

*“A breakthrough for
Early Childhood Edu-
cators in Ghana”*

**Internal evaluation of the
ECEC development program
2002 – 2010**

GNAT-BUPL

Background for the BUPL-GNAT ECEC program

The cooperation between Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators in Denmark (BUPL) and Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) started in 1991 through Educational International (EI). In October 1993 a National Seminar on ECDC (Early Childhood Development and Care) were held in collaboration between GNAT, Ghana Education Service (GES), and Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC), BUPL and UNICEF. The most important outcome of the seminar were formulation of *The Accra Declaration*¹, pointing at possible areas of co-operation between various stakeholders, multi-sector strategies, recommendations for a national ECDC policy and commitment within two years, specific action plans, development of community based programmes, and a vision of holistic development of the young child. *The Accra Declaration* has since played a major role in discussion and development of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector in Ghana.

Challenges for an ECEC development program

In 1999² there were around 16.000 preschools in Ghana with approximately 40.000 educators and attendants employed. The majority of educators did not have any formal education, and the salary levels were on average very low (in 1995 the average monthly salary, using today's exchange rate, was USD 5.30). Many parents and members of the general public did not appreciate the potential value of pre-school education.

Moreover, there is a strong social bias among the pupils, in so far as majority of children attending pre-schools around 1998-2001 were from relatively rich families. The relatively few children who already attend pre-schools benefit from an improved educational professional level among teachers, and physical environment in especial private pre-schools. There were two main challenges for an ECEC development program:

1. How to reach the majority of poor and rural communities through community-based initiatives? This challenge requires long-term commitment from ECEC Centres, related associations / organisations, Government departments at all levels, individual educators and parents.
2. How to develop an organisational and professional structure for Early Childhood Educators? This requires a focused programme with a strong element of sustainability.

Other more specific problems for educators were:

- There is none structure / association to provide services and advocate for the interest of educators
- There is none organisational support for professional development of educators
- There is none organisational support to individual educator as employees in the ECEC sector
- Difficult and poor conditions prevail in most ECEC centres
- Political and public awareness of the importance of Early Childhood Development is almost non-existent

¹ See: "A case study on ECD policy development in Ghana" – by: J.K.A. Boakye, M. Adamu-Issah and Stella Etse – Accra – UNICEF Ghana – March 2001. And: "Situation analysis of children & women in Ghana 2000", UNICEF, 2001.

² Information from GNAT 2001

- There is a need of addressing gender issues in the ECEC sector

Phase 1 – Project: Early Childhood Educators in Ghana

The result of the discussion between GNAT and BUPL was the first Early Childhood Development program from the 1st of March 2002 to end of August 2004.

The objectives were:

- To establish a structure for Early Childhood educators in GNAT at national and regional levels to provide education, services and advocacy for educators as part of GNAT as union
- To improve understanding and awareness among policy makers, parents and educators of the rights and duties of Early Childhood educators
- To improve Early Childhood Education and Care at regional and national level by developing in-service training materials for Early Childhood educators

To run the program a project staff includes a national project coordinator based in Accra at GNAT headquarters; 4 district coordinators based in James Town Greater Accra region, in Assin Foso Central region, in Nkawie / Atwima in Ashanti region and in Wa Upper West region.

Because the program started on virginal ground it was necessary to qualify the project coordinators in how to develop the project at district and national level. Very concrete; a BUPL project team – project manager, project consultant and a Danish vocational training college - created a special training in project management for project coordinators. The training gave them basically knowledge about how to develop a program, how to research and analyses needed information, leader skills, and how to motivate educators etc. Later the training became of great value not only for the outcome of the program, but also for individual coordinators. The training run over the first 2 year as a learning process supported by the project consultant; it is obvious the training made the coordinators to see themselves as a team even they worked far from each other from south to north of Ghana; they had a common understanding of how to understand their task and how to support individual educators.

One main objective for the program was established of a union structure as a part of the GNAT organization. The most important task for the district coordinators were therefore motivation of educators especial from private centres to involve themselves in forming a district Early Childhood Educators Association (ECEA) and elected representatives, with educators pay membership fee (dues) often out of a very low salary. Already before end of the first year a group of ECEA representatives were trained in mobilization and union affairs, which enabled them to support coordinators and GNAT staff to effectively mobilize other educators. Unfortunately, registration of members who start pay dues was not organized well, one of the problems was that the ECEA were not fully integrated into GNAT as constituent body at national level from the beginning, and district and regional GNAT staff was not being informed and involved in how to understand and support the ECEA structure e.g. how to administrate the dues payment.

The conditions of service of educators especially among those employed in the private sector were very deplorable and bring them under GNAT were important, as an instrument to foster unity among them and use the strength of an organization to help negotiate better conditions of service and professional development for them. However, there was awareness among a number

of proprietors and head teachers of the need to improve working conditions for educators. In the public sector representatives and coordinators tried to solve some of the problems especially on issues of transfers, most cases succeeds because a long tradition for finding a solution, but the private sector does not have the same tradition.

