2023 ANNUAL REPORT
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AfC  Associates for Change
ALP  Accelerated Learning Programme
API  Advocacy and Policy Influencing
CBE  Complementary Basic Education
CEA  Complementary Education Agency
CDA  Community Development Alliance
CSU  Civil Society in Development
CLEAR  Citizen-Lead Educational Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana
DANIDA  Danish International Development Agency
EAF  Education Accountability Framework
EduWatch  African Education Watch
EOL  Education Out Loud
EOF  Educational Opportunity Fund
ESP  Education Strategic Plan
E4L  Empowerment for Life
FCDO  Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
GALOP  Ghana Accountability and Learning Outcomes Project
GEM  Global Education Monitoring
GEOP  Ghana Education Outcomes Project
GES  Ghana Education Service
GETFund  Ghana Education Trust Fund
GDCA  Ghana Developing Communities Association
GNECC  Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
GOG  Government of Ghana
GPE  Global Partnership for Education
G-REP  Gender Rights and Empowerment Programme
GPRBA  Global Partnership for Result-Based Approaches
GV  Ghana Friends
IMF  International Monetary Fund
KNUST  Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
MEL & KM  Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Knowledge Management
MOE  Ministry of Education
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
OOSC  Out-of-School Children
PLUS  Parental Learning for Uninterrupted Schooling
PTA  Parent Teachers Association
SAGE  Strategic Action for Girls Education
SAGES  Strengthening Accountability in Ghana’s Education System
SC  Second Chance
SDG  Sustainable Development Goals
SMC  School Management Committee
SPAM  School Performance Appraisal Meeting
STAGE  Strategic Approaches to Girls Education
TPD  Teacher Professional Development
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
WB  World Bank
YEFL  Ghana Youth Empowerment for Life, Ghana
ZOI  Zone of Influence
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APPRECIATION TO OUR DONORS WHO SUPPORTED OUR WORK IN 2023
OUR AFFILIATIONS, NETWORKS AND COLLABORATIONS

- Ghana Education Service (GES)
- Ministry of Education (MoE)
- Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies
- Northern Network for Educational Development (NNED)
- Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC)
- CSO platform on SDG 4
- Africa Education Watch
- STAR Ghana Foundation
- UNESCO Global Monitoring Report
- International Institute of Parliamentary Network
- MDF/ACER
- Complementary Basic Education (CBE) Alliance
- Ghana Developing Communities Association
- Youth Empowerment for Life (YEL Ghana)

SCHOOL FOR LIFE FOUNDATION
## Approximate Grant Size (USD)

### Name of Donor

- **GV-CISU-DANIDA**
- **GPE/Oxfam/EOL**
- **Luminos Fund**
- **WB/GOG/Bridges Fund**
- **USAID/CARE**
- **FCDO/STAR GHANA Foundation**

### Name of Project/Contact Person/ Referee

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name of Donor</th>
<th>Name of Project/Contact Person/ Referee</th>
<th>Approximate Grant Size (USD)</th>
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<td>Strengthening Accountability in Ghana’s Education System (SAGES)</td>
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<td>FCDO/STAR GHANA Foundation</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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MISSION

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.

VISION

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

CORE VALUES

Transparency and accountability: we are honest, open, and accountable to ourselves, partners, supporters, and communities; we take personal and collective responsibility for using our resources efficiently to achieve results.

Collaboration and participation: We work as a team and value our differences. We work with and involve partners, communities, civil society, and state actors to make a difference for children and communities.

Equity: We believe in fair and equitable access to and distribution of resources and social services. We work for a just society that values everybody’s differences.

Inclusion and non-discrimination: we include the most deprived communities and children in our work independent of divisions based on ethnicity, religious beliefs, political allegiance, gender, and ability. We never compromise our impartiality in selecting beneficiaries of our work and work for inclusion in all parts of society.
Access to Education: School for Life 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: School for Life works to ensure that children in deprived, hard-to-reach and marginalized communities have access to quality education. Key elements to be addressed are physical space, qualified and committed teachers, and relevant teaching and learning materials.

School Governance: As part of the school governance structure at the Basic Education level, the government has instituted committees to support the management of schools. School for Life 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 of success. School for Life promotes a fair and inclusive system that addresses barriers to equal opportunities.
STAFF

School for Life has a team of experienced, dedicated and committed staff with expertise in education development, innovative Teaching and Learning practices, stakeholder engagements, social accountability, community mobilisation and facilitation, project design, implementation, and management, monitoring evaluation and learning and financial management. We currently have 115 staff (89 males and 26 females) and over 240 community volunteers.
It has been an incredible and exciting year for us in School for Life, not least in terms of the exponential increase in the size of our programme portfolio and staff strength. In 2023, our funding portfolio increased from $6,000,912 in 2022 to $13,375,680 and our staff numbers grew from 40 to a total of 115. The organisation successfully brought together a team of dedicated and committed professionals we call a family with varied expertise and experience, whose individual and collective efforts are already contributing to the success of the organization and the communities we serve.

The year has seen some remarkable successes and surmountable challenges that serve as motivation and learning curves for us as a team. We are motivated by the successes we chalked and at the same time inspired by the learnings that emerged from the challenges we encountered.

