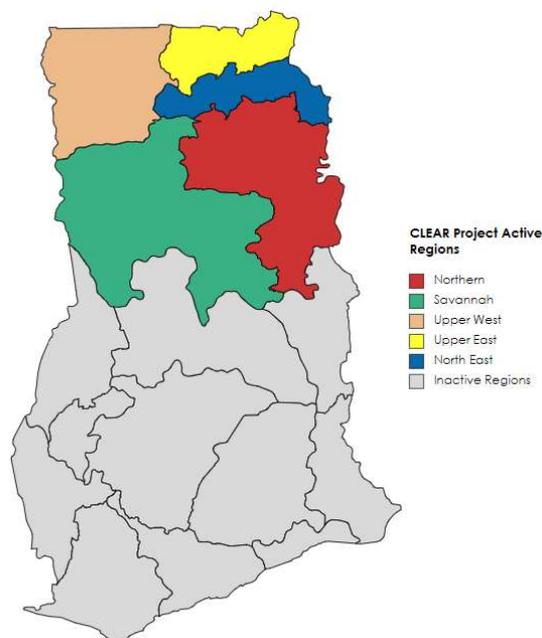
School for Life was founded in 1995 and is a lead CSO in Ghana. It was founded due to the serious educational performance challenges faced in deprived parts of northern Ghana, particularly in terms of the high number of out-of-school children. The vision of the organisation is a Ghana where the right to relevant quality education is fulfilled, leaving no one behind. It strives to achieve this vision by influencing national policy and programmes, delivering innovative and inclusive approaches to education, and engaging with strategic states and non-state actors through advocacy. Its four strategic areas and their associated objectives are:



1. Access to education for all - Promote access to education for children in deprived and marginalized communities
2. Quality education - To promote and contribute to achieving good learning outcomes in basic schools
3. School governance - To promote and strengthen the functionality of formal and informal education structures for accountable educational governance
4. Equity in Education - To promote inclusiveness, fair allocation, distribution and accountability of education resources

EOL provides funding to School for Life for its Citizen-led Action for Educational Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (CLEAR) project, which was set up, in part, to address the challenges around accountability. CLEAR is a consortium project led by School for Life, with Youth Empowerment for Life (Yefl) Ghana and Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) as implementation partners. The project is funded as an OC2 grantee, meaning it should have a focus on strengthening civil society roles in promoting the transparency and accountability of national education sector policy and implementation. As such, the project broadly aims to support the equitable access to quality basic education for children living in deprived areas of Ghana, by strengthening transparency and accountability. The project is intended to be two and half years long; starting in 2022 and closing in 2024. It operates in 6 districts (East Mamprusi, Nanumba North, Northeast Gonja, Talensi, Tatale-Sanguli and Wa West) across 5 regions (Northern, North-East, Savanna, Upper East and Upper West) (see figure 1), and it targets 2,700 citizens from 180 citizens groups. The specific project objectives are:

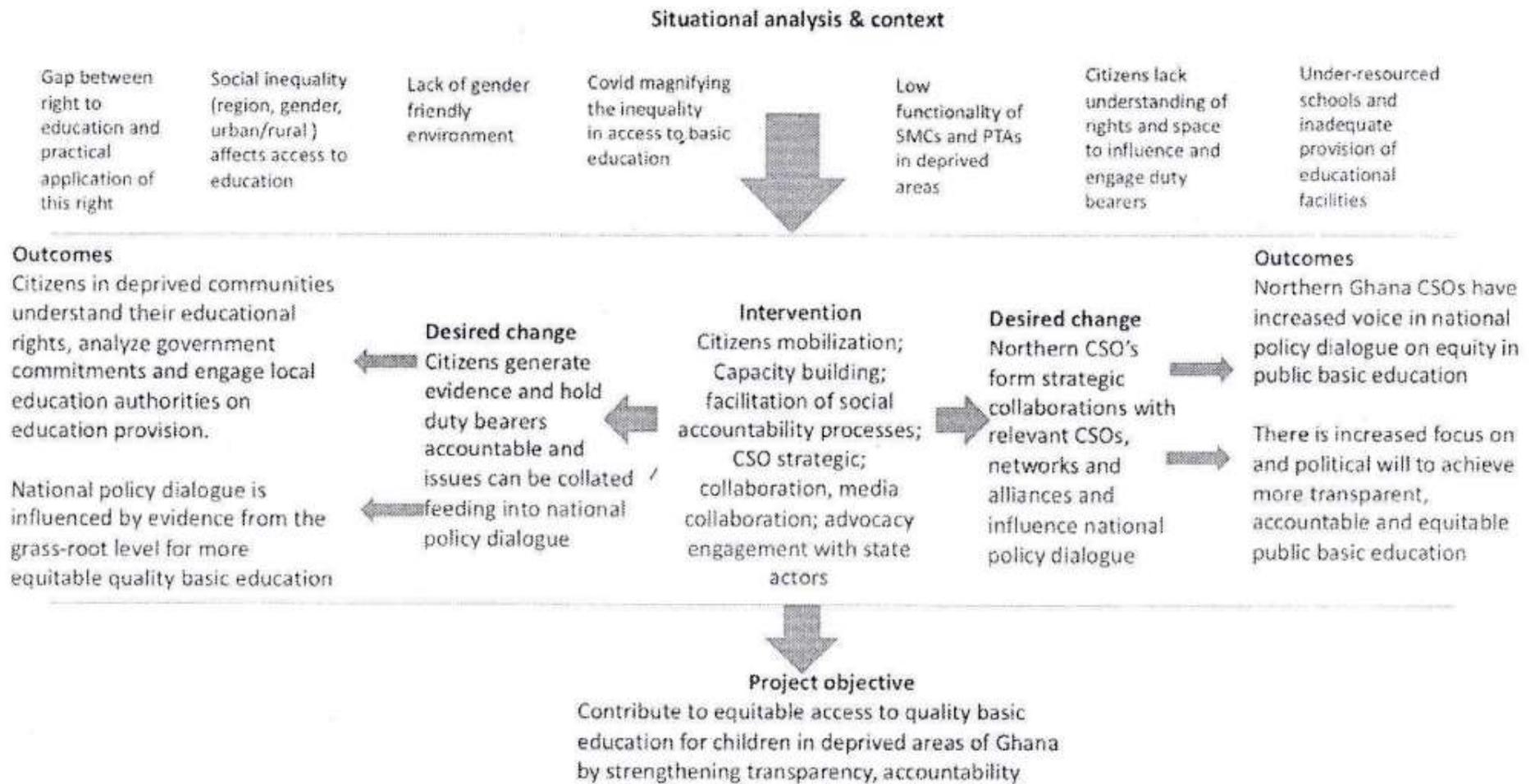
**Figure 1: CLEAR Project Active Regions in Ghana**



1. To mobilize community-based organisations (CBOs) and communities in deprived districts on their education rights and build their capacity to hold education authorities accountable
2. Facilitate citizens to generate evidence on basic education delivery for use in national policy dialogue
3. Enhance the capacity and voice of Northern Ghana CSOs in national policy dialogue on equity in basic education
4. Influence national policy dialogue to promote equity, accountability, and transparency in basic education

These are represented in the CLEAR project theory of change in figure 2 below:

Figure 2: CLEAR Project Theory of Change

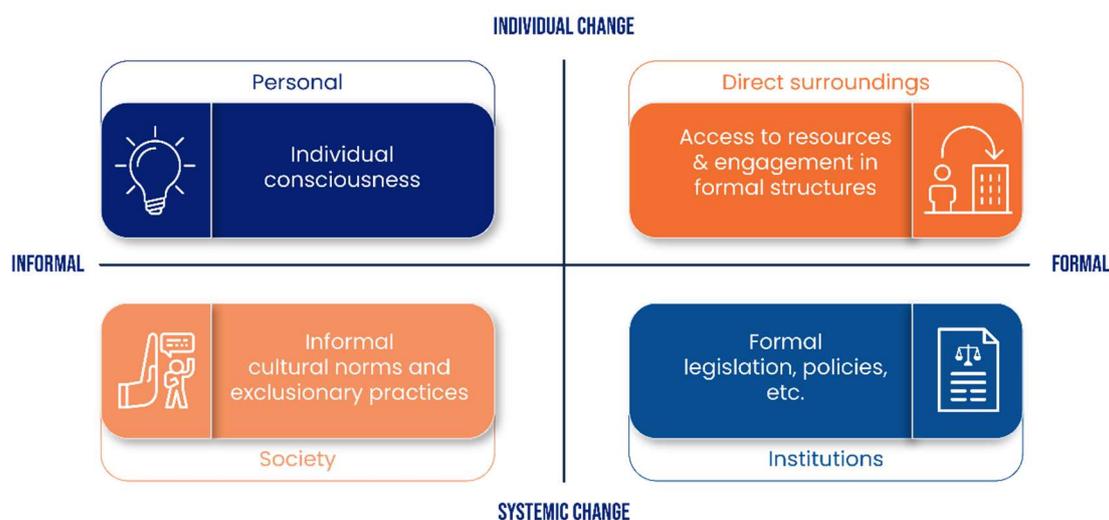


## Action Research Process

### Overall Approach to Case Studies

The research investigated grantee’s API efforts, through a review of their existing approaches with the particular focus on their ToC. The review made use of the Social Change Matrix (SCM) (see figure 3) to identify and review the various underlying key assumption(s) that support pathways to their vision of success. The assumptions were jointly analysed in relation to the relevance and impact of the change in educational systems the grantee wants to bring about, and constituted the basis for an action research project for the grantees to conduct.