Another objectives were to create awareness among policy makers and parents on issues related to Early Childhood Development; a very relevant dimension of the program because it fit into the way the Government and politician began to have keen interest in issues concerning Early Childhood around 2000-2004, which result in passing of *Ghana's Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Document* in 2004. A new educational policy was approved which recognizes Early Childhood as part of the educational system with an Early Childhood Centre attach to public primary schools. It was the surest way of ensuring that Early Childhood was given much more attention than before in order to ensure that as many children as possible get the opportunity to attend Early Childhood Centres before entering primary schools. It means educators become more and more visible, and ask for better access and possibilities for professional pedagogical skills training. For the project it was nearly like sailing in smooth waters, the political and public environment act very positive towards the effort from the coordinators at local level and GNAT at national level.

It became a challenge for the project to put focus on training of educators mostly because of the new educational policy. In order to follow up at the policy the Ministry of Education had developed a draft syllabus for all Early Childhood Centres, however, the professional level and training of educators does not followed this development and the project decided to develop a training set up for un-trained educators – 1 to 6 weeks training which at that time give accesses to the training at the National Nursery and Teachers Training Center (NNTTC) in Accra.

Outcome of project phase 1

Because the project were in the starting phase it was necessary to make it public not only for educators but also for parents, local, regional and national key persons, media and politicians. It was the main reasons why there were produced different materials like posters, streamers, magazines, pamphlets and handouts. It include a "*Handbook for ECE Representatives on mobilisation and union affairs*", a very helpful handbook for the ECEA representatives, because there was none tradition for mobilising teachers as members of GNAT. When a teacher gets employed on a public school she or he automatically becomes member of the GNAT, as a part of the agreement between GNAT and Ministry of Education. Therefore mobilisation effort among educators was a very new task to do and it was necessary to held training and workshops in how to do it.

At end of phase 1 the project had succeed to organised around 30% of educators in the 10 involved districts. Representatives were trained and the first steps to form district ECEA in the 4 project districts were taken with around 60% membership among private centres. Especial in James Town and Wa districts over 70% from private centres paid dues, even those 2 districts include the poorest slum-like areas. In spite of the ECEA was not established at national level, the ECEA worked strongly especially in the Wa and James Town. Services involving working conditions (including impromptu transfers from one centre to another, salaries, leave, and ill-health) of the educators were rendered by both district coordinators and ECEA representatives. It shows how important for educators it was to establish a union structure to improve working conditions and salary

especial in poor areas. Because of conditions for the program and request from ECEA members the National Executive of GNAT begin in 2004 process of changing the constitution of GNAT to fully integrate ECEA as a constituent body of the GNAT.

The most requested topic from the educators was in-service training. The situation was that majority of educators do not have any or very little training and just 1-day course gave them a little better understanding in how to work together with children. In the first phase around 70% of educators in the involved districts benefit from 2 sorts of training programmes; 1- / 2-days skills training for newly recruited educators from private and public centres and 6 weeks training program.

In phase 1 the Ghana Education Service (GES) started developing a national guideline for certification of Early Childhood Centres. It gave the project coordinators a good possibility to help and support EC centres to maintain some decency in their environment. Generally most of the centres tried to keep their places tidy and provide basic services especially those centres whose educators benefited from the in-service training, but there were still a lot to do and understand why a clear and decency environment had influence on children and their health.

Child Rights materials were developed and distributed to educators, proprietors and policy makers as well as parents. Most educators in the project districts become much more aware of Child Rights issues and they actually tried to implement them in their interactions with children in daily duties. However, most parents did not seem to be aware of Child Rights and did not help to implement them, they often respond to educators: "*just use your cane*". At the same time there were other public agencies which were concerned with Child Rights issues, and the media gave a lot of publicity to Child Rights issues which complemented the effort of the project.

The project developed a pamphlet on gender issues as a medium of education for educators, head teachers, proprietors and parents, which again attract a lot of discussions around especial in the sector. Among educators there were still sufficient awareness as a result of the gender issues discussed in all the workshops and meetings held during the project period. The pamphlet helped educators to understand more about gender issues and methodologies to use in centres to avoid gender stereotyping. It helped to improve the attitudes of educators towards children (girls and boys) and parents, and to educate parents on gender issues for the benefit of their children. Even that effort there are still a gender imbalance among educators e.g. around 95% are women.

