

INNOVATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT- ISRD

ANNUAL REPORT- 2017



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Introduction

In 2017, ISRD, thanks to our hardworking staff/volunteers, recorded a number of achievements;

1. Over 400 smallholder farmers, (in very remote communities who previously could not access tractor services or got it too late), accessed tractor services in very convenient and timely manner, leading to increase in their maize production!
2. 120 children under-five years have better chances of a good nutrition and health, as their mothers improved their skills and knowledge in child feeding and food hygiene, through the collaborative efforts of ISRD and GHS in the Chogsia community.
3. 900 women farmers and households have access to low-cost, convenient and timely extension services/information delivery through voice messaging! This was made possible through the AgriCaller Services introduced by ISRD in the Wa West District.

Programs

Maternal and Child Health/Nutrition

Malnutrition among children under five years is a worrying reality in the hard-to-reach areas of the Wa West District in North-Western Ghana. The malnutrition problem in this area is a complex one! Causes are not just limited to food insecurity, though the District ranks high in terms of food insecurity. Knowledge of child nutrition among mothers and caregivers is one critical factor. Another very important factor is food handling and hygiene practices. Thus, though there may be all the food groups necessary for a balanced diet, food (especially vegetables) is often overcooked and gets contaminated before it gets fed to children.



A child being screened using MUAC Tape



Food Demonstration @ Chogsia

The NUTRITION SCHOOLS FOR HEALTHY CHILDREN, a POLLINATION PROJECT sponsored initiative is collaborating with the Chogsia CHPS compound to educate mothers and caregivers on child nutrition. Regular education sessions are organized for five mother support groups, covering the use of MUAC tape to identify children at risk of undernourishment, nutrition requirements of children under-five, how to prepare children's complementary feeds, food handling and food hygiene practices and exclusive breastfeeding. Currently, some 120 mothers and 75 children under five years are direct beneficiaries. The project shall expand to two additional communities in the next program year, 2018.

Agricultural Development and Food Security

Accessing tractor in good time has always been an unbelievable dream of many women farmers in the Wa West District. Communities in the South-Western parts of the District are worst affected by this challenge. ISRD is, however, working to make this dream a reality. Under the PrIME initiative, over 400 smallholder farmers had timely access to tractor services in the 2017 planting season. The additional challenge of getting operators plough the correct size of land they charge for an acre has also been overcome, as ISRD-engaged operators commit to the use of a 70 by 70 standardized rope to the delight of farmers. This led to an increase in yields per acre. Farmers reported 8 maxi bags per acre for maize as compared to an average of 5 bags in the 2016 season.



Tractor on Field



Soya/Maize Field

ICT, Child Protection and Education

The CAGE initiative works with communities in the Wa West District to identify socio-economic, cultural and Gender-based challenges militating against Girl Child Education and develop innovative programs to address such challenges, using participatory approaches. The initiative has the following objectives;

- Improve the retention of girls in schools up to, at least, completion of Junior High School (JHS).
- Promote Girl-Friendly School Environment for effective Teaching & Learning, especially, in schools without female teachers.
- Improve the Academic Performance of Girls in selected Junior High Schools.



Students Receive Awards during Quiz Competition organized by ISRD

Under CAGE, ISRD has been engaged in the organization of Community Durbars to sensitize community members on need for girl child education and the urgency for Community Action to safeguard the education of girls.

ISRD also facilitate the formation of Girls Clubs to create a platform for peer-education and learning on the rights of girls and how to protect same. The Girls Clubs are also avenues for girls to develop self-confidence and build leadership skills. CAGE also organizes regular mentoring sessions for girls in selected school, using successful young ladies from the District as mentors. Additionally, ISRD promotes ICT education among girls in beneficiaries

through the training of ICT teachers and the provision of Gender-sensitive ICT materials for education (including posters, sensitization cards, markers and marker boards).

So far, the Project which was started late 2018, has recorded some Most Significant Change Stories (MSCs) that indicates its effectiveness and potential for successful up-scaling. Under CAGE, ISRD conducted a study into the Academic Performance of students in the BECE in Chogsia Community, in collaboration with the Old Students Association. Preliminary findings from the study revealed that Girls perform better when exposed to ICT and ICT materials. The results also showed that girls felt more confident and motivated to learn, when there are female teachers in the school. The provision of an ICT Centre and a Library were considered the two most important interventions the community needs to improve Academic performance of students, especially girls.