**Figure 3: Social Change Matrix**



In addition to reviewing the grantees’s ToC and the development of SCM, additional research included a review of relevant documents, such as, policy and planning reports and other documents related to participatory API activities, and specific background literature in order to better contextualise the research’s focus in each country. Furthermore, each grantee underwent a capacity assessment in order to tailor capacity building activities to their particular needs. Where available, the research also examined any additional evidence-based education API approaches, such as citizen-led assessment (CLA). CLA is an important initiative implemented by CSOs that is supported by the EOL programme. The research explored other approaches to strengthen advocacy for equitable learning outcomes particularly in relation to gender, intersectionality, and social inclusion.

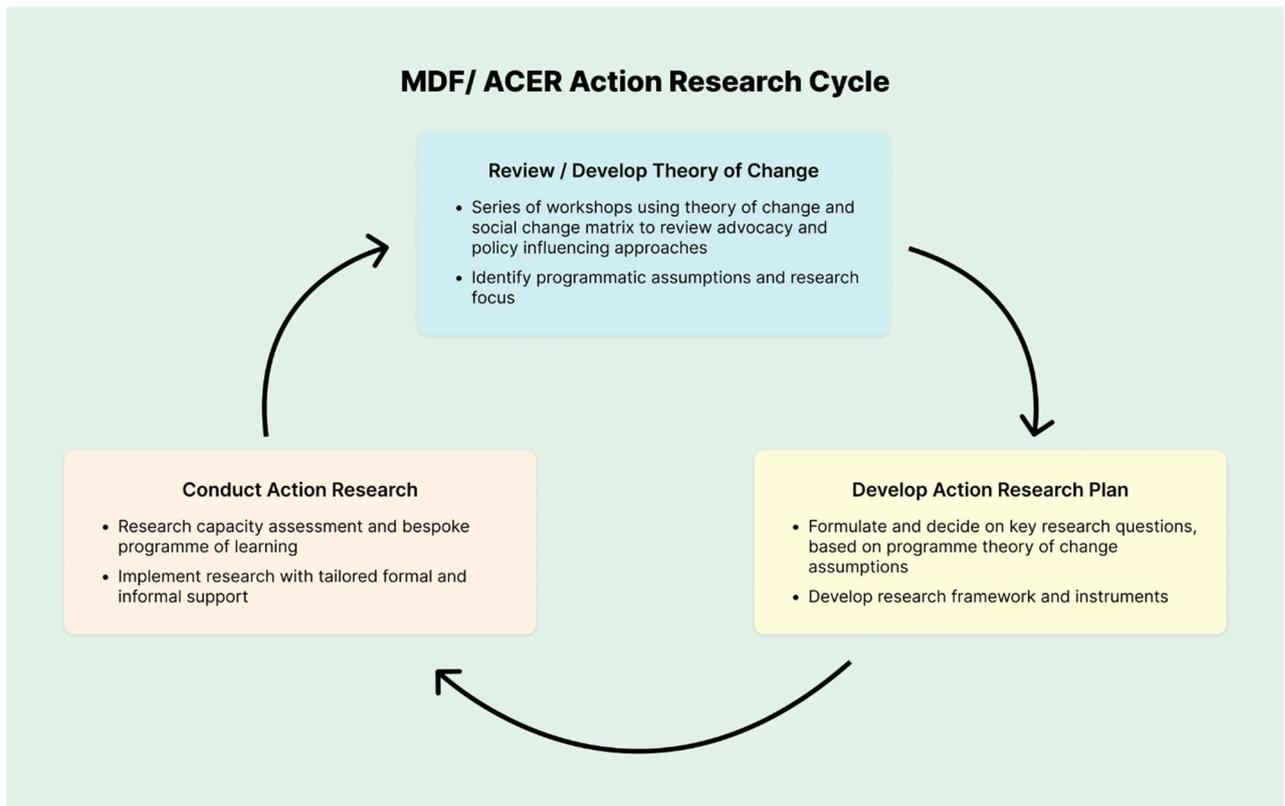
In order to support the development of these case studies, stakeholder consultations were conducted in each country, aligned to the specific research questions of each grantee. Respondents consisted of representatives from the grantees, grantee associate organisations and stakeholders, and the regional management unit (RMU). Where appropriate, other GLPs were contacted in relation to specific actionable learning agenda items or findings, in order to consider any additional inputs they may have, such as suggested literature and similar research findings, as well as to share our knowledge from the research.

In summary, the participatory research consisted of:

- Documents and literature review, including CLAs where available.
- Review of ToC and development of SCM.
- Grantee capacity assessments and tailored capacity building activities.
- Grantee led action research projects.
- Stakeholder consultations.
- Research validation.

This process is captured in figure 4 below:

**Figure 4: Action Research Process**



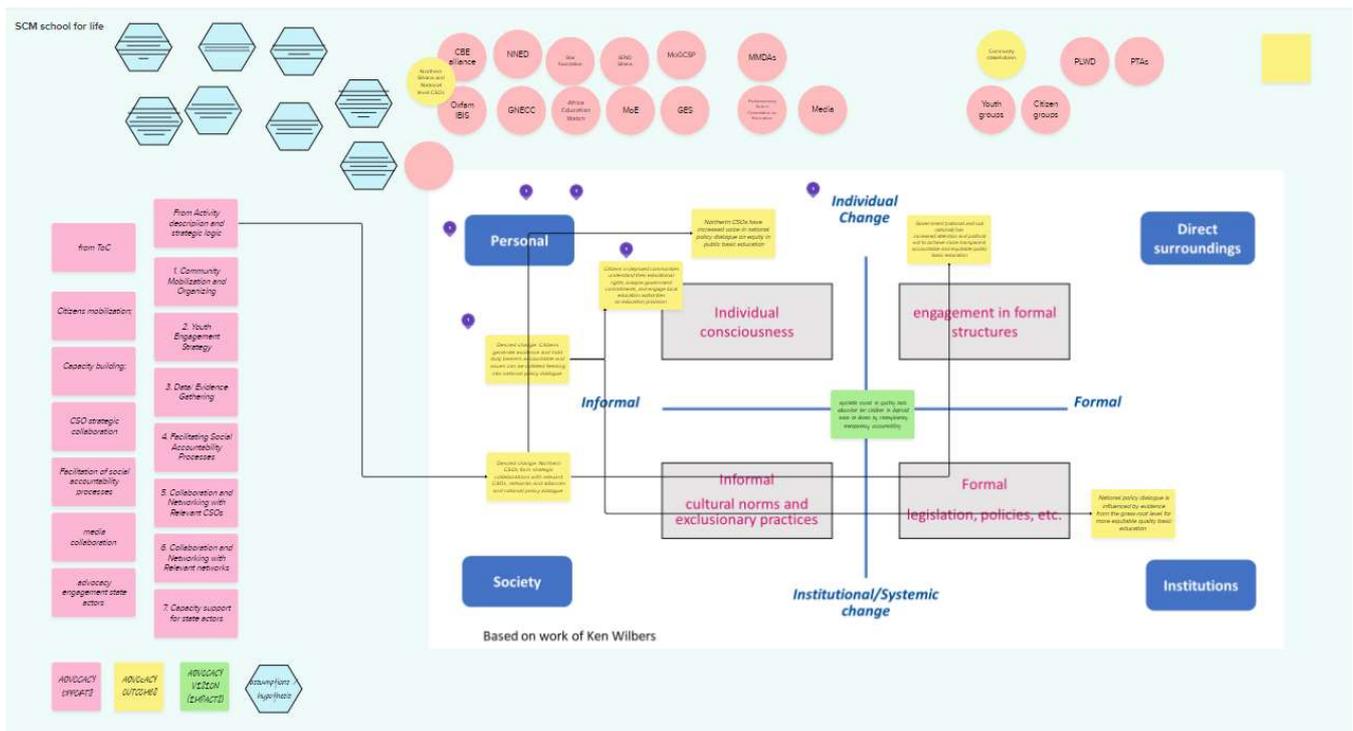
## School for Life Action Research

An agreed part of reviewing School for Life’s approaches to API was to work with them on re-examining their ToC and its associated assumptions, to better understand any gaps in information that is beneficial to the success of the programme. By engaging with their ToC, and by using SCM as a tool to map out the stakeholders influences and underlying assumptions that are needed for the change to succeed, School for Life was able to identify some information gaps that can be addressed via additional action research. School for Life and their associates engaged in the action research project at all stages and successfully completed a piece of action research. This section summarised the activities at each stage of the action research process outlined in figure 5.

## Review and Development

During the review and development stage of the action research cycle outlined in figure 5, School for Life collaborated with the MDF/ ACER to draw out the planning assumptions they had made when developing their ToC, and map them to the SCM. This was done via a number of online workshops, using virtual whiteboard software, and can be seen in figure 5.