Evaluation of the BUPL-GNAT first phase

It was necessary for the LO/FTF Council, because of a delicate political situation in connection with Danish Development Aid to show result and to continuing such development programs in the West-Africa program, to set up an evaluation the pervious projects in Ghana³

From the evaluation report:

The ECE project

The GNAT/BUPL project supports capacity building in GNAT, which is the general trade union for teachers in Ghana. The project aims at improving the organisation with respect to membership

³ GNAT/BUPL/LO_FTF Early Childhood Educators Project - Ghana - Evaluation Study Final Report - August 2004 - Development Associates A/S

recruitment and service provision to early childhood educators, ECEs, by establishing a specific ECE association under GNAT. The extent to which GNAT assuming intended organisational strengthening, is able to improve salary and other working condition of the ECEs, particularly in the private Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres, is of primary importance for the project to achieve sustainable development impact. Equally important, however, is the contribution the project can give to improve the conditions of children in their early childhood.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Relevance

Early Childhood care and development is an area, which has been neglected by the Government and which was not part of the GNAT organisation before the project was initiated. The project has established an ECE unit in 4 districts (of about 110 districts nationwide, in all of which there is a GNAT representative office). Through these offices and in cooperation with the respective GNAT representative offices, the project is providing support to ECEs in the district and organising them into membership of GNAT. As most of these potential members have little or no educational background or training, the project's focus on training and provision of professional assistance and support is a highly relevant approach. The project is clearly contribution in the 4 districts which should provide a basis for GNAT to extend the activities into all districts and regions and hence make it a nationwide effort. This will include contributions towards improving education and training in the country for early childhood care through improved training and educational material.

The project is the first of its kind in Africa, and is therefore highly relevant in terms of "export" of knowledge on Early Childhood Development to other Africans countries through i.e. Education International (EI).

Effectiveness

The project does appear rather effective in achieving results. Concrete and direct results in the form of project outputs have been attained, including a number of persons trained as trainers, and effects on the GNAT organisation are noticeable. Thus, GNAT has on its own expended into more districts and developed a plan for achieving nationwide coverage over time. The intention is to include Early Childhood Educators as members of GNAT, through and affiliated association of the ECEs with nationwide coverage and with a full regional and district offices network. Through this network, GNAT shall become able to provide both professional and organisational support to members in the future.

Impact

Impact so far is, of course, limited, as the project is reaching only a small part of all educators in the country directly. Those, who have been directly involved with the project up till now have, however, experienced considerable benefits, both professionally and in terms of trade union protection of their interests. The long-term perspectives for considerable positive impact, both for living conditions of educators themselves and for the children as well as their parents, would appear to be very good.

Sustainability

The project is firmly anchored within the GNAT organisation and is related directly to normal functions of GNAT with respect to professional developments. Results of the project can feed directly into GNAT's own planning of the sector.

Bridging project before application for phase 2

After the slow period from September to December 2004 the LO/FTF Council still was not able to apply for a continuing phase 2 in spite of the very positive evaluation of the BUPL-GNAT program. The only possibility was to keep on under a Bridging project waiting for a Danida organised appraisal for the West-Africa program. Therefore the LO/FTF Council made agreement with Danida to run a Bridging project from 1st February to 30th June 2005. New activities for BUPL-GNAT were:

- Establishing of national network of educators
- Policy paper on Standard working conditions for ECEC centres
- Model resource center for Early Childhood Development
- Policy and positions papers on HIV/AIDS
- Advocacy activities for the sector

Even the program was a sort of have a bridge from phase 1 to phase 2 it was necessary to keep the pot boiling with some activities going on, the environment still were under pressure of an unsecure future and question: would there be a second phase? In spite of very positive recommendation from the evaluation, nothing in connection with the Danish development aid policy was sure at that time. Never less the coordinators keep on their work and the outputs of the period was:

- Paper on setting up the Early Childhood Educators Association (ECEA) based on the experiences of the coordinators (tool box)
- Draft HIV/AIDS Policy for Early Childhood educators and centres
- Draft conditions of service (incomplete)

HIV/AIDS policy for educators

In spite of resistance from some educators it was decided to start developing an HIV/AIDS policy and guideline for educators. The reason behind was new information about the HIV/AIDS situation in general all over Africa south of Sahara, with nothing or very little focus and attitudes towards the HIV/AIDS issues in connection with Early Childhood Sector especial among educators and there interaction with parents. Under the discussion it became obviously that some educator's attitude towards the topic was nearly resistance towards including the topic in the ECD program. Some expressed the topic has not any to do with working together with children, others seems to be afraid or shy for discussion such topic with other people including colleagues and parents.

Other challenges in the project

For future succeed of the program it was necessary to expose the regional GNAT staff to running of the project, with its challenges and also brought the GNAT and the representatives together for the purpose of familiarization and harmony to enable them work towards a common goal of advancing of ECEA. One effect of the stalling in the district was lack of dues payment of ECEA members, it was therefore important to continue effort in order to bring them back. Another challenge came by realizing that some of the 4 main project districts have lost their ECEA representatives through transfers to new districts and change of jobs. It was therefore necessary to train new representatives and keep on advance training program for ECEA representatives.

In the period a new labour law was treated into details. The emphasis was on conditions of employment, the rights and privileges of the employer and employee, grievance handling and procedure, where to go for redress in cases of dispute. The law seeks to promote industrial harmony by setting up a New Labour Commission, and it makes it very necessary for every employee to join a union and for employers to form their own union. The labour commission will be the last point of reference for labour disputes. This information provided a background for drafting of the proposed conditions of service for educators.