Report on 'Educational Performance in Chogsia'

The Chogsia Old Students Union (CHOGSU) has been working over the past years to contribute towards improving educational performance in the community. Efforts, to this end, included organizing community sensitization forums, Quiz competitions and Extra-Classes, among others. However, observed academic performance of students at the BECE does meet expectations, given general improvements in the learning environment, including the construction of a new JHS block and availability electricity in the community.

ISRD conducted a research under the CAGE project to ascertain the causes of slow improvement in educational performance and make recommendations for actions to improve same. This report presents a summary of preliminary findings of a survey conducted on the subject, aforementioned. It must be noted that the report does not include qualitative data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions, thus, the findings herein are inconclusive.

Objectives of Study

The study sought to do the following;

- a. Establish the perception of educational stakeholders in the Chogsia Community about educational performance in the community.
- b. Ascertain the educational challenges in the community.

- c. Assess recommended actions for addressing the challenges confronting educational performance in the community.

Methodology

We used a mixed-method design for this study. This stems from the realization that educational performance is not limited to issues of quantification but includes social perspectives and experiences within a cultural setting, which are not easily analysed quantitatively.

Thus, the study employed and survey, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. A sample size of 80 was used for the survey, four focus group discussions were conducted, while four key informant interviews were also conducted. The survey used questionnaire administered through the SurveyCTO electronic data platform.

Sex of Respondents

Out of a total 80 respondents, 38 were females, while 42 were males.

Category	Female	Male	Grand Total
Parent/Guardian	14	15	29
Past Student	7	7	14
Student	15	15	30
Teacher	2	5	7
Grand Total	38	42	80

Respondent Category

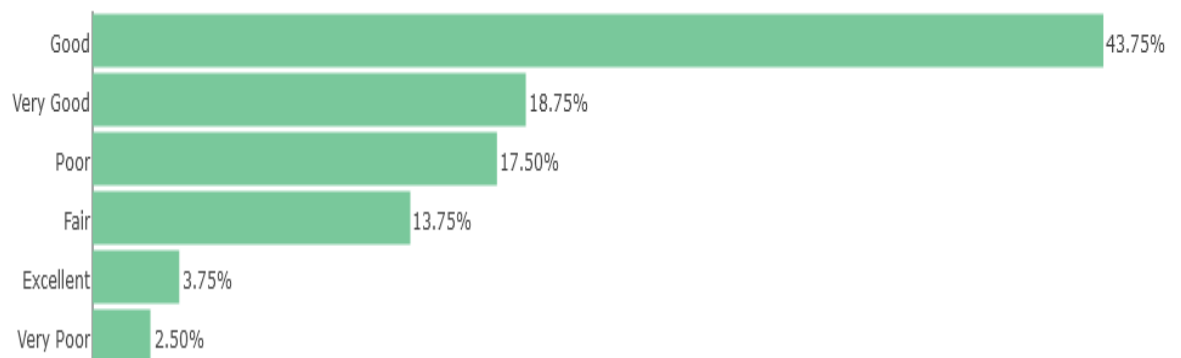
Respondents were grouped into four categories as shown in the table below.