The successes are manifested in the new partnerships we built and the strength of our existing partnerships. Guided by our core values of transparency and accountability, we succeeded in forging close bond, open and trusting relationships with our partners which continue to endear us to new and like-minded partners and stakeholders. In 2023, we continued and strengthened our collaborations and partnerships with Ghana Venskab (Ghana Friends), Luminos Fund, OXFAM, Bridges Fund Management, Rising Academy Network, STAR Ghana Foundation, and CRAFT Education. We also forged new partnerships with CARE International in Ghana, Alinea Foundation and JARA. Through these partnerships we continued the implementation of our existing interventions and designed new ones with funding support from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Civil Society in Development (CISU), the World Bank, the Government of Ghana (GOG) and the Or Foundation.

School for Life worked together with our longstanding Danish Partner, Ghana Venskaeb (Ghana Friends), Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA), YEFL Ghana and Changing Lives and Innovative Partnerships (CLIP) to secure a new funding support from CISU for the phase five of the Empowerment for Life (E4L) Programme for the next 4 years (2024-2028). This landmark continuous funding was based upon the successful completion of the phase four of the programme. Still, through our partnership with the Luminos Fund, over one thousand Out of School children in the Ashanti Region have been reached with our Complementary Basic Education Programme (CBE) with which we provided these beneficiaries a second chance to education. Under the Ghana Education Outcome Project (GEOP), in partnership with Bridges Fund Management (BFM) and Rising Academy Network (RAN), we reached over 6,000 Out of School Children and over 85 low performing basic schools with our Complementary Basic Education Program and the RISING Model Mainstream School Intervention Program.

Furthermore, we secured an extension of our Citizen-Led Action for Educational Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (CLEAR) Project under the GPE-funded Education Out Loud Programme to be implemented from 2024 to 2026. This has been made possible with the collaborative support and guidance from OXFAM Denmark through its Regional Management Unit for West and Centra Africa.
School for Life also began the implementation of a five year USAID-funded Strengthening Accountability in Ghana’s Education System-Strengthening Activity as part of a consortium led by CARE in Ghana.

During the period under review, the organization also embarked on a number of advocacy efforts that have contributed to some policy discourse, promoted actions from systems actors and stakeholders and increased our presence and influence in the education policy space in the country. In connection with our advocacy work, we built strategic and learning collaborations with organisations such as the MDF/ACER, the International Parliamentary Network, Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition, Africa Education Watch and the STAR Ghana Foundation.

We are very excited about the results of our existing interventions so far and the prospect of the new interventions. We are grateful to our partners and donors for the trust and confidence they repose in us and for the many learning opportunities they offered us in 2023. Together, we continue to strive for a Ghana where the right to relevant quality education is fulfilled leaving no one behind.

We are also grateful to our Board of Trustees for the incredible support and guidance throughout the year. They have worked all through the year to provide policy and strategic direction for the organization.

Many thanks to our amazing staff without whom the work we did in 2023 would not have been possible. They continued to put up their best amid challenges. Their energy and the zeal to make positive impact in the lives of people and communities we work with is highly commendable. In this report, we provide an account of the results and learnings from the implementation of the various interventions and programmes. It is my hope that as you read on, you will learn more about our interventions and accomplishments in 2023.

Thank you

Wedad Sayibu
Brief on Our Flagship Programme

**Complementary Basic Education (CBE) for out-of-school children**

Since its inception over the past 29 years, School for Life has delivered several impact and target driven programmes benefitting the most disadvantaged population in the country especially rural Northern Ghana. School for Life has been delivering target driven education interventions to deal with the problem of access and quality education. Our flagship program, the Functional Literacy Programme (Started with funding support from DANIDA) which has evolved to become what is now known as the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) Programme has contributed in providing access to education for the hardest to reach children in Ghana. To date, over 400,000 out of school children have been supported to enhance their literacy and numeracy skills by providing flexible learning platforms, context based learning materials and community resident volunteer support. School for Life has also contributed significantly in enhancing the learning gains especially in literacy and numeracy skills of children in the most deprived communities of Northern Ghana with programmes supported by USAID, DFID (now FCDO), UNICEF among others.
School for Life works in deprived communities in seven out of the sixteen administrative regions of Ghana including Northern, North East, Upper East, Upper West, Savannah, Oti and Ashanti Regions. In terms of reach, our interventions are of national scope. Our advocacy and policy influencing efforts aim at influencing systemic and structural changes that promote quality and equitable provision of education for all Ghanaian children. Our strategic approaches are human rights-based approach, capacity building, evidence sharing, collaboration, alliance building and partnerships, networking and literacy provision. These approaches are complemented with interventions vigorously pursued towards the achievement of the key strategic areas of the strategic plan.

The year 2023 has been an exciting journey for School for Life. In 2023, our funding portfolio increased our staff numbers grew from 40 to a total of 115 highly trained, skilled and committed human resource involved in the day to day implementation of activities across 7 administrative regions in Ghana. We have made significant progress in promoting access and quality of education to both in-school and out-of-school children. We have also significantly contributed to school governance at the school-community level and at the district level through our cutting-edge capacity building initiatives for the relevant stakeholders in the education value chain.

In 2023, School for Life reached a substantial number of beneficiaries across the operational zones, with various projects and programs that directly impacted the lives of about 87,771 people. Of this number, 13,365 out-of-school children comprising 7,353 boys and 6,012 girls have had access to formal education through our Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP). Also, 25,023 children in low-performing schools, comprising 13,361 boys and 11,662 girls have improved learning outcomes through the mainstream school intervention programmes. In terms of strengthening school governance, 49,383 school leaders and other citizen groups have been reached.