**Figure 5: School for Life ToC/ SCM Workshops**



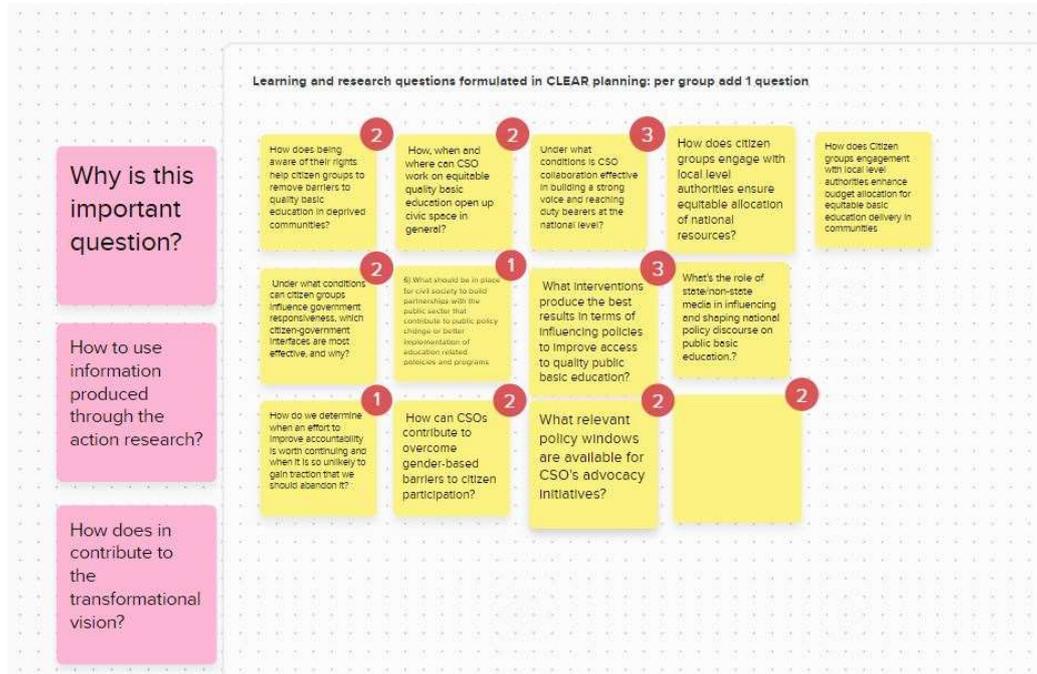
## Develop Action Research Plan

School for Life then moved into the ‘Develop Action Research Plan’ phase of Figure 5. This phase began with an evaluation of the CLEAR project assumptions. This focused on:

- Which assumptions they would like to, or needed to, know more about in order to become more effective as organisation
- What could and would they do with the information gained through action research.

They then were able to prioritise their potential research questions through voting and discussion in an online workshop. This can be seen in figure 6. The yellow squares are some of the main assumptions drawn out of ToC, and the red circles represent votes by School for Life colleagues and their key stakeholders, to prioritise the importance of the research question in relation to realising the main impact of the CLEAR project’s ToC.

**Figure 6: School for Life Assumption Prioritisation and Scoring**



Following this, further prioritisation of potential research questions took place to develop their learning agenda. Key discussions focussed on:

- Who would/ should be involved in collecting the information in the learning agenda?
- How would they use the information, focusing on organisational decisions that would need to be made?
- How useful is it i.e. how would it help them as organisation?
- What were internal and external conditions that needed to be in place for using the information and translating that in revised strategies.
- Deciding on key number of research questions.

This allowed School for Life and their associates to finalise their research questions and framework. The research questions and a summary of their methods can be found below, and the full framework is available in Annex 1.

## Research Questions

The core objective of School for Life's action research was to identify the conditions under which citizen groups can influence government responsiveness; and which citizen-government interfaces are most effective, and why. The following four Research Questions were identified:

1. Do citizens groups have the capacity to influence government responsiveness?
2. To what extent does citizen's awareness and knowledge of their rights affect their ability to demand accountability responsiveness from government?
3. Which citizen's and government engagement spaces exist and which of them are effective?
4. In what ways can existing engagement spaces be made inclusive and effective?

## Methods

School for Life used Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews via an Online Survey to collect the data for this action research project. They collected the data from four of the five regions they are active in, and collected information from a range of stakeholders, including citizen groups, community journalists and girls caucus.

## Conduct Action Research

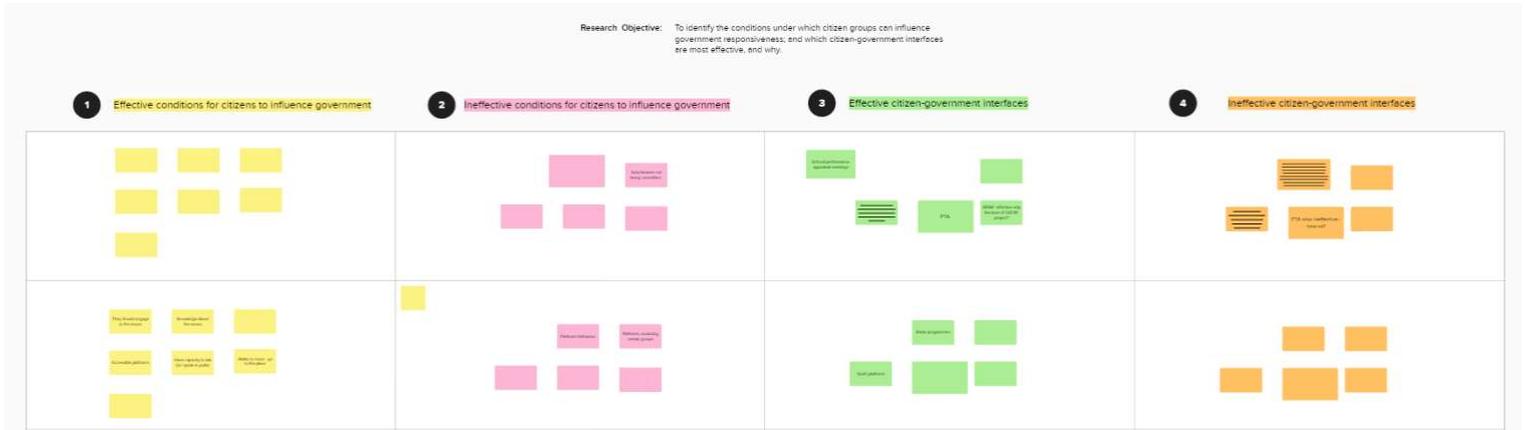
After finalising the research framework, School for Life moved into the next phase of the action research process. This began with MDF/ ACER conducting a capacity assessment of School for Life, in order to develop a bespoke programme of learning. This led to MDF/ ACER delivering capacity building sessions on qualitative data analysis, outcome monitoring and progress markers, and power dynamics. As part of the organisational capacity building, MDF/ ACER also facilitated regular reflection sessions, informal advice, and feedback on research approach, tools, and outputs. With this support, School for Life were able to conduct a successful action research project, which reportedly had a significant impact on organisational learning and management practices. The full report can be found in annex 2.

Once the research was finalised, a validation session was held. This took the form of an online workshop, in which the grantee and their key stakeholders rationalised the findings of the research, and any associated actions, and revisited the SCM and situated their findings within it. Virtual whiteboard software was used to support these sessions and document the discussions. Figures 7 and 8 show this. The main findings from their research are:

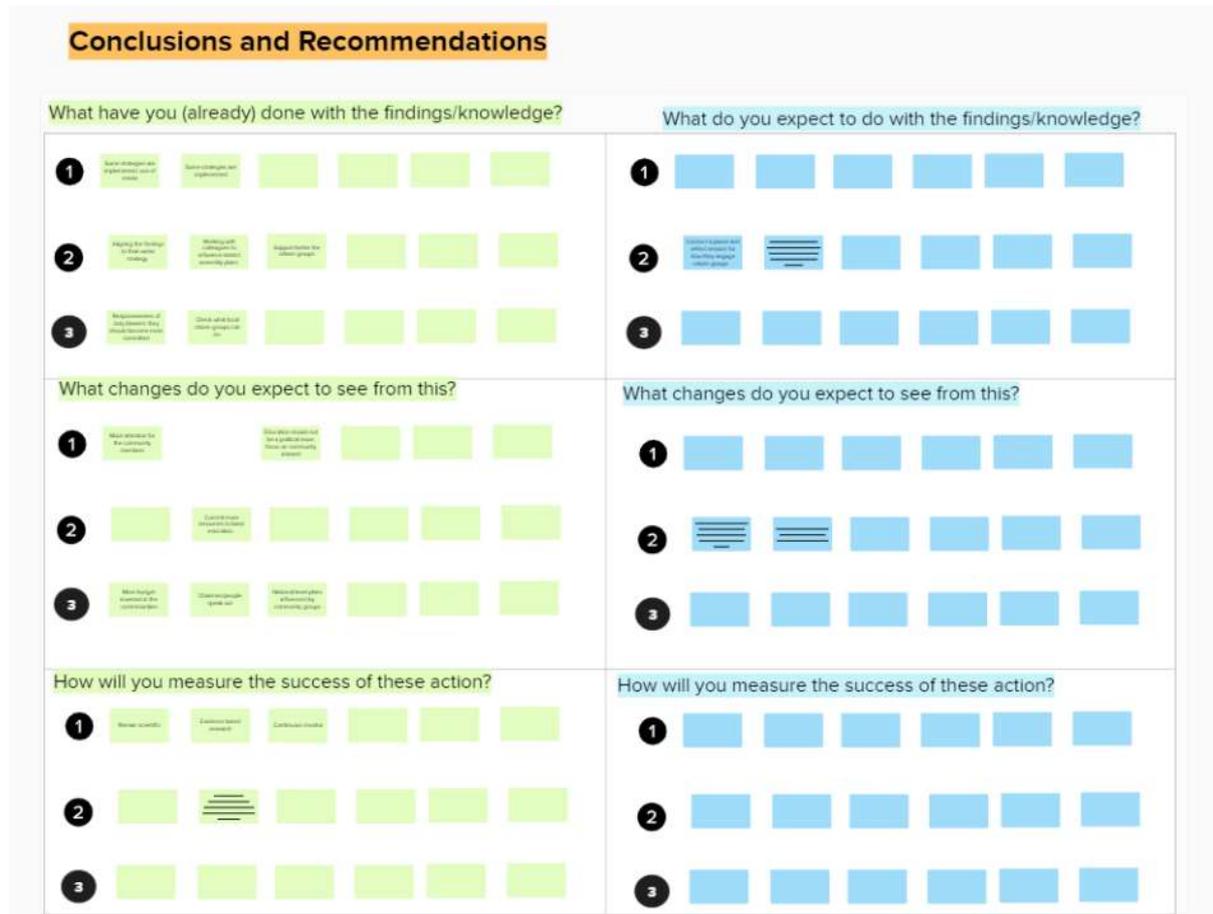
- Citizens are sufficiently knowledgeable of quality basic education service delivery and well positioned to demand accountability.
- Community-level accountability structures are more effective in citizens' pursuit of accountability.
- Ghana Education Service (GES) accountability structures at district level are more friendly and responsive than District Assemblies.
- Communities and citizens have become partisan and this affects their ability to take collective action towards accountability.
- Duty-bearers are committed and facilitate spaces for citizens' demand for accountability.
- Limited resources for duty-bearers is preventing their capacity to be responsive to citizens demand for accountability.
- Remoteness of some communities, partisanship, and tribal and behavioral challenges are barriers affecting accountability and basic education service delivery in communities.