Last but not least preparation of a model center in Wa Upper West. The plan was under a 2nd phase to establish a sort of Pedagogical Model Center for Early Childhood Development. Such Model center should serve as meeting point for educators, for inspiration in their daily work, focus point for training, and place for developing of pedagogical materials. The reason behind choosing Upper west and Wa was that any development useful in Upper West would be useful in Accra too, but any development in Accra would maybe not be useful in Wa.

The Appraisal report – April 2005

The long waited appraisal report came in April 2005 with very positive recommendations special for the BUPL-GNAT programme. The following text from the appraisal report⁴ give impression of the positive tone towards the Early Childhood Development program.

Main Conclusion

The proposed new phase of support to the Ghanaian trade union movement falls well within the principles of the Strategy for Danish Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries and other Danish guidelines. Furthermore, it is evident that the trade unions in the country strongly need support and have the capacity to absorb what is proposed. Hence, the appraisal consultant recommends that the proposed programme on “*Poverty and Empowerment in West Africa*” is accepted for funding by Danida provided the programme and its three projects are adjusted in accordance with the recommendations of this report. In many ways, the endeavour to organise the informal sector and the grey labour market at the fringe of the formal economy, which the Ghanaian trade union movement has embarked on, is pioneering. The outcome of this work should be of significance for the trade unions in other parts of the developing world. Experience suggests that dealing with the informal sector is a demanding task that does not always “pay off” financially in terms of increased membership. Therefore, an effort should be made to systematically work up the lessons learned from Ghana. It might be considered to draw on international research expertise to fulfil this task. (page 5 in the report)

The programme proposes three areas of support to GNAT: (i) expansion of the Early Childhood Educators Association into new regions and districts; (ii) strengthening capacity of GNAT to provide services and advocacy for Early Childhood Educators at regional and district level; and (iii) strengthening GNAT capacity to raise awareness about the importance of Early Childhood Education and the prestige of educators among policy-makers and parents.

⁴ Appraisal Report – LO/FTF Council’s Programme for Poverty and Empowerment in Ghana – April 2005 – Danida

Essentially this is a continuation and scaling up of the activities launched through the previous collaboration between GNAT and BUPL. The pilot activities, which were carried out in four districts, are planned to be mainstreamed, and various information materials enhancing the awareness about Early Childhood Education will be produced. Information about HIV/AIDS is anticipated to be integrated into the educational activities. A key element of the strategy is to offer the Early Childhood Educators basic professional training, which they lack in most areas.

The Ghanaian government has just approved an Early Childhood Care and Development Policy. The proposed activities are in compliance with this. The experience from the previous phase suggests that the chosen strategy is appreciated by the target group.

Experience from the pilot districts indicates that although the GNAT services are well received the newly recruited union members often have difficulties paying their dues. From a financial point of view the effort to unionise Early Childhood Educators is therefore not sustainable – at least in the short term. However, as GNAT financially is a relatively resourceful trade union, this may not pose a problem. A lot of similarity exists between GNAT's work within the private Early Childhood area and that of ICU in relation to the tourism sector. Experience sharing among the two unions should therefore be ensured.

Poverty and Empowerment in West Africa - Early Childhood Educators – phase 2

The most important changing of the program perspectives from phase 1 to 2 was a closer connection to poverty reduction effort. The 2nd phase program should have a stronger focus on how to change working condition for educators than before as an effort to ensure better salary and other rights for educators. The program still use the 4 districts as main base for the coordinators, but with a stronger focus on involving all districts in the 4 regions (Greater Accra, Central, Ashanti and Upper West region). Later in the 2nd phase Western region were included with most of its districts.

Challenges for Early Childhood Development

Even very positive progress in the 1st phase of the BUPL-GNAT program, there was still a number of challenges for educators and the ECEA; the main topic for the 2nd phase would therefore be:

1. To reach the majority of poor and rural communities through community-based initiatives. This challenge requires long-term commitment from ECD Centres, related associations / organisations, Government departments at all levels, individual ECE's and the parents.
2. To develop the organisational and professional structure for Early Childhood Educators from the experience in the present program. And to spread the development and experience to the remaining districts and regions in spite of the differentiation among districts all over Ghana. This requires a focused program with a strong element of sustainability.

Way forward in a second phase program

To give educators a visible outlook and adequate attention, the ECEA structure need to be firmly rooted in the GNAT set up. And it was important the GNAT Executive Committees take up the challenge of changing the Constitution to ensure representation of educators at district, regional and national levels of GNAT. This has already started at district levels in 2004 and continues at regional level in 2005 and 2006; an effective strategy was establishing a structure of support system at district, regional and national levels to render service to the benefit of the educators in the form of

negotiations about their working conditions and monitoring guidelines for the work as educators. However, with the focused on developing working conditions and standards for ECEC Centres it was important to be aware of the difference in possibilities, living conditions and social and economic reality for children, parents and families all over Ghana. Even it was not the developmental focus for the project, it was important to reflect on how the effort had influence indirectly on poverty reduction e.g. in cooperation with parents and families.