Beyond these numbers, this report further captures compelling stories, loud voices and anecdotes of how the lives of our beneficiaries have been changed through the projects and programmes we implemented within the year. These stories range from how the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) programme inspired facilitators to further their education, how low performing school pupils improved on their literacy (reading) and numeracy (Maths) skills, to how we have inspired voices for young girls to speak out for their rights.

These beneficiaries have been reached through the interventions of the various projects including the Ghana Education Outcomes Project (GEOP) with funding support from the World Bank and the Government of Ghana (GoG); the CBE/Second Chance Project with funding support from the Luminos Fund; the Citizen-Led Action for Educational Accountability and Responsiveness (CLEAR) Project with funding support from the Global Partnership for Education through OXFAM; the Empowerment for Life Programme with funding support from the Danish International Development Agency through the Civil Society Fund; the Parental Learning for Uninterrupted Schooling (PLUS) Project with funding support from the Commonwealth of Learning; the Strengthening Accountability in Ghana’s Education System (SAGES)-System Strengthening Activity with funding support from the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) through CARE Ghana; and the Strategic Action for Girls Education (SAGE) Project with Funding support from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office through the STAR-Ghana Foundation.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

School for Life started in 1995, springing from cooperation on rural development between the Northern Ghana-based Civil Society Organization, Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) and a Danish NGO called Ghana Friends (GV). The partners envisaged education as a critical pillar and tool for development and at the same time realized that there were serious challenges to education performance in deprived parts of Northern Ghana. One major identifiable challenge was the high and rising numbers of out-of-school (OOSC) children. As a way of providing access to the out-of-school children, School for Life developed a functional literacy model, a flagship programme which has been proven to be highly effective and has been adopted by the government as Complementary Basic Education (CBE).

In recent years, School for Life has expanded its scope to engage in strategic service delivery and evidence-based advocacy. In line with this, we collaborate closely with other civil society education actors and education authorities at the district, regional, and national levels to contribute to the delivery of accessible and relevant quality education to all Ghanaian children.

School for Life is currently delivering interventions under its strategic plan covering 2020 to 2024. This plan is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5 and Ghana’s Education Strategic Plan 2018 to 2030.

2.0 EXTERNAL/INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF OUR WORK

A good education offers individuals the opportunity to lead richer and more fulfilling lives. At a societal level, it creates opportunities for humanity to solve its pressing problems.

The world has gone through a dramatic transition over the last few centuries, from a period where very few had any form of basic education to one where most people now do. This is not only reflected in the inputs to education – enrollment and attendance – but also in outcomes, where literacy rates have greatly improved. Getting children into school alone is not enough. What they learn also matters. There are large differences and gaps in educational outcomes where, for instance, in low-income countries, most children cannot read by the end of primary school. These inequalities in education exacerbate existing poverty and inequalities in global incomes (Ritchie et al., 2023).
Globally, around 90 percent of the world’s population had completed a primary education in 2020, whereas 66 percent had attained a secondary education. The numbers were even lower in tertiary education, with around 40 percent of the global population having attained some kind of tertiary education (Einar & Dyvik, 2023).

In sub-Saharan Africa, 81 percent of children are in school and just 63 percent complete primary education. The rates fall even further for lower secondary education, with just 63 percent of adolescents between the ages of about 12 to 14 years old enrolled in school and only 38 percent completing this level (UIS Information Paper, 2019)¹.

The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report for 2022 estimated that 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 worldwide were out of school in 2021, of which 118.5 million were girls and 125.5 million were boys (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2022²). Out of the worldwide Out-of-School Children population, 98 million are from sub-Saharan Africa. The UNESCO Global Monitoring data further reported that there was a further 12 million increase of the Out-of-School Children population in sub-Saharan Africa from 2021 to 2022. New data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report further showed that in 2022, the global out-of-school population has reached 250 million (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2022).

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries across the world have invested around US$12 trillion in response measures to save lives and support critical economic structures (Lustig et al., 2000³). As the pandemic went on, those funds were being stretched increasingly thin, with governments forced to make difficult fiscal trade-offs. In developing regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, where health systems are less advanced and require a higher share of limited resources, those trade-offs led to areas that pose less immediate socioeconomic risks being overlooked. Consequently, areas such as education were overlooked in many African countries and this affects quality education delivery in the post-pandemic era.

Over the past two years, countries have set national benchmarks for selected SDG 4 indicators to be achieved by 2025 and 2030. These targets are likely to be missed due to inadequate funding for education. A UNESCO report indicates that there is a US$ 97 billion gap for countries to achieve their national SDG 4 education targets by 2030 (GEM Report, 2023). Double the teachers are needed in pre-primary between now and 2030 to reach set targets. The GEM Report further observed that one-third of the finance gap could be filled with better aid targeting.

Ghana has made significant progress in achieving universal primary education over the past two decades with primary school enrolment increasing from 2.5 million in 2001 to 4.6 million in 2021. At the Junior High School (JHS) level, enrolment within the same period increased from 865,636 to 1.8 million. Yet, despite these gains, statistics of educational performance show huge gaps in terms of access to education, retention and completion. Nationally, 30 percent drops out of school before completing Basic Education due to poor learning outcomes. In terms of quality education, recent Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) reports show that learning outcomes remain poor especially for those in deprived and remote communities in Northern Ghana. The 2018-2030 Education Strategic Plan (ESP) estimates that over 450,000 children are out of school, mostly from the Northern part of Ghana, Oti and Ashanti regions. However, the 2021 National Population and Housing Census in Ghana observed that 1,215,546 children children between the ages of 4 and 17 years are out of school.