School for Life and their partners shared that they felt the action research project had been very complementary to their work and had supported them to incorporate learning more effectively. The key lessons learnt include the need for robust planning, to be open to new ideas and practices, and that research works. They noted the capacity building session on qualitative data analysis was particularly impactful. The session stimulated many internal discussions within School for Life on how to augment the organisation's evidence analysis and supported them to develop more focus on how they track their strategies effectiveness. Furthermore, the research project supported them to identify gaps in their work. They have already integrated some of the learning on data analysis, conveying impact, and adaptive management into their new EOL proposal.

**Figure 7: Mapping Research Findings Against Research Objectives**



**Figure 8: Breaking Down Actions Resulting from the Research**



## Approach to API

School for Life and the CLEAR project consortium deploy API activities at several stages in their programme. This built into the design of the project, and they advocate at two levels: the national and sub-national level. At the national level, they engage with parliament (specifically the education select committee), centre of policy formation, members of parliament, and officials from the ministry of education. At sub-national level, they engage with a wide variety of organisations, from grassroots community engagement and school leaders to district assemblies and traditional leaders. The focus of their work at the district level is on policy implementation.

Their approach to advocacy takes multiple forms but can be summarised by the collection of evidence on the state of education in a context and then sharing with local and national leaders to affect change. They collect data from a wide range of sources and put it in easy to understand and easy to use packages. In addition to trying to empower citizens to collect as much evidence as possible and supporting them to disseminate it. They shared that they have seen evidence of individuals and communities beginning to mobilise themselves in this regard.

In terms of dissemination, they use mainstream media, social media, and radio to share evidence and reach the public. They also engage with government officials directly. They request formal meetings with MPs from the education select committee, the minister of education, and other officials. They then use the data they have collected to hold officials to account. For example, by comparing their data with targets outlined in the official education sector plans.

As part of this study School for Life, the wider CLEAR consortium, and their partners shared some examples of the API activities. A number of the main examples are shared below.

### School Score Cards

This technique allows citizen groups and CSOs to conduct a needs analysis of their community's schools. The cards use a number of predetermined categories and help the citizens and CSOs prioritise what change is most pressing. Once the score cards are completed and the key issues identified, they then take the information to local leaders and school leadership teams to advocate for change. An example of how this is done, is town hall meetings. In these meetings, key stakeholder, including local leaders and media, will be invited and provided with opportunities to respond to the issues raised and any necessary follow up actions committed to. The organisation reported some API successes using this tool. For example, they had successfully used them to advocate for a range of new school furniture in the localities they operate in (200-300 items of furniture dispatched to some schools).

**Figure 9: School for Life Team Ready to Engage the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education and the Committee on Gender and Children**



In the Ghanaian context, this citizen-led advocacy approach is not only empowering for communities, reportedly offering them different channels to air grievances and opportunities to take control of advocacy and school development, but also complimentary to the state system. This is because schools are mandated by the state to undertake similar needs analysis. However, sometimes they do not or cannot. As such, this supports them to meet their regulatory requirements. There is also evidence of success in this approach being combined with other API strategies. For example, in this context the information gathered is utilised as a primary source of evidence for the youth parliaments, which in turn use it to hold a range of actors to account. This includes school management committees and MPs. A key learning by the organisation, which supports the score card activities, is that they should be made as simple as possible, with no specialist knowledge require, to ensure they are accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. Another key learning is that it is not enough to score a school once. Follow up sessions are necessary to support positive change. See appendix 1 for an example score card.

**Figure 10: Delivery of Furniture to Bakpaba M.A Primary**



## Community Journalists

The community journalists gather grassroots evidence and feed it into other areas of CSO work. For instance, they visited a school, which had no furniture. They documented this and provided the evidence to the youth parliament (detailed below). This then allowed the youth parliament to invite officials to debate the issue. They then were able develop a resolution for stakeholders to take action. Whilst this approach by the CSO provides an engaging way for youth to take ownership of their local challenges, it also put the journalists in situations, which aren't always safe. The CSO cited a number of examples where young girls had been threatened because they had raised issues that offended people. To mitigate for this several actions were taken. These include: providing every journalist with a smartphone (also enhancing the quality of their journalism via pictures and videos); collaborating with security agencies to provide all journalists with identity cards; training not only on the issues they can raise, but also on how they should raise them; and crucially, a screening process, which means those who have views aligned to specific parties are not selected, due to the increased risk associated with political activism.

**Figure 11: Community Journalists and Girls Caucus at a training session Tamale**



## Youth Parliament

The Ghanaian CSOs included in this study either established or supported the activities of a youth parliament, which mirrors the work of the national parliament. This gives youth an opportunity to debate current policy issues and advocate for change from the youth perspective. There is some evidence that this type of forum is effective in influencing policy in Ghana. For example, the youth parliament was able to influence the building of additional teacher accommodation. This particular issue was first picked up by the community journalists. The information was fed into the parliament, and then the grantee was able to further raise the profile of the issue via media exposure. This highlights the importance of creating a holistic and complementary ecosystem, which empowers youth to be active in the policy debate and generate their own evidence to support their priorities.

## Girls Caucus

The girls caucus is a relatively small-scale initiative, with a membership of between 15 and 35 girls. However, it has shown promising signs of impact. The caucus provides a safe space for young girls to speak about issues that affect them, in addition to an hour radio spot, which provides a platform for them to mobilise their priority issues. Examples of issues raised include sexual harassment, sanitary pads, and lack of changing rooms at school. There is evidence to suggest this has directly supported young girls who are at risk of childhood marriage. At least five girls have been in touch with the female caucus directly and, the caucus was able to report these cases to local level actors, such as the traditional authorities, the police, education services, and the PTA, which were able to intervene.

**Figure 12: Community Journalists and Girls Caucus at a training session Tamale**



## The CLEAR Hour

The 'CLEAR hour' is a talk show, which gives youth a platform to discuss advocacy and policy issues important to them. This takes place on radio and runs one or two times per week. The importance of mapping radio stations, to understand which have the widest engagement and listenership was stressed. This strategy not only provides an exciting platform, which youths can present evidence from their local area and speak on issues they are passionate about, but it is also an effective way to engage policy makers and politicians, as if they do not attend, the young hosts will only present one side of the argument.

## Documentaries

Developing short documentaries to highlight areas for action was also another technique highlighted by multiple organisations in this research. CSOs go into under resourced schools (and other public service environments) with film crews to highlight the need for support. They then air the footage on TV, at a prime time. There is evidence to suggest this type of strategy is effective in influencing positive change. However, it should be noted that this is not always at the policy level, with examples of high worth individuals providing additional resources to deprived settings. School for Life shared a particularly good example of this type of activity. The project was titled 'School of Shame', and is a short series of documentaries, in which the organisation shares grassroots school challenges. An episode from the series is linked to the right.



## Regional Learning Event

Having concluded the action-research and validated the action-research findings on 18th September, SfL, and MDF/ACER in close collaboration with RMU WCA jointly organised a knowledge and experience sharing Learning Event/Workshop in the last week of November. This was to share the action-research outcomes and learning with a cross section of OC2 EOL grantees in the WCA region with EOL funded projects that have a similar focus to SfL.

The learning event was intended to support EOL grantee participants to reflect on their practices. Furthermore, the event was designed to enable grantees in the WCA region who did not participate in the action-research and learning process to learn from the main stages of the process and connect these to their own reality in API for Inclusive Education.

27 participants attended the learning event/ workshop. They were drawn from Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone EOL OC2 grantees in the RMU WCA region involved in citizen-led education advocacy, SfL and the CLEAR consortium members who participated in the action-research, MDF/ACER facilitators, RMU WCA staff and interpreters.