The strategy in the project regions / areas

Based on experience from the project development in the present districts, it seems necessary to work with different development perspective in the 2nd phase program. Two main reasons made it necessary for changing the program. One was different background and capacity in project districts and regions. Other was necessity of developing different elements of the Early Childhood Sector in order to ensure future sustainability. Experience indicate there was a chance of, that the 2nd phase program would not be able to support the most important decisive elements of the Early Childhood sector, if the program do not has different developmental focus in project regions. Experience shows there was a great difference from Greater Accra to Upper West region; in Upper West districts there was a long distances from one center to another not only in kilometers but also in possibilities. It would therefore be a failure to continuing a parallel program. And in other cases some need progress in Greater Accra is may be not possible in Upper West.

Development objective

Contribute to improving the quality of Early Childhood Education (Development) through awareness raising, promotion of professional identity, prestige and respect for Early Childhood Educators profession, and improvement of living and working conditions for ECE's in Ghana.

Immediate objective

At the end of phase 2:

1. GNAT has promoted and further developed the ECEA structure at national, regional and district level as part of GNAT's union structure
2. GNAT has improved the capacity to provide education, services and advocacy for educators and ECEC at regional and district level.
3. GNAT has improved the capacity for awareness raising and advocacy promoting the professional identity, prestige and respect for the profession of educators, and increasing the awareness among policy makers, educators, parents and children of rights and duties of educators.

The National Early Childhood Development Coordinating Committee has been set up with the objective to help drive the objectives set out in the National Policy of Early Childhood Care and Development. A National Curriculum for Early Childhood Centres was introduced for the first time ever in September. In the period the government has started a new educational structure where Early Childhood centres have become part of the educational system. In furtherance of this aim, the government also include a new educational structure, which included a two-year Kindergarten as part of primary education. Public basic schools including Early Childhood centres have been made free of charge from this academic year onwards and were given funds to enable them run.

Sustainability

During the period more and more GNAT staff was involved at district, regional and national levels in daily running of the project. This exposed the GNAT staff to the project in order to get them actively involved in project management. Educators were mobilized for formation of ECEA in districts outside project regions. Skills training programs were organised for educators. In addition process of recognizing ECEA as a constituent body of GNAT was partially achieved; the National conference would recognise ECEA as a constituent body on probation. This means that the ECEA has to be set up in much more districts during the period ahead so that its presence would be felt in all regions. A national ECEA would then be formed to merit a full constituent body.

DK students in Wa

In order to support development of a pedagogical model centre in Wa, Upper West BUPL-GNAT made agreement with the College of Hoejvang (Danish college for educators) about placement of 2 x 2 Danish students in their practical period of ½ year as part of their training as educator. They worked in 2 ECEC centres together with their Ghanaian colleagues which they could give inspiration, new ideas and maybe together develop the pedagogical model centre.

Placement of Danish students was successful, perhaps not with the expected output, but largely with an excellent result and with obvious effect on especially the 2 institutions, the students were connected to. They managed to support and develop the first step of a pedagogical model center, albeit on a smaller scale than expected. There was, when they left, a much greater awareness of pedagogical development among educators, than ever before. Even it is expressed that the expected outputs were not achieved, it should be seen in relation to that the program in 2006 moved into totally unknown territory by involving Danish students in such development efforts, with of them unknown territory in unfamiliar culture and traditions, with an unknown number of factors and regardless of how well effort was being prepared. It was really impossible to predict what could be done and where the challenges would be greatest and perhaps insurmountable.

Conclusions and recommendations of 2nd phase

Even the project in 2005 was on course and needs to be given all the encouragements that it deserves and GNAT shows commitment to the project and there was no doubt that it is sustainable there were genuine problems related to breakdown of basic equipment, dissatisfaction with salaries of project coordinators, medical expenses and transport costs.

The policy introduced by the government in respect of public education has had tremendous effect. The school enrolment at the ECD level has gone up by 30%. This meant that educators have more work to do, but there were fewer resources available to support them in the centres. Most of the classrooms in public ECD were congested. This means that the educators need more skills training to equip them to meet the new challenges, and it was necessary to intensify skills training next year without compromising the trade union education aspect.

Even such conditions the phase was taken off smoothly and it was hoped that this atmosphere would continue for the project to continue to evolve into a 3rd program as planned. The effort to extend the project to other West African countries is a motivation for GNAT to work hard on the

project. It was expected that the project would be extended to cover the remaining regions and in addition there had to be extensive effort to deepen the union leg of the project.

Poverty and the Informal Economy in West Africa – phasing out program

It was very important to strength effort for better working conditions and agreements for educators in the private sector, therefore the main focus for 3rd phase was higher priority on union affairs than pedagogical development. Without better and more secure working conditions for individual educators, professional development will not succeeded in a broader scale, and members of the ECEA would not be able to see why it was necessary to continuing their membership and pay due. The main region for 3rd phase effort towards union affairs would be Asante and Greater Accra regions. Based on previous experience it was important to train ECDC resource persons at district and regional level in order to ensure the continuation development of the ECDC sector after the 3rd phase.