Over the years, government efforts in financing education to address the critical gaps in the sector has been inconsistent. For the first time in two decades, only 12.9 percent of budgeted expenditure

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¹UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Information Paper No. 59, September 2019
²UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2022
was allocated to education in the 2023 budget, which is below the UNESCO’s minimum benchmark of 15 percent. Also, Ghana fell short of the minimum benchmark of 4 per cent GDP allocation to education, with a 3 per cent attainment in the 2023 budget. These allocation cuts have direct negative implications on equitable access and quality in education, especially on the supply of teaching and learning resources, teacher deployment and infrastructure provision.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme onto which Ghana signed up provides a set of conditionalities and benchmarks which in diverse ways impacts significantly on the country’s debts and expenditure profiles. These conditionalities pose severe implications on Ghana’s education service delivery and the attainment of the targets in the 2018-2030 Education Strategic Plan.

In reference to the fiscal pressures occasioning Ghana’s IMF bid and the need to remain within the debt benchmarks and limits, Government of Ghana ‘tightened the cap’ on GETFund and the other earmarked funds, granting central government the fiscal space to divert funds from GETFund to other sectors of the economy from 2023. This diversion of funds purposely to comply with IMF’s borrowing benchmarks, it is envisioned, will adversely affect the already deplorable state of education delivery in the country.

With GETFund being the major source of financing education infrastructure, the implication is that fewer schools are constructed. Furthermore, given the restrictive financing contexts, GETFund is unable to create the fiscal space to fund the necessary infrastructure interventions for enrolling and retaining children in formal basic schools, pursuant to national and international targets.

The resultant effect of central government acceptance to the benchmarks of the IMF programme will most likely be manifested in low quality educational attainment. Consequently, this is more likely to affect basic schools and further impacts on the School for Life complementary support to education delivery, thus necessitating a sustained advocacy efforts of pushing for equitable government allocation, distribution and utilization of educational resources for basic schools. Faced with these contextual realities in the year under review, School for Life delivered initiatives that are aimed to create a society where every Ghanaian child enjoys access to quality basic education without leaving anyone behind.

### 4.0 NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED

In 2023, through our various projects, School for Life has reached a substantial number of beneficiaries across the operational zones, directly impacting the lives of about 87,771 people. Of this number, 13,365 out-of-school children comprising 7,353 boys and 6,012 girls have had access to formal education through our Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP). Also, 25,023 of our life-impacted children are in low-performing schools, comprising 13,361 boys and 11,662 girls whose learning outcomes have been improved through our mainstream school intervention programme. In terms of strengthening school governance, 49,383 school leaders and other citizen groups have been reached.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Areas</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED</th>
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<tr>
<td>Access to education</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Youth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>7,353</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality education</td>
<td>13,163</td>
<td>11,452</td>
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<tr>
<td>School governance</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20,586</td>
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Source: (Project Reports for 2023)
Figure 1: Beneficiaries under Access to Education Based on Gender

Figure 2: Quality Education Based on Gender
5.0 SHOWCASING OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE DELIVERY OF RELEVANT QUALITY EDUCATION

5.1 Access, Quality, Governance and Equity
Access, Quality, Equity and educational governance are the thematic areas School for Life is addressing. During this period, School for Life made significant contributions to providing access, quality, equity and good local-level education governance through the various projects we implemented. This section highlights the projects and their contribution to the thematic objectives in 2023.

5.1.1 Complementary Basic Education (CBE)-Second Chance Project

To contribute to addressing the out of school children situation in the country, School for Life partnered with the Luminos Fund through which we implemented the Complementary Basic Education (CBE)/Second Chance (SC) project in the Ashanti Region. The objective of the project is to contribute towards reducing the out-of-school children (OOSC) situation in the Ashanti region in particular and Ghana as a whole.

Figure 3: Facilitator, Emmanuel at Samanjakura conducting weekly assessment of learners
The intervention benefits from a combination of learning and experiences from several years of implementing the CBE programme in Ghana and the Luminos Second Chance programme in other parts of the world. The project targets districts and communities with evidence of the prevalence of the OOSC situation.

The CBE/Second Chance project targeted 1000 OOSCs in 2023 and eventually transitioned and integrated 989 (98.9%) OOSCs into formal schools. By Gender aggregation, this resulted in 518 (51.8%) males and 471 (47.1%) females for the second cohort of the CBE cycle.

As the Cohort 2 learners were transitioned into formal schools, a total of 1,015 OOSCs were also enrolled for the 3rd Cohort in Sekyere Afram Plains and Asante Akyeme North. Out of the total of the cohort 3 learners, 742 OOSCs which comprised 318 (42%) males and 360 (48%) females are in the Sekyere Afram Plains district which represented (74.1%) of the Cohort. The rest of the 274 (27%) OOSCs consisting 149 (54%) males and 125 (46%) females are from the Asante Akyeme North district.

Quarterly Assessments and Placement Results
Quarterly assessments are an integral part of the CBE/SC project. These assessments are conducted to measure the learners’ progress in each quarter. Based on the outcome, project leads are able to plan and review with the Facilitators to find suitable approaches to support the learners, especially the weak-performing learners. The motive of this critical intervention is to contribute to improved learning performances.