Specific Objectives:

1. EOL grantees are exposed to the experience of School for Life and the overall research results.

2. EOL grantees work with the theory of change as an instrument to explore social change and stakeholder behaviour.
3. EOL grantees identify assumptions in need for further actionable research.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Results of the learning event/workshop guides the adaptation of advocacy and influencing strategies by grantees.
2. An actionable commitment by EOL grantee participants to an action plan eg. They can develop their actionable research connected to their theory of change

Methodology

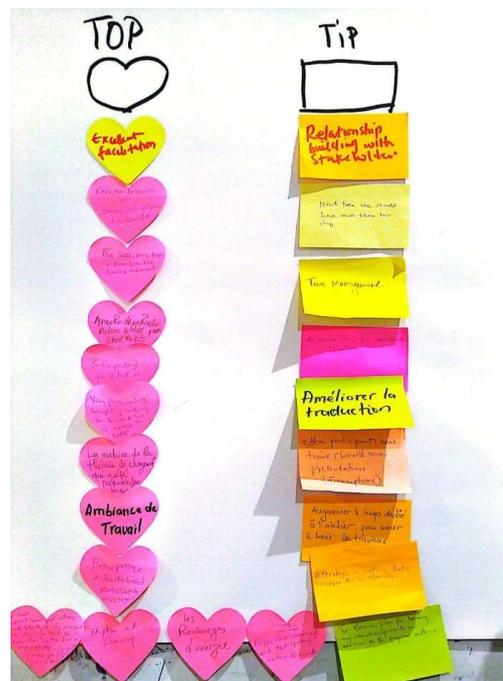
The workshop was participatory and inclusive, with a focus on learning from each other. This included work modalities such as group discussions and brainstorming, mapping exercises, and dialogue practice sessions. The workshop modalities ensured that all participant voices were heard and included in the discussion.

Valuing the role of the participants in advocacy and policy influencing activities, facilitation of the learning event included reflective moments so participants will use the findings and commit to adapted action. The Social Change Matrix was used to structure participants' ideas, experiences so they can develop their actionable research connected to their theory of change. The agenda for the learning event can be seen in appendix 2.

Reflections

Participants demonstrated via a number of learning moments that their own experiences were comparable with the journey of CLEAR and the theoretical framework studied during the workshop was relevant to them. As such, commitments were made to implement a stronger evidence based strategy in their advocacy and influencing actions.

Workshop attendees, the CLEAR consortium, and the WCA RMU reported that the learning event methodology was highly appreciated and, in turn, the event was relevant and highly impactful for all parties. This was reinforced by the WCA RMUs indication that they would like the MDF/ ACER consortium to be involved in the capacity development of additional OC1, 2, and 3 EOL grantees.



## Conclusion

The overall objective of the research was to investigate, review and learn from School for Life and their partners' education API efforts, with the aim to identify strategies and practices that have shown to be effective in instigating change at local, regional and education system levels, and shed some light on the conditions that have contributed to their effectiveness.

The process started by School for Life formulating their research questions and developing their research framework and research tools. The SCM was used to review the ToC and ToC assumptions, which was the main input for formulating the key research questions. School for Life implemented the research by integrating it in their planned research activities. After the research was concluded, ACER/ MDF facilitated a ToC validation workshop with School for Life to reflect on the ToC/ SCM and check the assumptions. The ToC/ SCMs was updated and refined at this stage.

School for Life produced a piece of research, the findings of which allowed them to make adaptations and improvements to their API activities. Nevertheless, additional follow-up research will be needed to understand the longer-term impact of the project, particularly in relation to adaptive management practices.

As a final step in the process, an in-person workshop was co-facilitated by School for Life and MDF/ ACER to share the findings with School for Life's CSO network partners and other West Africa-based EOL grantees.

The next steps are for EOL grantees and sub-grantees (CSO network) to find common ground and have aligned their agendas with regards to advocacy for inclusive primary education. School for Life and their partners' reflections on this action research project, conducted in collaboration with MDF/ ACER can be found in the testimonials to the right.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Score Card Example

# CLEAR PROJECT

## Scorecard Template for Citizen Monitoring of Service Delivery in Education

<b>Name of Region:</b>		<b>District:</b>	
<b>Name of Facility Assessed:</b>		<b>Community:</b>	
<b>Period of Assessment:</b>	<b>From:</b>	<b>To:</b>	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>% SCORE</b>	
<b><u>Assessment Areas</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b> 0 = No satisfaction 0.5 = Partial satisfaction 1 = Full satisfaction	<b><u>Reasons</u></b>	<b><u>Follow up Actions Required</u></b>
<b>THEME 1.0. THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE/SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT</b>			
1.1. Availability/Appropriateness of Classrooms for teaching and learning (i.e. number of classrooms, (KG, Prim./JHS), size, ceiling, floors, etc.)			
1.2. Availability of headmaster's office			
1.3. Availability of staff common room and store room			
1.4. Adequacy and appropriateness of furniture in classrooms (chalkboard, chairs, tables, cupboard, etc)			
1.5. Accessibility of school building to PWDs (i.e. ramps, rails, detached chairs, tables, etc.)			
1.6. Maintenance of the school building			
1.7. Security of the school (does the school has a day and/or night security, etc.)			
1.8. Availability of, and maintenance of playground.			
1.9. Encroachment on School lands			
<b>TOTAL SCORE: Physical Structure:</b>		<b>% SCORE:</b>	
<b>THEME 2.0. STAFFING (HEADTEACHER AND TEACHERS).</b>			
2.1. Availability of staff with the required number			
2.2. Availability of staff with the right qualification			
2.3. Regular attendance and punctuality of staff (from attendance book)			
2.4. Tracking of teacher's attendance (availability of attendance book, etc.)			
<b>TOTAL SCORE, Staffing:</b>		<b>%SCORE</b>	

<b>THEME 3.0. GENERAL TEACHING AND LEARNING</b>			
3.1. Pupils' attendance to school (register)			
3.2. Availability and adequacy of Teaching and Learning Materials.			
3.3. Availability of School/class Library			
3.4. Coaching/support to teachers			
3.5. Teacher-pupil ratio			
3.6. Pupil-textbook ratio			
3.7. Availability of teaching and learning materials for PWDs (inclusive education)			
3.8. Supervision of teaching and learning			
<b>TOTAL SCORE, General Teaching:</b>		<b>%SCORE</b>	
<b>THEME 4.0. SCHOOL FEEDING, HEALTH AND SANITATION</b>			
4.1. Availability of School Canteen for the School Feeding Programme (SFP)			
4.2. Availability and adequacy of Water in the school			
Availability of storage facilities for the school			
Availability of containers, cups, hand wash basins and <i>tissues</i>			
4.3. Availability and adequacy of first aid facilities			
4.4. A functioning SHEP/Coordinator for the school			
4.5 Availability and adequacy of gender sensitive toilet and urinal facilities			
4.6. Availability and adequacy of dustbins/ disposal pits/sites			
4.7. Availability and adequacy of cleaning materials (brooms, brushes, dusters, soap etc.)			
<b>TOTAL SCORE, School Feeding:</b>		<b>%SCORE</b>	
<b>THEME 5.0. PA AND SMC</b>			
5.1. Existence of SMC			
5.2. Functionality of SMC			
5.3. Existence of PA			
5.4. Functionality of PA			
5.5. Community involvement in School management			
<b>TOTAL SCORE, PA &amp; SMC:</b>		<b>%SCORE</b>	
<b>OVERALL TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>OVERALL %SCORE</b>	

**EDUCATION COMMUNITY SCORECARD (CSC) ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE**

<b>NAME OF FACILITY:</b>				
<b>DISTRICT:</b>			<b>REGION:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>				
<b>Problem description</b>	<b>Action description</b>	<b>Stakeholder/ Collaborators</b>	<b>Person(s) responsible (Owner)</b>	<b>Deadline (Date)</b>

**EDUCATION DIALOGUE MEETING PLAN OF ACTION TEMPLATE**

<b>NAME OF FACILITY:</b>			
<b>DISTRICT:</b>		<b>REGION:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>			
<b>Problem description</b>	<b>Commitment on the Issue</b>	<b>Person responsible (Owner)</b>	<b><i>Deadline (Date)</i></b>

## Appendix 2: Learning Event Agenda

<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Persons Responsible</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	Arrival of Participants in Accra and Check in at the Hotel	EOL Regional Prog. Assistant EOL Reg. Finance Assistant
<b>DAY 1: Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023</b>		
8.30 – 9.00	Registration of participants	EOL Regional Prog. Assistant EOL Reg. Finance Assistant
9.00 – 9.30	Setting the Climate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome</li> <li>Introductions,</li> <li>House-keeping matters</li> </ul>	EOL Regional Education Advisor (RMU WCA) EOL Regional Prog. Assistant/EOL Reg. Finance Assistant
9.30 - 9.40	Opening Remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Programme Manager</li> <li>Oxfam in Ghana Country Director</li> </ul>	EOL Regional education advisor (RMU WCA) moderating
9.40 – 10.30	Aligning Expectations   Check- in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants expectations</li> <li>Objectives of the Learning Event; Workshop Methodology; Expected Outcomes</li> </ul>	SfL-MDF-ACER
<b>10.30 – 11.00</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>Hotel/EOL Reg Prog. Assist</b>
11.00 – 11.40	The CLEAR journey: Presentation The MDF/ACER Global Journey	SfL MDF-ACER
11.40 – 13.00	Plenary: Q&A	
<b>13.00 – 14.00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>Hotel/EOL Reg Prog. Assist</b>
14.00 – 15.00	Do it : from theory of change to social change: in peer groups	SfL-MDF-ACER
15.00 – 15.30	Plenary: feedback & Q&A	
<b>15.30 – 16.00</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>Hotel/EOL Reg. Prog. Assist</b>
16.00 – 17.00	Do it: from social change to stakeholder analyses: in peer groups.	MDF-ACER
17.00 – 17.30	Plenary Session: feedback & Q&A	
17.30	Close	
<b>DAY 2: Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023</b>		
8.30 – 9.00	Registration of participants	EOL Reg. Prog. Assist./EOL Reg. Fin. Assist.
9.00 – 9.10	Check-in/Recap	MDF-ACER
9.10 9.30	Presentation CLEAR Project: plan and results	SfL
9.10 – 10.30	Do it: Analysing the assumptions.	MDF-ACER
<b>10.30 – 11.00</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>Hotel/EOL Reg Prog. Assist./ EOL Reg. Finance Assist.</b>
11.00 – 12.30	Do it: Vote for the assumption to be researched upon	SfL-MDF-ACER

<b>12.30 – 13.30</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>Hotel/EOL Reg Prog.</b>
13.30 – 14.30	Presentation of the research mix and promising approaches and actions	SfL-MDF-ACER
14.30 – 15.00	Plenary: Q & A	
<b>15.00 – 15.30</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>Hotel/EOL Reg. Prog. Assist./ EOL Reg. Finance Assist.</b>
15.30 – 16.10	Do it: Peer exchange and identifying best practices.	SfL-MDF-ACER
16.10 – 16.30	Mapping in plenary.	
16.30 – 17.00	Closing Remarks	Rep. of participants Regional Programme Manager
17.00	Close	

## Annex 1: Research Framework

### Action research on:

Understanding under what conditions can citizen groups influence government responsiveness; and which citizen-government interfaces are most effective, and why.

