

SCHOOL FOR LIFE (SfL) ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

YEAR 2020 IN REVIEW

There is no doubt that the year 2020 was a challenging year for everyone (individuals, state and non-states agencies and institutions) globally. The whole world woke up to an outbreak of Covid-19 with its far-reaching consequences on the socio-economic life of every community. The education sector in particular, which School for Life (SfL) is primarily focused on has been the hardest hit especially in Ghana, as schools continued to be closed throughout the year in line with the government's effort to contain the spread of the virus. This affected the implementation of our planned interventions for the year, especially with respect to activities that had to be implemented whilst schools are in sessions.

Particularly for SfL, 2020 has been an extra challenging year, as we witnessed the passing of our Board Chairman, Mr. H. S. Haruna in late 2020. Mr. Haruna had been very instrumental to the growth of the organisation, being part of the SfL journey right from the very beginning till his untimely demise on 25th October, 2020. May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace!

Despite these obvious setbacks, we remained resilient and steadfast in our quest to contribute to the development of Ghana, especially Northern Ghana, through the promotion of equitable access and quality education. We still managed to make modest contributions in this regard.

We also had to adapt to the new normal that the pandemic had presented by adopting new strategies both operationally and grammatical in line with our response to the pandemic.

Together with our partners, we resorted to virtual meetings to ensure our partnerships remained strong and that we each lived up to our respective responsibilities on programme management and monitoring. At the same time, we adopted other

strategies to contain the spread of the virus and to minimize the impact of the virus and the associated school closure on the education of children in the most deprived and remote rural communities of Northern Ghana.

In this regard, we sensitized community members in our zone of influence that helped create awareness about the Covid-19 virus as well as its preventive measures. To complement these efforts, SfL further introduced supplemental learning classes and other adaptive learning strategies that ensured children continued to engage in learning whilst still observing the safety and preventive protocols in comfortable environments. Other result-oriented interventions included back-to-school campaigns and stakeholder engagements on school reopening in the midst of the Covid-19 virus.

I am hopeful that as you read on, you will learn more about our modest achievements and strategies in 2020 even in the midst of the devastating virus.

Thank you.



Wedad Sayibu, Programme Director

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SfL AT A GLANCE

School for Life (SfL) is a local Non-Governmental Organization that works to strengthen Civil Society's role in improving access to relevant quality education. SfL functions as a lead organization in delivering, demonstrating and advocating for mother tongue based complementary basic education in underserved areas of Ghana and provides complementary educational services to out-of-school children. SfL also provides technical support to both Government and Non-Governmental Organizations in the area of complementary education and quality education programmes providing innovation and inclusive approaches to education in Ghana. School for Life strives to be a center of excellence that inspires breakthroughs in education. The organisation started in 1995, emerging from cooperation on rural community development between the Northern Region based civil society organisation, Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) and a Danish NGO, Ghana Friends (GV).

OUR VISION

A Ghana where the right to relevant quality education is fulfilled leaving no one behind

OUR MISSION

SfL works to strengthen civil society's role in improving access to relevant quality education by functioning as a lead organization in delivering, demonstrating and advocating for innovative and inclusive approaches to education in Ghana



Out of School Children excited about Learning to read and write

Since its inception and over the past 26 years, SfL has delivered several impact and target driven programmes benefitting the most disadvantaged population in the country, especially in rural Northern Ghana.

OUR STRATEGIC AREAS:

In 2020, we launched our new Strategic plan, spanning the period 2020-2024. Under the new strategic plan, SfL focuses on four main strategic areas which are linked to the Sustainable development Goal 4 (SDG4) and the Government of Ghana's strategic priorities on education as highlighted in the 2018-2030 Education Strategic Plan (ESP). These strategic areas are:

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

SfL works to ensure that all children have equal opportunity in education, regardless of their social class, gender, ethnicity background or physical and mental disabilities

QUALITY EDUCATION

SfL seeks to ensure that children in deprived, hard-to-reach and marginalized communities have access to quality education. Key elements we focus on are the physical space, qualified and committed teachers, relevant teaching and learning methodologies, materials and community support.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

As part of the school governance structure at the Basic Education level, the Government has instituted committees to support in the management of schools. SfL promotes well-functioning governance structures with adequate capacity and access to engagement platforms.

EQUITY

Equity in education requires putting systems in place to ensure that every child has an equal chance for success. SfL promotes a fair and inclusive system that addresses barriers to equal opportunities in education.