Table 2 below presents the quarterly assessments that were conducted and the corresponding performance of learners for the year under review.
Cohort 2: Quarterly Assessments

Table 2: Quarter 1 Assessment (Phonic Focus):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Score Range</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1.4%</td>
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<td>1 – 5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 – 20</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 25</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Learners that participated in the Q1 Assessment</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absenteeism</th>
<th>131</th>
<th>13.2%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrolled Learners</td>
<td>993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: (CBE/SC Quarterly Assessment Report)*

Table 3: Quarter 2 Assessment (Literacy & Numeracy):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Score Range</th>
<th>Literacy Learners</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Numeracy Learners</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>0 – 5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – 10</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<td>11 – 15</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 25</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>910</td>
<td></td>
<td>910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: (CBE/SC Quarterly Assessment Report)*

The CBE/SC Project has made some great impact on the learners, their communities and the facilitators in the Ashanti region. Some of our change stories in 2023 are shared below:

1. How Mariam Dauda furthers her education through the inspiration of being a CBE facilitator

Meet Mariam Dauda a 21-year-old Facilitator, in Atutuso, a town in the Asante Akyem North Municipality. She served as a Facilitator on the CBE/SC Project for Atutuso in Cohort 2 and partly in Cohort 3. This is a Facilitator who resisted her selection and invitation to come for Facilitators’ training at Ejisu, with the thinking that, it was a plot to kidnap and kill her. To address her misgiving, her brother attended the training for two days before reassuring her that it wasn’t a ploy to kill her or harm her in any way. Her successive participation in the Facilitators Training, eagerness to learn, her teachability and passion for the facilitator role earned her a recognition as one of the outstanding Facilitators. Most of her colleague Facilitators resort to her for peer teaching, and coaching. Some of her colleague Facilitators travel from their communities to Atutuso, for peer coaching. This gave birth to her desire to pursue higher education in teacher training. Through diligent saving of her monthly stipend and community contributions, she saved to purchase a Teacher Training Form last year and gained admission into the teacher training college.

Currently, Mariam is pursuing a Bachelor of Education (B.ED) at the Agogo Presbyterian Women’s College of Education. She made the following statement about her participation in the CBE:

*Figure 4: Mariam Dawuda, a 21-year-old facilitator who furthered her education through the CBE/SC intervention*
"The CBE has helped me a lot. It broke the poor perception I had of myself that, I could not teach for someone to understand. It took away the low self-esteem I had of myself and shyness away. It built my confidence, especially the stamina to stand in front of people to talk or do a presentation. When the Early Grade Reading Assessment and the end of quarter assessment results came, and I saw that the learners were making positive progress in learning, that encouraged me to do more for the learners. We do our classes in the morning, and because of the good results I witnessed, I always prepare my lessons a day ahead. That is what sparked my love and passion for teaching. I am glad that I didn't miss the chance of serving as a CBE Facilitator in spite of all the wild excuses I gave."

1. From CBE Class to a Wing School: the story of Akwei Dawia in the Sekyere Afram Plains District

The picture above (figure 5) is a wing-school initiative by the Akwei Dawia community in the Sekyere Afram Plains District. This concept of Wing School has evolved due to the increasing number of learners graduating as CBE graduates in each cohort of the project. However, a notable challenge faced by the community is the distance of over 14km from Akwei Dawia to the nearest school in Issakrom.

This distance defeats the policy by the Ghana Education Service (GES) concerning the acceptable distance for a child to travel to access the nearest school. This distance-related challenges whittles the efforts of the CBE Project aimed at providing a second chance at education for Out-of-School Children.

To address this situation, the community leaders of Akwei Dawia have undertaken the construction of a shed intended to function as a wing-school. The objective behind the wing-school is to overcome the geographical barrier, thereby motivating children to re-engage with education and avail themselves of the opportunities presented by the CBE Project.

Another objective behind the construction is to advocate the recognition of the community by the District Education Office and the District Assembly, with the hope of securing a dedicated school for the community.

5.1.2 Ghana Education Outcomes Project (GEOP)

In 2023, School for Life partnered with Bridges Fund Management (BFM) and the Rising Academy Network (RAN) to implement the Ghana Education Outcomes Project (GEOP) in the Northern and Oti regions. The project is funded by the Government of Ghana through a co-financing agreement with the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Education ("GPE"), and the Global Partnership for Results-Based Approaches ("GPRBA") as a sub-component of the Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP).

The MOE, supported by the World Bank and the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF), has designed an outcomes funding mechanism to: (1) Support OOSC in districts which have the highest number of OOSC,
to transition into mainstream primary education; and (2) Improve learning in mainstream schools into which the OOSC are placed, targeting literacy and numeracy at the end of P2 and P4. This outcomes funding mechanism is developed into The Ghana Education Outcomes Project (GEOP).

GEOP lies under the subcomponent 2.4 of GALOP which has as an objective to “strengthen support for schools and Out-Of-School Children (OOSC) through education outcomes funding”. The School for Life Rising Education Outcome Partnership (SfLREOP) is responsible for implementing this project in Lots 3 and 6 which comprises ten (10) districts in the Northern and Oti regions of Ghana. Lot three lies in Northern Region and includes the Tolon, Kumbungu, Savelugu, and Nanton districts/municipalities. In lot 6, School for Life is implementing activities in six (6) districts/municipalities of the Oti region namely; Krachi West, Krachi Nchumuru, Krachi East, Biakoye, Nkwanta South, and Nkwanta North.