### Background

At the beginning of 2023, MDF/ACER in consultation with Regional Management Unit (RMU) proposed to SfL to participate as MDF/ACER case studies research into EOL Advocacy approaches. Part of the case study involves SfL conducting action research within their CLEAR project. This support, as part of Education Out Loud's global learning partner initiative, envisions to help grantees like SfL achieving their project's outcomes more efficiently while also generating knowledge on education advocacy and policy influencing (API). The action research will concentrate on how civil society organizations (CSOs) engage in API to improve equitable learning outcomes, particularly in relation to gender, intersectionality, and social inclusion.

After two virtual meetings and a series of email communication, SfL agreed to participate in the research. As part of it, MDF/ACER facilitated two workshops in January and February 2023 with the researchers and project management team at SfL to contextualize the social change matrix for CLEAR project and explore the potential research questions. This document is produced as the next step to further elaborate the methodology including research questions, objectives and scope of the action research.

### Objectives and research questions

The core objective of action research to identify the conditions under which citizen groups can influence government responsiveness; and which citizen-government interfaces are most effective, and why. The following four Research Questions are identified:

1. Do citizens groups have the capacity to influence government responsiveness
2. To what extent does citizen's awareness and knowledge of their rights affect their ability to demand accountability responsiveness from government.
3. Which citizen's and government engagement spaces exist and which of them are effective.
4. In what ways can existing engagement spaces be made inclusive and effective?

### Scope

The proposed action research seeks to align with the scheduled activities and priorities of the CLEAR project and aims to support the project in achieving its objectives. SfL will gather data and information on the stated Research Question, by conducting a Focus group (min of 5 different stakeholders) and a selection of interviews (3 per region) in five regions. These regions are:

- Upper East Region
- North-East Region
- Northern Region
- Upper West Region
- Savannah Region

Stakeholders include:

- Citizen Groups
- Community Journalists
- Youth Parliamentarians

- Girls Caucus
- Women Groups
- PTA/SMC Leadership
- Ghana Education Service (GES)
- District Assembly Officials

### Methodology

Aligned with the core objective, this action research will encompass different data collection methods for four Research Questions. Briefly- the timeline, method and research participants are summarized in the following table.

Research Questions	Time	Method of data collection	Research participants
1	April/May	Focus Group Interviews	All stakeholders
2	April/May	Focus Group Interviews	All stakeholders
3	April/May	Documents analysis	All stakeholders
4	April/May	Focus Group Interviews	All stakeholders

### Data collection methods

One Focus Group per region will be held, consisting of representatives from Citizen Groups, Community Journalists, Youth Parliamentarians, Girls Caucus and Women Groups.

In addition, an interview will be held with Ghana Education Service (GES), District Assembly Officials, and a Community Headteacher in each of the four regions.

### Research participants

The respondents for the action research will be mostly recruited from list of participants of activities/events of CLEAR project. For example, SfL works closely with .....

### Timeline

The activities related to Research Questions will be carried out in the following timeline:

Activities	March	April	May	June	July
Finalize Research Design					
Instrument Development					
Data Collection					
Data Analysis					
Validation workshop and ToC revision					
Report					

### Conclusion and next steps

Through this research partnership, SfL will be able to leverage the expertise and resources of MDF and ACER to systematically investigate the CLEAR project, identify areas for improvement, and optimize the project's implementation. Moreover, the partnership will contribute to the advancement of knowledge and best

practices in education advocacy and policy influencing (API), which will have broader implications for the field of education and development.

The next steps are for this action research, in combination with some key document reviews and a few additional consultations with partners, to contribute to an overall understanding of SfL work. A case study report will be produced, highlighting the key findings from this research. Based on the findings, strategies will be developed on how to use the produced knowledge during the implementation of the CLAER project. These strategies may include changes to project activities, modifications to the approach towards API, and targeted advocacy efforts aimed at policymakers and other stakeholders. Ultimately, the goal is to optimize the CLEAR project's implementation and generate new knowledge and best practices for education advocacy and policy influencing.

## Annex 2: School for Life Research Report

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*CITIZENS-LED ACTION FOR EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS PROJECT IN GHANA (CLEAR)*

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### REPORT ON

### MDF/ACER/SCHOOL FOR LIFE ACTION RESEARCH FOR PROJECT STRATEGY LEARNING

2023.



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## **Executive Summary**

The Citizens-Led Action for Educational Accountability and Responsiveness Project in Ghana (CLEAR) being implemented by School for Life, YEF-L-Ghana and the Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) in pursuit, of its learning agenda commissioned research/study in partnership with MDF/ACER with the objective of understanding effective strategies for engaging government and duty bearers on education service delivery. The study also sought to understand the condition under which citizen groups can effectively influence government responsiveness. The study was guided by two main research questions as follows; Under what conditions can citizen groups influence government responsiveness to basic education service delivery; and which citizens-government interfaces are most effective and why?

The study sampled a total of 63 participants across the 6 project districts. The two main approaches used to collect data were Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Respondents were purposively selected from citizen groups and education stakeholders from education directorates in the districts.

The key findings related to existing platforms created by duty bearers for engaging government by citizen groups were identified as follows; PTA meetings at the community level and District Assembly Annual General Meetings. It was noted that the community-initiated ad hoc meetings and PTA meetings were not producing desired change at structural and institutional levels like other platforms. The platforms that citizens used to engage government and duty bearers included; MPs constituency platforms, Assembly Members meetings, PTA/SMC meetings, community self-initiated meetings, petitions, and media engagements.

The study also delved into barriers to effective citizens-government interfaces and identified the remote nature of some communities with inaccessible roads; limited resources of duty bearers to move and engage citizens and partisan politics were some barriers. In bringing about desired change, lack of commitment by government officials and communities was reported as a key inhibitor.

It was also discovered that empowered citizens who understood their educational rights, mobilized citizen groups engaging as a unit on educational issues, and had effective community leadership were some of the conditions necessary for responsive citizens-government interfaces.

The study recommends that School Performance Appraisal Meetings be intensified as one of the effective strategies for engaging duty bearers on educational inequities, mobilizing citizen groups and empowering them to be able to engage authorities on their educational rights, using the media to broadcast and highlight stories from the districts be maintained and strengthened to ensure responsiveness. The girl's caucus radio discussions, and citizen-generated evidence were found to be effective advocacy strategies.

## **1.0 Introduction**

School for Life is a learning organization and is committed to generating knowledge to impact its program implementation. As part of the learning agenda under the Citizens-led Action on Educational Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (CLEAR Project), School for Life and its consortium partners; YEfL-Ghana and GDCA, in collaboration with MDF/ACER conducted this research with the objective of learning, particularly focused on testing the

effectiveness of the project implementation strategies with stakeholders and how that is yielding the desired outputs and outcomes. The following research questions were the focus of the study.

- **Under what conditions can citizen groups influence government responsiveness to basic education service delivery?**
- **Which citizens-government interfaces are most effective, and why?**

As an organization, we are fully committed to integrating collaborative learning and adaptation because it is only through *this* medium, we can effectively learn and ensure successful project implementation.

## **2.0 Background and Purpose of the Study**

The study was conducted across all 6 districts of the CLEAR Project with a total of 63 respondents (38 respondents in the Key Informants Interviews and 25 respondents in the Focus group discussion sessions).

This assessment report is part of the CLEAR project process learning objective and commitment to generating evidence on what works and does not work to inform learning and adaptation among Education Out Loud (EOL) partners. The study objective is to understand how we can optimize outcomes by learning how the project strategies are working or otherwise and the key learnings that can be considered to enhance project implementation.

## **3.0 Methodology**

The study methodology is structured into the tools and methods of data collection, sampling method and sample size and method of data analysis and presentation of findings.

### **3.1 Tools and Methods of Data Collection**

Simple digital questionnaires and interview guides programmed in Google Forms with both open and closed-ended questions were used to collect data from project stakeholders. These stakeholders include; Key Informants from Ghana Education Service, the district assembly and community Assembly members.

### **3.2 Sampling method and Sample size**

The sampling method used for the study was purposive sampling targeted at the project stakeholders. Respondents were selected from the project's various citizen groups and interviewed through focus group discussion sessions and through key Informant interviews. A

total of 63 respondents, 38 respondents from institutional level key Informants Interviews, and 25 respondents from the Focus Group level together formed the sample size.