RESPONDENT CATEGORY	NUMBER SAMPLED
PARENT/GUARDIAN	29
PASTSTUDENT	14
STUDENT	30
TEACHER	7
GRAND TOTAL	80

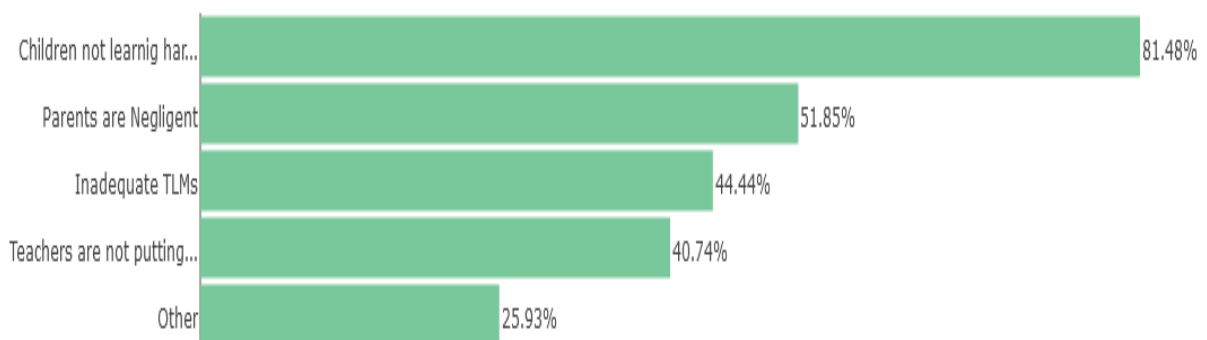
Educational Status of Respondents

Row Labels	JHS	None	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Vocational/Technical	Grand Total
Parents/Guardians	2	22	5				29
Past Students				7	6	1	14
Students	20		10				30
Teachers					7		7
Grand Total	22	22	15	7	13	1	80