The GEOP intervention is two-prong with two main objectives; to reduce the incidence of out-of-school children in Ghana, and to improve learning outcomes in low-performing schools under the GALOP programme.

In 2023, a total of 5,447 OOSC (2,828 boys and 2,619 girls) of the first cohort were transitioned into formal schools across 240 communities in the 10 districts. At the same time, a total of 6,128 were mobilised across 140 communities and enrolled onto the CBE classes as cohort 2. A total of 23,626 learners across 85 formal schools have also been reached with the mainstream school intervention initiatives in the Oti region.

The stories below highlight how the GEOP project is contributing to improved learning in schools and providing access to out-of-school children.

### 1. And we are champions!! Kakraka D/A Primary wins district quiz competition

Kakraka D/A Primary School in the Krachi Nchumuru district of the Oti region was identified as one of the low-performing schools under the Ghana Education Outcomes Project. With a total population of 173 (84 girls and 89 boys) the school faced critical pedagogical challenges. As part of our intervention to improve learning outcomes in the school, School for Life, collaborated with Rising Academy through which we implemented a Faster Reading (FR) curriculum based on the Rising Academy model. This model hinges on a complete student and teacher pack resources and the establishment of sound conditions for learning as well as innovative teaching strategies.

Faster Reading curriculum is essentially developed to accelerate readings gains through the teaching of reading based on pupils’ ability levels. With a daily commitment of FR sessions every morning before normal classes; 68 pupils of Kakraka D/A Primary are being taught with students’ work book and teachers’ guide on letter identification and its associated sounds, blending of sounds, word pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition. As a result, the school became one of the top performing schools in the curriculum adoption and adaptation despite its challenge with infrastructure. With the right commitment and zeal from both teachers and students, the fruits of their hard work and commitments to the FR curriculum came sooner than expected when World Vision Ghana organized a quiz competition in reading for the Krachi Nchumuru district among selected primary schools.

The Three pupils who represented Kakraka D/A Primary were beneficiaries of the FR sessions. At the end of the contest, the school emerged winners of the competition with 54 points whiles the second-best school had 34 points. The teachers and pupils of the school testified that the foundation of their victory stemmed from their adoption and adaptation of FR curriculum which has since accelerated the reading ability levels of pupils in their school. Mr. Agbanyo Freeman, a basic 4 teacher who handles the Consonant Vowel Consonant (CVC) level expressed his excitement when he noted:

“The foundation of our victory stems from the school’s adoption and adaptation of FR curriculum which has since accelerated the reading ability levels of pupils in our school.”
Miss Gemba Menyoyema, a CVC level student also noted: “I can now blend and pronounce new words. We thank our teachers for extra tuition they are giving us”.

The children were awarded with assorted learning materials. School for Life and our partner Rising Academy celebrate this achievement and are motivated to replicate this model across other communities in the country.

2. School at Last! The Story of Hannah Tornyi and Her colleagues at CK Kopper Community in the Biakoye District

CK Kopper is a community located in the Biakoye district of Oti Region. It is predominantly a fishing community with about 500 houses and is ruled by the Head Man of Klagbo family. Hannah Tornyi is one of the Twenty-five (25) Accelerated Learning Program learners enrolled in the Class. She is 15 years old and a primary 2 school dropout who is the sixth born of her mother and the tenth of her father. Even though few persons from the community are educated, she is determined to go higher after several years in the house without school.

Hannah summarises her journey into the ALP/ CBE class:
“One day, after returning from fishing at about 9 a.m., I saw some strangers (referring to School for Life team) in our community speaking with the elders and some community members. My mother called me to join the gathering. The people spoke about providing opportunities for children who aren’t in school and how it would help them. They registered us and promised to come back for the start of the classes.”

She added: “I always wanted the opportunity to go to school because I want to become a medical doctor. But my parent did not have enough to keep me in school and I had to work to support the family. Luckily the class was established for all of us that were registered. We attended the classes for 6 months”.

The class facilitator Mr Selorm Hlordzi said Hannah has always been regular and the first to come to class, she takes learning and class activities seriously and in no time, she became the best CBE learner in her class.

Hannah’s Mother, Madam Enam Adabla also said; “Hannah has changed in many things, she does the house chores on time, takes learning at home seriously, and attends CBE class always. I know she has started late but, better late than never”.

Hannah graduated from the CBE programme with many of her colleagues and currently she is at Abotoase R/C JHS 1. The Headmaster of Abotoase R/C JHS, Mr. Franklin Adadevor lauded the functional literacy and numeracy program of School for Life and called for its expansion to all hard-to-reach communities in the districts.

According to the headmaster, Hannah respects and comports herself all the time and remains one of the very disciplined girls in the school. Other teachers further expressed satisfaction with Hannah’s level of confidence and self-expression as she actively participates in class discussions and activities.