### **3.3 Method of analysis and Presentation of Findings**

1. Inductive and Deductive method based on subject/themes were used in the organization of data and qualitative responses relative to the research questions and broad learning objective.
2. Descriptive, process, and value coding techniques have been used to identify keywords from key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions around topic areas such as respondents' knowledge, barriers, effectiveness, participation, inclusiveness, opinions, and respondent satisfaction.
3. The study used descriptive analysis of quantitative data into simple count and proportions and these were displayed in charts.
4. The analysis was done based on thematic and content-based categorizations including a summary of qualitative responses using the technique of Key lines of inquiry (KLOE) relative to the broad study questions and specific sub-questions.

### **4.0 Summary of Key Findings**

- Widespread furniture deficit across communities, inadequate teaching and learning resources, poor school buildings, and inadequate teachers are key factors affecting quality education delivery.
- Citizens are sufficiently knowledgeable and are able to describe the components of quality basic education service delivery and are therefore better positioned to demand accountability.
- Community-level accountability structures are more effective in citizens' pursuit of accountability.
- Ghana Education Service (GES) accountability structures at the district level are more friendly and responsive than District Assemblies.
- Radio discussions and sensitization may make the needed impact in terms of their reach and coverage and also because of their potential to bring shed light and draw duty bearers attention to the issues discussed.

- School Performance Appraisal Meetings (SPAMs) are effective as an advocacy tool for accountability
- Communities and citizens have become excessively partisan and this affects their ability to take collective action towards accountability.
- Duty-bearers are committed and also facilitate spaces for citizens' demand for accountability.
- Limited resources for duty-bearers, remoteness of some communities, partisanship, and tribal and behavioral challenges are some of the barriers affecting accountability and basic education service delivery in communities.

**RQ1. Under what conditions can citizen groups influence government responsiveness on basic education service delivery?**

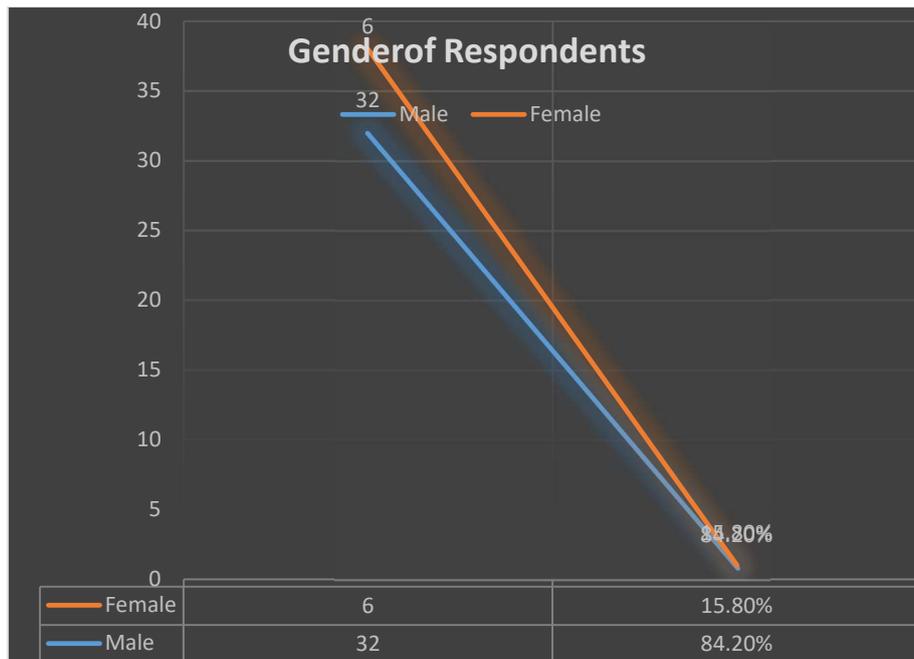
Citizens groups refers to Community-level stakeholders/groups mobilized to lead the Project evidence gathering on gaps and barriers affecting the delivery of quality basic education. These groups include, youth groups, Parents Teachers Associations (PTA), women groups who have been supported in terms of capacity building to support the project advocacy and implementation strategies.

**5.0 Thematic and Content-Based Analysis, Discussion and Presentation of findings.**

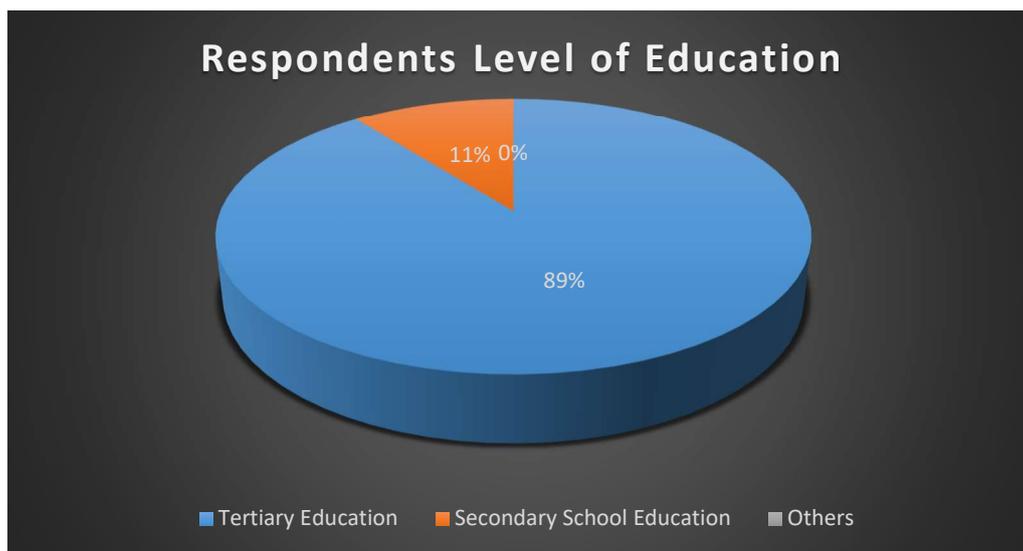
**Discussion of findings from Duty-bearers or Key Informants Interviews**

**5.1 Gender and Education of Respondents:**

Out of a total of 38 respondents who participated in the assessment, 32 (82.2%) were males and 6 (15.8%) were females. In terms of respondents' level of education, 34 (89.5%) of respondents completed tertiary education with about 4 respondents (10.5%) with some secondary school education. These findings show some good level of education in terms of the project institutional stakeholders or duty-bearers and this is a necessary ground for the project strategies and cross-stakeholder learning or joint support in terms of ensuring that the right environment and conditions are created for advocacy and citizen's mobilization and engagements.



**Figure 1. Gender of Respondents**



**Figure 2. Respondents' Level of Education**

### 5.2 Duty-bearers knowledge of their Role

The findings show that all respondents had significant knowledge about their role. Respondents from the Ghana Education Service and the District Assembly outline various points which describe their role. Examples of this include, school governance and oversight, supervision, and teacher support. Respondents from the assembly also outline the key issues of coordination and oversight over basic education, planning, and facilitating citizens/rights holders'

representation, especially through the assembly's decentralized structures and platforms such as the unit committees, the social services sub-committee including the general assembly meetings where the citizens are represented by their elected members. These findings show that stakeholders understand their role and can support the project advocacy strategies.

### **5.3 Respondents' Opinion on the Role of Citizens Groups**

Respondents shared a good level of understanding and appreciation of the role of citizen groups. These range from citizens' school support, monitoring, and supervision, PTA/SMC support, community-level Advocacy on education, collaborations with teachers, and school management. This finding is critical for citizens' and duty-bearers' collaborations and joint action. It can also facilitate the responsiveness mechanisms and platforms by duty-bearers. Once there is a clear understanding that accountability is a shared responsibility, it removes barriers such as suspicion and mistrust between citizen groups and duty-bearers and this can deepen and open-up spaces for accountability.

### **5.4 Impact of Citizens Groups and Duty-bearers' Regular Meetings for Accountability**

All 38 (100%) of respondents agree that the regularity of engagements and meetings with citizen groups is an important condition for accountability. These findings are critical because in many of the CLEAR project communities, we recognized that and we are working to scale up and facilitate such meetings so that issues on accountability are continuously discussed and sustained

### **5.5 Duty-bearers facilitation of citizens Engagement and Nature of engagement**

#### **Platforms**

37 respondents agree that duty-bearers should lead in creating spaces for citizens' engagements. Some of the key platforms outlined by respondents include; District Assembly Annual General Meetings, especially during the preparation of the Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDP), Unit committee meetings, and SPAMs.

### **5.6 Effectiveness of Citizens Engagement Platforms**

The study found that the Parents Teacher Association meetings at the community level, the District Assembly's Annual General Meeting, and the community's own self-action ad-hoc meetings are the most effective however; more could be done to improve and enhance its

effectiveness. These platforms apart from the DA Annual meetings are already part of the CLEAR project known spaces for engagement. The DA annual meetings could be explored and considered more vigorously to see how that could facilitate responsiveness and accountability.

### **5.7 Respondents' Awareness, Participation in Accountability forums, and Issues discussed in these meetings**

Thirty-seven (97.4%) respondents indicated they have participated in accountability forums in the last 12 months with only one respondent indicating non-participation. One key reason found for some citizen's inability to participate is largely due to a lack of formal education which reduces their assertiveness and confidence to participate in the available platforms. Another reason was lack of time among duty bearers. Community-level self-action meetings have been the platforms where the majority of citizens have participated with some 34 respondents identifying it. In terms of the issues discussed, 34 respondents identified the lack of classroom furniture as a major agenda item, 28 respondents also noted community self-action whilst 26 respondents cited poor school building. Apart from these known platforms, 13.2% of respondents also identified radio discussions as another platform for advocacy on educational accountability.