YOUNG WOMEN IN LITERACY



A beneficiary of the Young Women in Literacy Project, learning to write

In 2020, in partnership with YEFL Ghana and with support from Ghana Friends, a sub-project, ‘The Young Women in Literacy Project’ was rolled out under the E4L Programme. The Project aims at supporting non-literate young women to achieve basic literacy, numeracy and entrepreneurship skills to enable them conduct businesses in a functional and professional manner. The project seeks to improve the quality of life of young women through training for self-employment.

Under this initiative, a total of 100 non-literate young women in four Programme Districts – Karaga, Savelugu, Kumbungu and Mion participated. They took part in six months of literacy and numeracy classes and a boot camp in entrepreneurial and leadership skills.

A significant number of the young women have attained appreciable

literacy and numeracy skills and can read simple text, write their names, and do simple arithmetic. The intervention also increased the confidence levels of the young women. They are now able to hold discussions and answer questions boldly. Also, the increased level of confidence has resulted to most of them openly sharing business ideas and discussing business plans as part of the entrepreneurship training.

Having participated in this exciting entrepreneurship training, Muniru Fulera, a beneficiary from the Savelugu District lauded, the intervention.

“Before joining the classes, I could not identify names on my phone. I always relied on other people to help me make calls. I could also not write anything. But now, I can make calls myself and can also write or mention my number to others”.

The results achieved are attributed to the level of commitment of the young women and the structured methodology that has been employed in the literacy and numeracy classes.

EMPOWERMENT FOR LIFE PROGRAMME (E4L)

School for Life is implementing the Empowerment for Life Programme (E4L) in partnership with GDCA, YEFL Ghana, and CLIP and Ghana Venskab (GV) an NGO based in Denmark. The Programme integrates three thematic areas; Governance, Education and Inclusive Growth and Employment with School for Life responsible for the Education thematic area.

With a broad aim of promoting equity, access, quality education and increasing civil society organizations’ contribution to improved distribution and use of resources in education, SfL works to achieve four key outcomes/objectives under the education thematic area namely;

- Partners organize civil society to push for increased funding and effective implementation of education pro-poor policies.
- School governance has become more inclusive, transparent and accountable; and educational resources are used more effectively.
- New educational methodologies are promoted for improved learning outcomes.
- Girls and young women have better education opportunities.

THE COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER TEACHER PROGRAMME (CVTP)

The Community Volunteer Teacher Programme (CVTP) was devised by Teach2Teach International and jointly developed and implemented with School for Life. The project trains talented young Ghanaians to be teachers of excellence. The volunteers are mostly selected from the local communities after an intensive and holistic training in pedagogy, leadership and safeguarding skills. Upon completion of the training, the CVTs are deployed to work in schools in their home communities with continuous guidance and refresher trainings from the SfL team.

In 2020, our first cohort were deployed in 20 schools in the Kumbungu and Tolon districts in communities with unbalanced pupil-teacher ratio, and general poor learning outcomes. These efforts complemented the work of the regular classroom teaching and learning. Through the child-centred teaching methodology and leadership skills, the CVTs provided dedicated service and friendly teaching and learning atmosphere that generated the interest and admiration for the project from parents, pupils, headteachers and GES officials.

Within a short implementation period, pupils in the beneficiary schools quickly felt the benefit of the CVTs in the classrooms.



A group photo of CVTs after a training session

Since then, the programme has proven to be very relevant in the communities where it is being implemented as community members and head teachers continue to provide positive feedback about its impact. In the first five months, literacy and numeracy rates amongst their students increased by 19% and 5% respectively.

“At first when I picked a book, all I did was to look at the pictures because I could not read. But now, I can read very well and I also understand what I read. He has time for us (referring to their CVT teacher). I now like reading a lot”.

Abdullah Raihana, a P.6 pupil of Tali RC primary school in the Tolon district.

With the support of Book Aid International, over 6000 age appropriate books were distributed to the communities through which the CVTs facilitated reading clubs. This further ensured positive reading habits among the pupils in the beneficiary communities at the crucial period when schools were closed. Also, after a year in the programme implementation, the CVTs reported a phenomenal increase in their levels of confidence as teachers and leaders.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ON SCHOOL REOPENING IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19

School for Life strengthened its engagement with key education stakeholders across all five districts under the E4L Programme. The engagement sessions brought together networks of PTA and SMC members, traditional authorities and District Assembly representatives and discussed the preparations towards school reopening. They also allowed for a better understanding of some collective efforts made at the community level in readiness for school reopening which included disinfection of schools, weeding and clearing of bushes, and repairs of broken furniture.

The engagements further encouraged inputs for a regional convening on school reopening amidst Covid-19. The regional level engagement provided a broader platform for collective discussions on the modalities for safe school reopening.

OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR 2020

DISTRIBUTION OF PPEs

As part of the E4L program, PPEs were donated to the Regional Health Directorate through the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) and the five MMDAs (Savelugu, Kumbungu, Mion, Saboba and Karaga) of the programme to help protect against the COVID-19 in Ghana.

The PPEs consisted of veronica buckets, hand sanitizers, nose masks, hand gloves, liquid soap and tissue papers. As an implementing partner, SfL supported the distribution of the PPEs in the Mion District.

In collaboration with the five MMDAs, the Ghana Health Service (GHS), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and Information Service Department (ISD), the program further facilitated the sensitization



A staff of SfL delivering PPEs to the Mion District Assembly in the Northern Region

and provision of relevant and updated information on COVID-19 precautionary measures, prevention and response to citizens of 111 communities in the five Program operational Districts.

The program further supported bi-weekly meetings of the COVID-19 Response teams of the five districts which helped them to address emerging issues of COVID-19 in the districts.



A CVT demonstrating how to use tipy-tap in Dalun Kukuo community

With the outbreak of COVID-19 SfL and its partner Teach to Teach International quickly responded by developing the Teach4Health initiative where CVTs were trained with COVID-19 health messages to sensitize their students, families and community members about the deadly COVID-19 pandemic and about the safety and preventive protocols.

The CVTs were remotely supported using WhatsApp platforms to constantly pass on new updates and latest news and information about the virus, government guidelines and any other relevant information about the pandemic. Through this initiative, our CVTs were able to help their communities to use the local materials to design hand washing containers to aid in washing their hands without contaminating the water. Each CVT reached up to at least 1000 people locally in every community.



A cross-section of learners under the Supplemental Learning Classes

School for Life with support from Ghana Friends (GV), instituted supplemental learning activities as an alternative measure to mitigate the impact of school closures on learning outcomes. The Supplemental Learning Classes were rolled out to provide ongoing tuition for selected vulnerable children in deprived and remote communities in the E4L districts. This was primarily meant to keep them engaged and to make up for

the lost time due to school closures occasioned by the Covid-19 Pandemic. A total of 1,750 children benefitted from this in 30 communities. The classes contributed in sustaining the interest of children in school during the school closures. It will also contribute in reducing the potential drop-out of the children. Testimonies from community members showed that, the intervention was timely and impactful. Yushawu Salifu, a parent

from Salinkpank, in the Mion district was full of praise for the intervention when he said:

“When schools closed, our children were found everywhere in the community. We feared for their future. But God being so grateful, we had class from School for Life. This supported our children a lot.”

In addition to the supplemental classes, re-enrolment drive campaigns were done through the radio with the support of the community journalists.

The facilitators of the Supplemental Learning Classes with the Support of the PTAs and SMCs, continuously engaged parents to ensure that, they support the return of their children especially girls to school.

SUCCESS STORIES

FROM SHYNESS TO A FLUENT READER: the story of Amina

“Our teacher is always in school and teaching us how to read and after school we will go back to school to read again”

Before the start of the Community Volunteer Teacher Programme (CVTP), Amina could not read. She struggled to pronounce three letter words on her own. But now, just one year after the start of the programme, Amina is not only able to read fluently, but she also understands what she reads.

Amina is a Primary 3 Pupil of the Rashaadiya R/C Primary school in the Kumbungu District in the Northern Region of Ghana. She attributes her improved performance to the efforts of the Volunteer Teacher, the reading clubs that have been established and the reading materials that have been provided by the project.

In her own words, *“Before madam Amatu came to teach in our class, school was not interesting. Some days you will*

go to school and you will not see a teacher. We didn’t also have reading books to learn. But when our new teacher came, she formed reading clubs and we also received some books from UK. We now have many books with nice pictures and this makes us to like reading. Our teacher also uses plays and games when she is teaching us. I now love

to go to school every day. I want to also become a teacher and support children like our Madam (referring to their Community Volunteer Teacher).”

FROM A POTENTIAL ‘KAYAYE’ TO A POTENTIAL UNIVERSITY GRADUATE

Meet Alhassan Fuseina, a 25-year-old young woman from Bognaayili, a rural farming community in the Kumbungu District of the Northern Region of Ghana. Fuseina completed Pong Tamale Senior High School in 2016 and had not been able to further her education due to poor grades and financial constraints. For almost four years, Fuseina sat at home doing almost nothing economically to earn a living. She did not have the requisite capacity and experience to be gainfully employed. She felt hopeless and frustrated upon continuous pressures from her parents to either marry or migrate to Accra for head portage (Kayaye).