Hannah expressed her gratitude to School for Life for the opportunity to gain literacy and numeracy skills for the betterment of her life and to keep her dream of becoming a medical doctor in future a reality.
5.1.3: Alinea Foundation-WEE North Program

In April 2023 School for Life partnered with the Alinea Foundation in Ghana under the WEE North program to deliver empowerment and literacy sessions to 11 selected young women drawn from communities in Savelugu, Sagnarigu, and Central Gonja districts. These were made up of young women who had either embarked on journeys to the South of Ghana in search of greener pastures or those who had plans of embarking on such journeys. The group was called the Mabilgu cohort. For a period of 4 months (May to August 2023), School for Life held empowerment sessions for the Mabilgu Cohort covering ten (10) modules which enabled these young women to push the limits and fight the usual stereotypes of women venturing into male-dominated trades. The modules included Gender concepts, Business skills, Job readiness, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, Leadership, Self-expression sessions, Literacy and numeracy, Counseling sessions, and Fitness sessions.

These sessions broadened participants' knowledge of life skills and positioned them to be better business owners. By the time of graduation, a total of 11 out of 12 of the targeted young women successfully went through all the modules. They expressed their readiness to use the skills (both the hard and soft skills) they acquired to support in establishing their enterprises.

Most of them also indicated they will want to further enhance their skills by joining already established artisans in their communities. The only candidate who could not make it was as a result of regulations regarding workplace safety as she had a baby with her.

The sessions also built the assertiveness of the young women who from the start, appeared timid and did not open up on conversations amongst themselves and the facilitators. Through the counseling and the lessons of self-expression, the participants gained great insights into life lessons and began to engage openly and share their life journeys. This inspired them all together to continue to talk to each other positively. One of the participants, a 22-year-old Rayan Abukari from Kpalga remarked:

“I am here today training as a carpenter and willing to end it successfully to become my own master and also explore my talent of training new apprentices in my community. I am grateful to be part of the beneficiaries to make the foundation, its partners and my family very proud.”

According to her the knowledge she acquired from these topics will enable her “to understand the society's view about women and to deal with stereotypes and prejudices against young women in particular.”

5.1.4 Citizens-led Action for Educational Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (CLEAR)

During the year under review, School for Life contributed to removing barriers and facilitating equitable access to quality education. Our Citizens-led Action for Educational Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (CLEAR) project contributed to the achievement of the goal of access to basic education by working with communities and citizen groups to conduct public expenditure tracking surveys to benchmark government expenditure against plans. The project also built the capacity of citizen groups to hold the government accountable for the non-delivery of plans required to ensure access to education.
The CLEAR project has instituted a culture of collaborative efforts between communities and duty-bearers in addressing key educational challenges confronting the districts. Through this collaborative efforts, Kpanshegu Community in the North East Gonja district, and Kolinvai in the East Mamprusi Municipal have supported their respective assemblies to provide school infrastructure.

During the year, the project worked closely with the Talensi District Assembly to ensure the timely release of a school building constructed by Earl International Group (GH) Gold Ltd, a mining company operating in the district. This created room for more students to enroll and study in befitting school environments. This was made possible by the intense engagement with the relevant stakeholders and the Citizens Group in the district who have been mobilized and organized by the CLEAR project to demand accountability for improved provision of quality education.

Through the CLEAR project, SfL also contributed to enhancing school governance in 2023. The project strengthened collaborations between communities and duty-bearers in addressing key educational challenges confronting the districts. The CLEAR project also contributed to facilitating quality education through evidence generation and learning. Research was conducted on teacher rationalization and centralized teacher deployment systems and the impact it has had on equitable teacher distribution. The citizens also led the generation of evidence on teacher attendance, the state of educational infrastructure in the communities, and the furniture situation. Quality education can best be provided if schools and communities have access to teachers to facilitate learning. The research findings, and citizen-led generated evidence all pointed out the challenge of teacher shortage and inadequate school infrastructure as impediments to achieving quality education. Figure 13: A Citizen group session facilitated by the District Field Officer for Wa West

Furthermore, the project initiated the community scorecard processes across all 60 project communities and assessed education provision in these communities. The development of action plans after the assessment, interface, and town hall meetings have proved useful in bringing stakeholders' attention to issues of inequity in education service delivery in the communities.

Working with youth groups to hold school performance appraisal meetings across the districts and communities has also strengthened school governance. To ensure an informed community demanding accountability from duty bearers, information campaigns have also been organized across 60 communities which provided citizen groups and community members with up-to-date information on government programs and policies in the basic education sector for their engagement with duty bearers.

Through the Youth Parliament model, Community Journalists and community-based youth groups have ensured the voices of the youth are heard in education discourse.

Decision-making is no longer the preserve of duty bearers but one that is shared between communities and government officials. This critical intervention is breeding inclusion and participation. Thus, in 2023, a total of 180 right-holder groups have been created/strengthened to champion advocacy and actions necessary for the achievement of the project goal. The following citizen groups have either been strengthened or created: School Management Committees (SMCs), Youth Groups (youth parliament, girls caucus, community journalists), and Women Groups. model to build on the evidence generated regarding the state of education.

Also, the citizen groups have been able to apply the knowledge and skills they acquired under the...
project to hold educational accountability fora. The engagement of community groups has resulted in a sense of responsibility among community members, who have begun mobilizing themselves to demand accountability to meet the needs of their community schools. The provision of teacher accommodation in some communities from the project districts has been attributed to the awakened interest of communities.

At the policy level, the project engaged with duty bearers and policymakers such as the Ministry of Education, the Director General of the Ghana Education Service and other front-line officers, Parliamentary Select Committee on Education. Through these high-level engagement, SfL presented findings to request policymakers to act to ensure quality education delivery for all Ghanaian children.

Below are some of the stimulating stories under the CLEAR project

1. Young Suraiya Finds Her Voice!!!!
By holding local authorities accountable in her community, young Suraiya in the Nanumba North Municipality has discovered her voice.