The 3rd phase also includes a pilot program for ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) sector in Benin, Togo and Nigeria. Because of lack of concrete and reliable information about the Early Childhood sector in the three West African countries the project application includes research of the present situation for the ECEC sector in the three countries. In connection with the research it was possible to involve some resource / key persons from the three countries in some of the activities in the 3rd phase program. The idea was to give participants from Benin, Togo and Nigeria impression of experience from the Ghana program, and in some extend to support discussion in the 3 countries about how to develop the ECDC sector and union structure for educators.

Communicate experience and challenges from the Ghana ECEC development program based on “How to do it”? How to establish local union structure for educators? How to motivate? How to train? How to work as representatives for educators? The national teacher unions in Benin, Togo and Nigeria are the national cooperative partners. Together with the respective governmental structures, they are responsible for Early Childhood sector / ECEC development.

Immediate objectives:

- 1) The capacity of involved partners to develop policies and carry out advocacy – with focus on the provision of basic social services to workers in and around the informal economy – has been strengthened
- 2) The capacity of the involved partners to develop trade union services and provide these nationwide to workers in and around the informal economy has been strengthened.

3rd phase information – 2008 / 2009

Input from Togo and Nigeria at the Pan-African ECEC seminar Accra Sept. 2009 gives good information in how the involved unions expressed their experience from the pilot program. For Benin the outcome has not be the same, the involved organisations has not been able to run the decided activities of some reasons one has to do with a number of small teachers unions. There are therefore none input from Benin for the time.

Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT)

The Nigeria part of the BUPL-GNAT-NUT pilot program took off in 2008 and is situated in Kaduna state. It is actually a 2½ year pilot project aimed at giving capacity to and a sense of professional belonging to Early Childhood Educators in the state. The project has a lot of support from Ghana from where the program initially started. The national project coordinator of the BUPL-GNAT project serves as adviser to the NUT coordinator. Ghana has been sharing its experiences in the program with Nigeria in order to reduce some of the problems and challenges Ghana had when implementing the program. This project is to a large extent an example of North-South–South cooperation.

The federal government has adopted Early Childhood as part of the public education system as a policy and developed a national curriculum for use by all Early Childhood Centres. There is therefore a phenomenal rise in the number of Early Childhood Centres in the public sector and the number of educators regularly recruited to cope with the rising number of centres. The Integrated Early Childhood Development Committee coordinates and monitors Early Childhood programs in the respective states. Most of the educators in both the private and the public are not trained. Educators, who work in the public sector, belong to the union, but had not been given any special recognition by the union in time past. Conversely the educators in the private sector had not ever been unionized; neither do they belong to any professional trade union.

The GNAT-BUPL-NUT ECEC program runs a series of professional skills training in Early Childhood Education. GNAT organizes periodic skills and trade union education in Ghana for the project coordinators and educators in both Ghana and Nigeria. By the nature of the project skills training of educators is meant to serve as an inducement to endear educators to the union and use that as an avenue to unionize educators in the private sector. It is also to help them improve their teaching skills so that they can work better with the children.

As a result of the sensitization on the project, there has been a very high level of awareness and demand by educators and some heads and proprietors for training of their personnel who yearn to benefit from the program. Unfortunately the large numbers and inadequate resources would not allow everyone to be trained. The reality is that most educators are not professionals and would need such training. This calls for a quick fix process of ensuring efficiency and productivity through specialized training program. Educators in the private sector do neither a voice nor a sense of identity. This is why their working and living conditions are so poor. There is therefore a need for NUT to reach out to them and bring them into our fold.

A third problem has to do with high rate of transfer of educators who have benefited from training under the program. The training makes them very sharp and emboldens them to do their work well. But instead of maintaining them in the centres they are normally transferred to the primary schools. This constitutes a drain on the program. Most centres in the public sector are under resourced and under staffed. The union would need to take up these issues as program continues. The program winds down in June 2010. With the experiences gained so far NUT looks forward to a longer period of collaboration with all the program partners.

TOGO – Federation of Unions of Teachers (FESEN)

Togo is happy to be associated with the Early Childhood program with GNAT-BUPL. The program is an education oriented one but it is particularly concerned with Early Childhood Education. In most of Africa Early Childhood issues are the concern of parents and not so much that of the government.

Togo used the experiences gained in Ghana to run skills training program for our educators. In addition we have developed a guide for producing teaching materials for young children. With inspiration from the program we picked up a curriculum which had been developed by government with NGO assistance and which had been laying waste for a very long time. So far we have revived interest in the document and trial tested and used it to train some educators and inspectors of Early Childhood Education centres. The program also has helped us to hold a consultative forum with key persons in government discussing issues of importance with them.

As a result of the program the Early Childhood educators have become more familiar with SYNE-PET and has become more relevant to them and more and more educators are enrolling in union, the membership has increased from 68 to 135. A lot of the educators not only know how to produce the didactic materials but also use them when working with the children.

