



## RURAL EDUCATION OWNERSHIP INITIATIVE

Rural Education Ownership Initiative (REOI) is an advocacy initiative designed by the African Center for Democracy and Socio-economic Development (CDS Africa) to promote infrastructure investments and learning outcomes for rural basic schools or pupils in line with Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4) and article 36 clause 2(d) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. The SDG 4 urges member countries to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



# Rural Education Ownership Initiative

## 1. Introduction

Rural Education Ownership Initiative (REOI) is an advocacy initiative designed by the African Center for Democracy and Socio-economic Development (CDS Africa) to promote infrastructure investments and learning outcomes for rural basic schools or pupils in line with Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4) and article 36 clause 2(d) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. The SDG 4 urges member countries to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The provisions of article 36 clause 2(d) offer a legitimate avenue for REOI's advocacy for deliberate government interventions to bridge the education outcome gap between rural and non-rural schools.

There was a grand carnival in 2020 when Thomas Amoaning, a student of Adeiso Presbyterian Senior High School, a rural community in the Eastern region of Ghana, passed his final exams with straight **As**. The pomp was primarily about how Thomas, a product of rural schools, had braced the odds to excel. The government consequently offered Thomas a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom. Inherent in the celebration of Thomas' performance is an admission of the poor outcomes for rural school pupils or students. Besides Thomas, in 2020, hundreds, if not thousands of students made straight **As**, but very little fanfare attended their performance. The difference in celebration is thus attributable to whether a student is a rural or non-rural school product.

Evidently, rural education has known problems that require considerable policy adjustments to ensure that all pupils can succeed academically, unrelated to attending a rural or non-rural school. The REOI initiative aims to promote quality learning opportunities through direct community action and sustained advocacy to prioritize rural schools.

The initiative has three main modules: Education awareness promotion (EAP), education support center (ESC), and rural education infrastructure advocacy (REIA). We intend to implement these modules in partnership with rural communities, government agencies, local and international organizations towards achieving inclusive and equitable learning opportunities and outcomes for all pupils.

We recognize and commend the interventions of successive governments that have contributed to bridging the rural-urban education access and inequality gap. For instance, the Northern Scholarship Programme pays tuition fees for students from Northern Ghana, while the Capitation Grant Policy abolished tuition fees in all public schools.

The National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) and Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP) are perhaps the most pro-rural interventions implemented by the government thus far. The National School Feeding Programme provides daily hot meals for pupils in public schools. The programme currently feeds more than **3 million pupils** daily. The GALOP, on the other hand, is designed to invest about **\$219 million** to improve education in ten thousand low performing primary

### Article 36 clause 2(d)

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schools in all districts across the country. While GALOP is not exclusive to rural schools, it is more likely to benefit rural schools because most low-performing schools are in rural areas.

## **2. The Rationale for Rural Education Ownership Initiative**

Rural basic schools and pupils are being left behind, and governments have not been deliberate with their observance of 36 2(d), which mandates balanced rural-urban development. Some of the symptoms of the poor state of rural schools can be traced to the growing number of street children, street vending or begging and head portorage (kaya ye).

Most children on the streets are migrants from rural communities to the cities searching for menial jobs instead of being in school. This is because Ghana's growth in education has inadvertently created two worlds—the rural and non-rural school worlds. At CDS Africa, we believe that all our pupils and students should be given equal opportunities to excel. To achieve equity, REOI proposes an aggressive observance of article 36 clause 2(d), a shift to a policy regime that targets rural schools with tailored interventions to bridge the gap.

The three REOI modules were developed from observation and appraisal of EMIS Data and focus group discussions with pupils, teachers, parents, and opinion leaders. The participants raised several issues, which we have categorized under three broad themes: poor infrastructure, lack of teacher motivation and retention, and inhibiting local precepts and anecdotes.