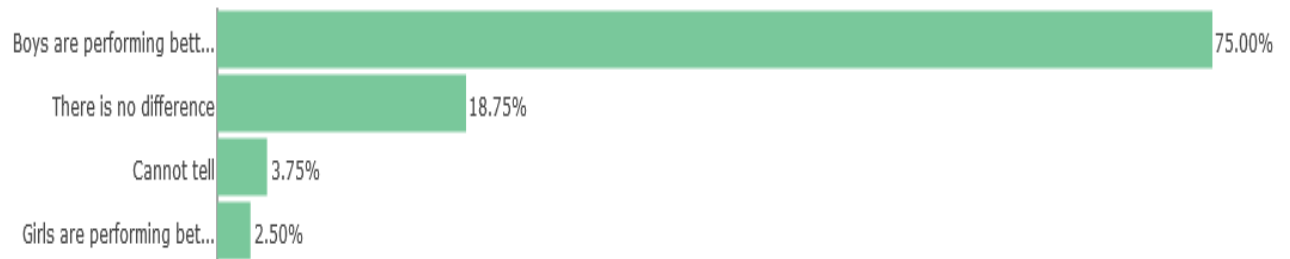
Perceptions about Performance at BECE



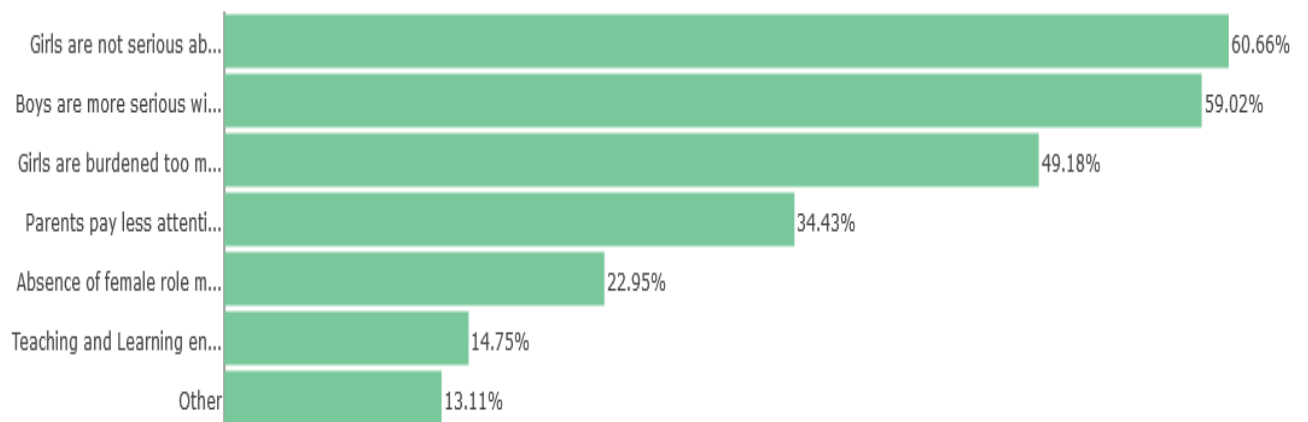
Reasons for poor performance



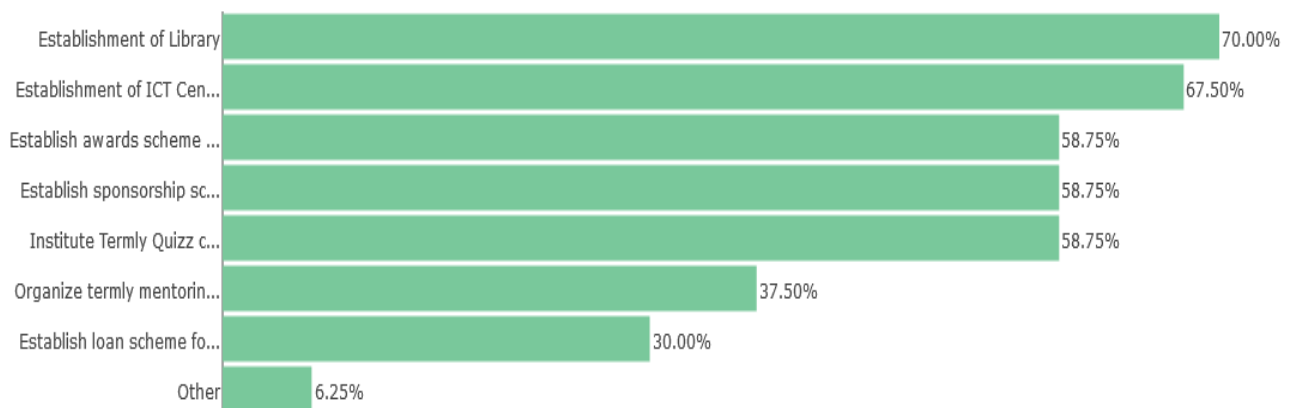
Gender Disparity in Performance



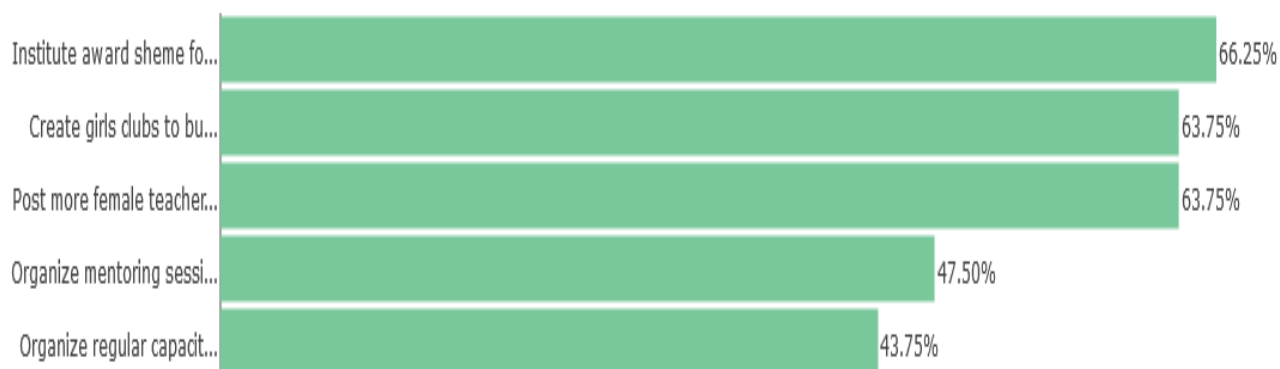
Reasons for Girls Performance



Recommended Solutions



Recommended Solutions for Improving Girls' Performance



Conclusions

- i. More respondents thought that performance at the BECE over the past three years has been good, albeit, they think students don't take their studies seriously enough.
- ii. Inadequate TLMS, Computers and Water or absence of same constitute major challenges to performance.
- iii. Boys are thought to be performing better than girls due to gender impediments, but also that girls are not taking their education as serious as boys.
- iv. Establishment of Library and ICT Centre were most recommended solution for improving performance generally.
- v. Posting more female teachers to the schools, instituting an awards scheme for girls and creating girls clubs/mentoring were also most recommended actions to improve girls' performance.

Administrative and Human Resources

An Administrative/ Finance officer was employed on fulltime basis to assist the Executive Director with office duties. An office was rented for one and furnished with working desks and chairs. Two volunteers have been engaged to support with field activities. An organizational Bank Account was successfully opened with GN Bank. The organization's website has been created and launched, while a dedicated mailbox has been registered.

Management intends to engage an audit firm to audit the organization's accounts and produce an audited accounts statement. A strategic plan is also being developed for the next three (3) of operations.

Financial

A separate report has been submitted on finances*

Conclusion

This reporting year has been eventful for a young organization, as ISRD. Though a lot of successes has been chalked, operations have been limited to few communities due to limited funding. Going forward, ISRD shall engage in rigorous funding raising activities, including writing of funding proposals, so as to widen the financial resource base of the organization.