Togo still has some challenges in the Early Childhood sector. The general poverty of the most of the people in the rural areas makes it difficult for mothers to patronize the centres. But this is buttressed by the fact that there is a persistence of ignorance of people about the importance of Early Childhood Education. Again there is inadequate number of Early Childhood Centres. Also the staffs are inadequate; these include educators, inspectors and administrative personnel. The continued closure of the Teacher Training College for Early Childhood Educators is a contributory factor affecting the total quality of Early Childhood Education.

Thematic Evaluation of Support by Danish NGOs to Civil Society in Developing Countries – Ghana country report - 2009

The thematic evaluation is a result of that the Danish Auditor General's Office in 2007 pointed to the need for strengthened documentation of the results of the support of Danish NGOs to civil society in developing countries, as well as to the potential of enhanced sharing of experiences. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) subsequently proposed the relevance of conducting thematic evaluations aimed at the work of the civil society organisations (CSOs) in order to facilitate documentation and learning. It is on that background that the MFA commissioned this evaluation of the support of Danish NGOs to civil society. The focus of the evaluation is on Danish NGO interventions within the thematic area of "promoting democratic development and popular participation in the development process". The report discusses the findings from Ghana.

Extract from the report

The partnership with ICU revolved around the needs of workers within the tourism industry and around workers conditions in the informal economy. The partnership with GNAT concerns organisation and training of early childhood educators (ECE), who are predominantly part of the informal sector (either public or private). Early childhood development (ECD) has not been recognised as a level of education of importance in Ghana, which GNAT has been working to change. (page 31)

The partners have also received training in technical aspects of their work. GNAT receives training from BUPL in ECD issues and BUPL has inter alia assisted GNAT with creating a curriculum for the ECE training, which according to GNAT management has increased GNAT's capacity in this area considerably. TUC and GNAT have worked with the issues of organising informal economy workers and ECD respectively before the partnership with LO/FTF was initiated. The support of LO/FTF has however ensured that the organisations have been able to scale up their work with organising the informal economy. (page 32)

With the support of LO/FTF, GNAT has been a driving force to ensure the increased focus on ECD at policy level. The advocacy and lobby activities in this programme and prior activities of GNAT have helped promote the educational reforms in Ghana to include ECD. With funds from LO/FTF, GNAT has produced different PR material (leaflets) on policies and manuals for ECE and ECE Associations (ECEA) on relevant issues such as psycho-social skills for ECE, Union manual for ECEA and GNAT staff, child rights, HIV/AIDS policy etc. It is the intention that these materials will assist the ECEs and ECEAs in providing better care. (page 39)

In 2004 the Government of Ghana adopted a policy on ECD. GNAT has been very active in the advocacy around this policy, which already started in 1995. GNAT has also achieved to get the Ghana government to attach Early Childhood Centres to all public primary schools. It should be mentioned that TUC and GNAT have worked with the informal economy and early childhood development respectively for many years before the partnership with LO/FTF was initiated. Furthermore TUC and GNAT have a range of international partners and it is therefore difficult to trace the attribution of LO/FTF. It can however be assumed that the results that have been obtained can be contributed to LO/FTF support and the capacity building efforts mentioned above. (page 45)

Outcome of the Program

The GNAT-BUPL-ECEC program funded by the LO/FTF Council DK in Ghana has had tremendous outcomes both in the private and public ECEC sector.

The program has led to creation of the Early Childhood Educators Association (ECEA) made up of educators from both private and public centres as a constituent body in GNAT represented at the National Executive Committee level. This offers educators an opportunity to voice out their concerns at national level for attention.

Through effective mobilization several educators from the private sector have joined GNAT and are paying dues, and some have joined the Teachers fund.

Mobilization of educators from the private sector has introduced new dimensions and demands into the organization and role of GNAT as a union and a professional body for teachers and educators in Ghana. Working and living conditions of educators in the private sector have generally been on the low side. Educators in the private sector are mostly located in institutions run by individuals with profit motive and so often scattered all over the place. Most proprietors are suspicious of unionization of educators and would initially not cooperate with union staff. Many educators have dire need of training in union education and professional skills as well as constant attention and visitation. There is therefore a strong need to do center based negotiations which is traditionally

not a function of GNAT. The situation calls for very dedicated and well resourced staff to be able to mobilize and maintain educator in a union structure.

Mobilization skills have been the major theme of union education organized for coordinators, GNAT staff and some experienced educators from the ECEC sector who served as representatives supporting the project coordinators in their work.

Workshops in center based negotiations have been run for some GNAT staff and project coordinators as well as experienced educators from the ECEC sector who have started putting the knowledge gained into practice.

The project coordinators and some GNAT staff and staff of the National Nursery Teachers Training Centre (NNTTC) have been offered a course in Project management at the diploma and certificate levels. Several educators have also been sponsored for professional courses in Early Childhood and Care including a post graduate level course for the staff of the NNTTC.