In 2020, Fuseina’s life took a positive turn when the Community Volunteer Teacher Programme was introduced in her community. She applied to serve as a Volunteer Teacher, and, having met the eligibility criteria, she was chosen.

Narrating how she got to know about the programme Fuseina explained she heard the information and recruitment processes for the programme through radio but first felt reluctant to apply. Upon several encouragements from her family, she finally applied through the district education office, was selected for an interview and finally enrolled as a volunteer teacher in her community.

Fuseina together with 39 others with similar conditions from different communities in the Kumbungu and Tolon districts were trained in basic pedagogy and teaching methodology. They were also continuously mentored and coached and given monthly stipends to provide tuition to the children.

This made Fuseina to start thinking about life differently. Her confidence level boosted and her interest in becoming a teacher also increased and she decided to re-sit for the Senior Certificate Examinations and improved her grades. With the improved grades, she decided to apply to the University for Development Studies for a 2-year

Fuseina engaging with her students in a lesson in class

Diploma Course in Early Childhood Education. Just at the time she and her colleagues graduated from the CVT Programme, she was offered the admission. But Fuseina still faced a bigger problem, she had to raise GHS1,500 admission fees in order to take the course. Fuseina and her family couldn’t raise that amount.

“My selection as a CVT marked a turning point in my life. Through the program, I participated in a series of trainings on pedagogy and classroom management skills that motivated me to pursue my dream interest in teaching. More importantly, I started my diploma course at UDS to enhance my future career and also support the children in my community. I thank SfL and its partners for this

Fortunately, due to the kind generosity and support of a UK based private donor, Fuseina had her admission fees fully paid.

She is now happily pursuing her dream course in the University for Development Studies and hopes to continuously help the younger ones upon completion.

GHANA FRIENDS (GV)



From the Danish NGO Ghana Friends, who has worked with School for Life since its inception in 1995, we want to say a big THANK YOU for excellent cooperation during 2020. Together we have celebrated numerous achievements in respect of access to quality education since our cooperation began with the goal of providing education to out of school children through the complementary basic education model. In 2020 we went into a new phase of our cooperation on the Empowerment for Life program, in which education plays a key role.

The year 2020 was a challenging year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, not least for the education sector and for school children. When schools remained closed for the major part of the year, Ghana Friends and School for Life shared a big concern for the many children who could not benefit from the government's electronic learning programs. We are grateful that School for Life stepped in to implement the

supplemental learning program reaching out to around 1,750 children in the 5 districts where we jointly implement the Empowerment for Life program. It was possible for School for Life to do this because of its well-established cooperation with the education authorities and close relationship and long-standing credibility with communities in the region. We are also grateful to School for Life for playing an active role in speaking out for well-prepared and responsible re-opening of schools and encouraging all families to send their children – girls and boys – back to school

During the first part of 2020, School for Life launched its new strategic plan 2020 – 2024 outlining the areas through which the organization wants to drive the agenda for equitable access to quality education for all. We wish School for Life all the best in pursuing this mission and look forward to continued cooperation along that path.

Teach2Teach International



Teach2Teach international is UK based organization that works to transform lives in marginalised and hard to reach communities through high-quality training and education. The working partnership between Teach2Teach (T2T) International and School for Life (SfL) Ghana began formerly in January 2019 with the roll out of the Community Volunteer Teacher (CVT) Programme supported by UK Aid Direct and the Ghana Association of Bankers. Since then, we have grown from strength to strength. The real test of the resilience of our partnership was the outbreak of the

Covid-19 pandemic with all the restrictions that came along with it, when we were mid-way into the implementation of our first joint project. But we have managed successfully to quickly adapt to the new reality and innovated effectively to ensure the completion of the first project. With openness, transparency, complementarity of our strengths and expertise and above all, a sense of mutual respect, both organizations see our working future together as one that will most enviable and a model for others in international development and cooperation.

We have also been extremely fortunate in having the strong patronage of Pisigu Lana Chief Alhassan Andani. He has not only mobilized the Ghana Banker's Association to provide some financial support for our programme ensuring that we could increase the number of CVTs from 30 to 40, but has also taken keen personal interest in project delivery by attending the inauguration and the Graduation ceremonies of our first cohort of Community Volunteer Teachers and personally supporting the

transportation costs of the Book Aid International Books within Ghana

We look forward to broadening and deepening the range of our programmes over the coming months and years, working tirelessly in partnership to ensure the maximum number of students can access the quality education they deserve and more young people can have the opportunity of being trained as quality community volunteer teachers, mentors and champions of disability and inclusion

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