The references made to poor infrastructure and teacher motivation are well-documented issues. What was revealing were the precepts and anecdotes described as factors that inhibit school attendance in rural communities. For instance, participants believed that “education is for the rich and people in the cities.” They recounted stories of children dropping out of school, especially girls, due to stories that – “education or schooling hurts girls’ chances to get husbands”. The insights from these interactions show that the challenges are multi-dimensional and confirm the need for a contextual and inclusive approach.

## **3. The Goal**

The goal of REOI is to advocate sustained infrastructure investments, tailored policy approaches, and community involvement to achieve better learning opportunities for rural pupils.

There are objectives linked directly to the three modules. They include:

- a. Education awareness promotion
- b. Facilitate the establishment of an after-school learning and resource center to support pupils, teachers, and the community.
- c. Advocate policy adaptation, infrastructure, and associated education improvement measures to ensure inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for rural pupils.

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## 4. Program Measures

The three modules of the REOI initiative are described below.

### A. Community Awareness Campaign

**Objective:** *Education awareness promotion*

There are two dimensions to this module:

- a. the first dimension will focus on community sensitization and engagement through adverts, durbars, and educational events to create awareness and prioritize education.
- b. The second dimension will focus on engendering partnerships with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) or District Education authorities, local civil society, and international organizations to execute urgent self-help initiatives.

### B. Education Support Center (ESC)

**Objective:** *Facilitate the establishment of an after-school learning and resource center to support pupils, teachers, and the community.*

ESC is the most involving module and may require multiple layers of strategic partnerships for successful implementation. We will leverage rural communities' ownership spirit to cut costs and administer a sustainable ESC.

The Center will provide the following –

- a. After school tuition, including homework assistance.
- b. A user-friendly space that promotes early reading and writing, math, and science.
- c. Organize educational excursions and exchange programs.
- d. A computer laboratory with internet access to promote ICT.
- e. Academic counselling and guidance.
- f. A resource and advocacy space for rural teachers and education workers.

### C. Rural Education Infrastructure Advocacy (REIA)

**Objective:** *Advocate policy adaptation, infrastructure, and associated education improvement measures to ensure inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for rural pupils.*

The REIA is the advocacy tool of the initiative. Its implementation will be driven by research and sustained policy advocacy and demand for governments to deliver on commitments to the Sustainable

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Development Goals and Article 36, 2 (d) provisions of the directive principles of state policy of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

Activities include –

- a. **Rural education fora.**
- b. Education policy watch and evaluation.
- c. Canvassing special budgetary regimes for rural district assemblies to boost local initiatives.
- d. Training workshops for rural teachers and education workers.
- e. Improved and enhanced conditions of service and incentives for rural education workers through advocacy.
- f. Coordinating stakeholder efforts to undertake small infrastructure works and renovations, provide basic amenities such as toilets and water facilities, school uniforms, books and supplementary teaching and learning materials.

## **5. Funding**

The initiative will be funded and implemented through fundraising activities, community resource mobilization and partnerships with international organizations, MDAs, and private enterprises. The REIA will drive the implementation of the other two modules.

## **6. Indicators of Success**

We will measure success in the following broad terms:

- a. Achieve mainstream awareness of the poor state of rural schools.
- b. Achieve a policy and investment differentiation between rural and non-rural schools.
- c. Establish at least ten ESCs in two years.
- d. Increase the number of rural pupils sitting and passing the National Standardized Test.
- e. Active community participation and buy-in.
- f. Increased school enrollment and retention.
- g. Widespread infrastructure investments.

## **7. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**

Monitoring and evaluation are critical success functions of REOI. Annual review and evaluation reports will be compiled and shared with partners, including MDAs, media, and stakeholders. Quarterly mini-community durbars will be held to review and ensure community involvement.

## **8. Conclusion**

The completion of the SDGs is just eight years away (2030). This initiative aims to extend the impact of the SDGs by ensuring that underserved rural schools in Ghana are not left out. We hope to generate significant momentum to stimulate substantial investment in rural education to redress the imbalance through advocacy.

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