In order to facilitate professional skills training activities a ECEC curriculum has been developed e.g. a six-week training. The NNTTC use this curriculum as part of their training program. Many educators from the private and public sector have benefited from professional skills training seminars and workshops in all districts in 8 of the 10 regions, varying from duration of one day to six weeks. These professional skills training seminars / workshops have formed the basis for advancement of many educators who have taken advantage of the University courses in Early Childhood.

In Wa a multiple-purpose resource centre has been developed for use by Early Childhood educators and organizers from the ECEC sector within the region. With support of Danish students and experienced educators and project coordinators, educators from private and public centres learnt how to develop teaching and learning materials relevant for young child. The materials have been left at the resource centre where educators come to borrow it, at the same time the resource centre serves as a library. In addition the resource centre serves a rendezvous where educators meet to discuss issues related to their working and living conditions.

The idea of bringing Danish Early Childhood educators to work together with educators in Ghana is a cross-cultural concept which has helped to improve professional skills of educators in Upper West to the benefit of children especially in the area of outdoor activities and use of teaching and learning materials. In centres where the Danish students and educators worked, the proprietors have made tremendous progress in managing their centres, especially in terms of relationship with educators, parents and class size.

Impact on ECEC -International perspectives

The GNAT-BUPL ECEC Program has had some important impact on Early Childhood at both national and international levels. At the international levels the program has put Ghana on the world map of Early Childhood. The program has been quoted at UNESCO websites and in documents as a key Early Childhood Education and Care activity in Ghana and Africa. The attention to ECEC by

many countries in Africa has been slow and so the program has been a kind of leader, breaking grounds for other African countries to follow.

What is innovative about the program is not only the inclusion of the informal / private sector but also the role played by teachers unions which is normally a private sector activity in Africa. And attention given to the HIV/AIDS policy for ECEC in the program is equally innovative and an international need which the program has fulfilled.

The international image of GNAT has been raised tremendously for the support and focus the union has given to ECEC. Most probably it is for this program that the Education International (EI) selected Ghana to host the Africa Conference on Early Childhood and Care by Teacher Unions in 2009. It is also an important coincidence that GNAT serves on the EI Task force on ECEC. Experiences gathered from the program are useful as an African dimension for the work of the EI Task force.

The Ghana experience has been worthy information for Benin, Togo and Nigeria as their relevant teacher unions took on the program in 2008. Ghana has become a focal point in the union community offering support, advice and human capital needed by other African countries which would be involved in the Early Childhood and Care program from union perspectives.

Support given by the program at national level led to the development of a national policy on Early Childhood Care and Development in Ghana. Though approved only in 2004 other African countries have since then learnt a lot from the long processes leading to adoption of the policy and developed their own policies.

Even though BUPL is highly experienced and known in the field of unionism in Early Childhood Education and Care, it has broken new grounds in Africa with the program in Ghana. It has given a new dimension to ECEC raising the flag on fate and rather deplorable conditions of service and working conditions of educators in Africa, especially those in the informal sector and has tried to use unionization and professional skills training of educators as effective tools to help improve the ECEC sector.

Learning experience of the program

At end of the 8 years program there still is a number of challenges to overcome for Early Childhood Educators as members of the ECEA affiliated to and members GNAT.

Even though some of the educators are paying dues and so are full members of GNAT there are still long way to go in order to understand their rights and duties as union member. For the time it is more or less only the representative of the Early Childhood Educators Association (ECEA) who is concrete involved in discussions and meetings at the GNAT national level. When it comes to GNAT activities at district levels only few ECEA members from the private sector are involved.

It is still a challenge how to organise and administrate registration of ECEA members and their dues payment, and organise meetings and workshops for them. Even the most important task for the ECEC coordinators employed by GNAT is motivation of educators and support professional de-

velopment in the private ECEC sector, the coordinators mostly are organize meetings, workshops, collecting dues etc. even it should be a part of the duties and organised by the GNAT district secretary. Dues collection seems still to be a problem. GNAT normally collects dues by the cheque-off system, but currently most educators pay dues out of pocket. Even through a system has been developed to ensure safe collection it still has not been used at district, regional and national level. The consequences are there is a risk of there in some cases flow of dues is not regular.

Neither GNAT nor the coordinators do concrete negotiations on behalf of the educators in the private centres even it is the most needed effort in order to improve working conditions for educators. It is still the ECEC coordinators who help educators to solve their personal cases and not the GNAT district secretary.

Another key problem is that even educators, who have tried to improve their qualifications there still, are lack of recognition of non degree University courses by the Ghana Education Service. If this persists then it could discourage those who want to take Early Childhood Education as their future career which could kill the enthusiasm the program has created among practicing Early Childhood Educators about Early Childhood Education and care as a profession.

If such challenges is not been taken seriously there is a risk of that GNAT seems remote from the needed focus on educators in the private ECEC sector. There seems to be a risk of that some educators see 2 systems of the ECEA administration; GNAT on one side and the ECEC coordinators on the other side.

Kofi Nyiaye / Svend Laursen 06.09.2010