### **5.8 Effectiveness of Strategies and Successes**

Thirty-three (33) representing (86.8%) noted that current advocacy strategies of citizens-led platforms such as youth groups, PTA meetings, girls –caucus and youth parliament, and other democratic citizens-inclusive platforms have enhanced the demand for duty-bearer responsiveness and accountability. Some of the results or successes identified by respondents include; citizens have brought to the attention of duty bearers the furniture deficit situation across many schools in the project communities, there is increased parental involvement and interest in children's education, increased citizen participation in school monitoring and general governance, increased advocacy in districts on educational accountability.

### **5.9 Barriers to Collaborations with Citizens-led Accountability Platforms**

Respondents identified a number of barriers that affect duty-bearers and citizen groups' joint action toward accountability. Some of these barriers include; the remoteness of communities with inaccessible roads, limited resources of duty-bearers to move and engage citizens, partisan politics and entrenched tribalism make engagements with communities and groups very

challenging. According to 10 respondents (27%), the existing CLEAR project platform does not pose challenges.

## **6.0. Analysis of findings from Focus Group Discussion Session**

### **6.1 Respondent's Knowledge of Basic Education**

A total of 25 respondents participated in the Focus Group Discussion session. 15 (60%) were Males and 10 (40%) were females.

Participants across the various districts showed varying knowledge of what exactly describes basic education service delivery and its scope. They all agreed that any condition, material, and services that ensure good quality teaching and learning in a school is what constitute basic education service delivery.

Respondents were unanimous about the poor state of basic education service delivery in their respective districts. They identified a lack of classroom furniture, textbooks, poor school buildings, and teacher inadequacy as the major and commonest challenges affecting basic education service delivery in Ghana.

### **6.2 Respondents' Perspectives on Elements of Quality Basic Education**

Findings showed that in terms of what elements or conditions can facilitate basic education service delivery, participants identified the provision of adequate furniture for the pupils, provision of adequate and better textbooks in line with the new curriculum, construction of the additional classroom block, and renovation of the old ones, teacher inadequacy, poor parental involvement as the challenges affecting basic education in the districts.

The furniture issue is a major challenge and the District Assembly is expected to be responsive in addressing that as noted painfully by a participant in the Gbangu community of East Mamprusi district in the quote below;

***'The furniture issue is affecting our schools and the Assembly is supposed to provide that furniture and the classrooms. Unfortunately, they are not able to meet our demands. Currently, we have no furniture for the lower primary. The textbooks too we haven't received anything from the Ghana Education Service since the time the new curriculum started'***

Another participant also noted that,

***‘Parents and NGOs have to support. The government institutions continue singing songs. Whatever you demand from them they will give you a positive answer but action will not be taken. Sometimes they even find it difficult to come and assess the situation to get to know the issues. They are not proactive’***

This finding shows that citizens are speaking out and are active in terms of contributing to the identification of challenges affecting schools in their communities. They do not however find encouraging the responsiveness of duty bearers in the provision of the needs of basic education.

### **6.3 Citizens groups Strategies for engagement with duty-bearers on accountability**

In terms of the strategies used by citizens in interfacing with duty-bearers on basic education accountability, the study found that members of parliament’s constituency platforms, Assembly members meetings, PTA/SMC meetings, community self-meeting, petitions, and demonstrations are some of the strategies citizens groups use to demand accountability from duty-bearers. Below is a view of a participant during in the FGD session as quoted:

***‘We also use other platforms like the media, especially social media to get our issues heard by these institutions. The official platforms are no longer very effective. These days the use of the media is an effective way to get leaders to address their educational issues’***

Participants also found a number of barriers affecting their collective pursuit of accountability. They outlined challenges such as political interference, the poor commitment of some leaders, lack of unity for communal collective action, ignorance of some community members, etc. A participant was captured as she lamented in the quote below;

***‘Family and friends’ issues. Sometimes your own community members will tell you not to insist on your issues because some of the leaders are related to them. They think that you are giving those leaders a bad name. The level of ignorance in this area is high, especially in this community. People don’t even understand that is their right to demand for services from government institutions. They will sit down without even knowing where to go with their issues’***

## **6.4 Impact or Successes of Citizens Groups Strategies on Basic Education**

### **Accountability**

The study found that some successes have been chalked in varying ways across districts and communities. Participants noted that attempts and minimal efforts have been made in the provision of furniture though a significant deficit still exists, Former students' support to schools is also emerging in some communities, a lot more teachers are deployed to schools now, and communities are contributing to the school feeding program, school governance, and community collaborations have also improved in some districts and communities. Below is what a participant had to say;

*'For us here we can show some examples of results we got from our engagements. That's how now we have full complement of teachers we need and we have been promised furniture this time around. They appear to now be listening to just a bit but is from our effort because of the persistent follow-up we are making. If you don't make follow-ups the institutions will not voluntarily engage you'*

In terms of collaborations, participants identified the School for Life CLEAR Project as a key partner and collaborator through the youth association.

*'School for Life is the only organization working in this community and through the project, we are understanding the need to speak up on our issues for us to get help. We sometimes also collaborate with the unit committees as well.'*

**RQ2: Which citizens-government interfaces are most effective, and why**

### **6.5 Citizens Group Awareness of Platforms for Accountability**

Participants in this focus group indicated they have used various citizen-government platforms. They outline various platforms such as Town Hall Meetings

### **6.6 Citizens Groups Use and Participate in Available Accountability Platforms**

- District Assembly General Meetings
- Community level Accountability meetings (including the CLEAR Project created platforms)
- Assembly Committee Meetings,
- Meetings with Assembly members at Electoral Areas
- Unit Committee Meetings,

- District Education Review Meetings,
- School Performance Appraisal Meetings
- Budget Hearings
- District Assembly Medium Term Planning Consultation Meetings,
- Assemblies Annual Review Sessions.

Participants have a preference for these various platforms based on their context including accessibility, inclusiveness, and participatory nature of these platforms. Below is a quote from a participant.

***‘As a community, we will have to create some engagement platforms and also take advantage of those at the Assembly level. Sometimes GES are more accessible than the Assembly but in terms of resources they are handicapped’***

In terms of the effectiveness of these platforms, participants identified SPAM platforms, PTA/SMC including other community-level platforms as the most effective in supporting the strategies of the CLEAR project. This is because the project since its inception has worked with various groups across the project districts.

### **6.7 Barriers to Accountability**

Participants identified weak responsiveness from district-level duty bearers such as the Ghana Education Service and the District Assembly whom they noted as the agencies responsible for resolving challenges of basic education at the sub-national and in their view these public agencies not been effective in their responsiveness to citizens demand for accountability.

### **6.8 What can be done to enhance the effectiveness of Accountability?**

In terms of what can be done to enhance the effectiveness of the citizen-government interfaces, participants outlined the following: Citizens must be educated to know why they have to engage, citizens must also be educated about the available channels of engagement, proper channels or platforms must be created especially at the community level e.g., Town Hall, Advocacy Groups/ Networks at the community level must be strengthened

### **7.0 Conclusions**

- The study made various findings relative to the research questions which include; under what conditions can citizen groups influence government responsiveness to basic education service delivery?
- Which citizens-government interfaces are most effective, and why?

Some of these include; widespread furniture deficit across communities, inadequate teaching and learning resources, poor school buildings, and inadequate teachers are key factors affecting quality education delivery. Citizens are sufficiently knowledgeable and are able to describe the components of quality basic education service delivery, and are therefore better positioned to demand accountability.

The research also found that,

- Community-level accountability structures are more effective in citizens' pursuit of accountability.
- GES accountability structures at the district level are more friendly and responsive than District Assemblies, radio discussions and sensitization may make the needed impact in terms of their reach and coverage, and also because of their potential to bring shame to duty-bearers.
- SPAM sessions are effective as an advocacy tool for accountability.
- Communities and citizens have become excessively partisan and this affects their ability to take collective action towards accountability.
- Duty-bearers are committed and also facilitate spaces for citizens' demand for accountability.
- Limited resources for duty-bearers are preventing their capacity to be responsive to citizens demand accountability.
- The remoteness of some communities, partisanship, and tribal and behavioral challenges are some of the barriers affecting accountability and basic education service delivery in communities.

## **8.0 Recommendations**

1. The project needs to relook at its efforts and relationship with the various MMDAs. This relationship should be deliberate and more focused on influencing their commitment to basic education accountability. The MMDAs are responsible for many of the needs of basic education such as furniture provision, and provision of school buildings towards enhancing access and equity issues in education. The project team needs to target opportunities within these MMDAs such as the appropriate committees, the preparation of the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP), and the District Assembly Action Plans and budgeting through lobbying and co-sponsoring of strategic related events and activities such as DEOCs/MEOCs.

2. The project should have a more and deliberate interest in organizing SPAMs in all project Districts through material and limited financial assistance to schools. School Performance Appraisal Meetings (SPAMs) are critical school governance platforms connecting citizens to duty-bearers, yet they are not conducted in ways that could produce the needed outcomes. District GES and schools are committed to this accountability tool but the lack of resources to organize this is affecting the regularity of SPAMs.
3. The project may also consider a more structured and measurable results-driven media strategy at the district level. The Community radio stations are available in communities and districts and so the project may go into simple MOUs with radio stations to facilitate the provision of airtime/spaces to encourage DAs/GES and project staff to regularly drive sensitization on agencies' responsiveness and citizens' right to accountability.
4. The project may also consider the design of an innovative Social Behavior Change and Social Norms Campaign model or activity(s) such as community activation drives, durbars, and tailored VSLAs, targeted at encouraging parents and communities on education.