Suraiya Nsimnyawuni Shahadu serves as the Secretary for the Nanumba North Municipal Girls Caucus of the Citizen-Led Educational Accountability and Responsiveness Project-CLEAR. Suraiya will later move to start her senior high school education at the Mawuli Senior High School where her dream of becoming a lawyer is shaping up.

Ms. Suraiya, a fifteen-year-old girl, was discovered while participating in the CLEAR Information Campaign, a platform for community people to learn about government initiatives and education programmes. She was immediately recognized for her potential after speaking persuasively and passionately on Ghana’s educational policies, gaps in her community and strategies to improve educational outcomes. She joined the Girls Caucus in her community and became the secretary. The Girls Caucus encourages young women to take on the responsibility of holding duty bearers accountable in their communities. They engage in meaningful discourses on education development amongst themselves and then take up education advocacy to duty bearers. The young girls also hold ‘the girls court hour’ on radio - an informative public advocacy campaign to draw the public and duty-bearers attention to the gaps in the provision of basic education.

Ms. Suraiya has benefited from empowerment assistance since joining the Girls Caucus and has participated in live radio talks on Bimbilla Radio, a rural/community radio in her hometown where she shared a panel with prominent figures from the community. She has had the opportunity to voice her concerns about careless parenting, inadequate furniture, truancy among students, and poor school infrastructure through this radio program. Parents, students, and several others tune in to the radio frequency to listen to her discussions.

Residents in her neighborhood have admired the level of confidence in confronting duty bearers and parents about challenges in the educational sector. As an opinion leader in the community puts it:

“Young women are reluctant to speak in public in this area of the country. Suraiya is breaking some of the obstacles that prevent women from speaking out about concerns, and I have no doubt that many other young girls will follow in her footsteps.”
Ms. Suraiya's voice has been amplified by these talk shows, and she has had the chance to interact with important persons, such as the Municipal Chief Executive of the Nanumba North Municipality. She will later meet with the Municipal Director of education who asked to meet with her as a result of her advocacy on radio. She has gained popularity and respect from the elderly as a result of the radio debates. However, difficulties are tugging her in the midst of the goodness that comes with it, but she remains optimistic.

She faces significant obstacles from a community that is hostile and actively works to crush her aspirations. Some people have also made the decision to disregard counsel and the value of education.

In her words: “Some have referred to me as "All-knowing" and stated I am too young to be confronting the elders since I began discussing development gaps in my community.”

The young activist has bemoaned the dearth of women in Ghana's leading media organizations. She asserted that the media is an excellent forum for amplifying the voices of the voiceless and that she would keep moving forward with her purpose.

Ms. Suraiya aspires to practice law as her future profession. She says that this would enable her to advocate the rights of women and girls. She is also extending her hands to inspire the students in the Basic Schools. She acknowledges the influence of the CLEAR Project when she said:

“I wouldn't have had the opportunity if it weren't for CLEAR. I've spoken to a lot of individuals, and many young people now look up to me. I am very proud of myself.”

2. CLEAR Project Sparks Community Initiative.

The people of Dondoni in the Tatale-Sanguli District have identified gaps in the education delivery in their community and are putting up strategies to ensure quality education is attained for their community.

Through the CLEAR Project, citizen groups are mobilized, given capacity strengthening and supported to take actions towards realizing quality basic education in their communities. The citizen groups have developed action plans from which they engaged with relevant duty bearers at the local levels to demand accountability and response from district level duty bearers.

One of the issues the group identified was the lack of classroom block for the Dondoni R/C Primary School, which impedes quality education delivery. As such, they prioritized this gap to demand from the government through the district assembly. Cutting-edge information on government’s policies, programs and the role citizens can play to promote education development in their communities has stimulated community members to take up the responsibility of ensuring that Dondoni R/C primary schools receive the needed support. The end goal is to enhance the quality of education delivery for its learners.

While waiting for the government to respond to their request, the citizens took the lead and mobilized internal resources through which they constructed a 3-unit classroom block to ameliorate the plight of their school-going children. The already-existing classroom block in the school accommodates kindergarten through to Basic 6. According to this citizen-led initiative, building this new 3-unit classroom block will provide more space for effective teaching and learning and further ease the pressure on the existing structure.

It is interesting to note that, the already exiting classroom block was built in the 1970s and have since seen little facelift. Thanks to CLEAR Project, these inspired citizens in Dondoni are now actively participating and engaging stakeholders in ensuring educational accountability.
The School governance systems have expressed gratitude for the advocacy and capacity building initiative. The School Management Committee chairman of Dondoni, Mr. Joseph Naja Ningbir remarked: “I want to thank the CLEAR Project for giving us the platform and opportunity to talk about education issues in our communities. As a result, we have taken this bold step to give our children at least the best form of education they deserve so that they can become responsible people in future’.

Many communities like Dondoni have developed positive mindsets in efforts towards quality education delivery and are showing interest in their community Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs). Dondoni R/C Primary School has a total student population of 346 which comprised of 186 girls and 160 boys.

5.1.5 Optimising Messaging to Promote Participation in Formal Education in Ghana Project

The Optimising Messaging to Promote Participation in Formal Education in Ghana project was a 6-month pilot research project aimed at exploring cost-effective and contextually appropriate ways to provide positive messaging about education and access to education. The project also sought to support returns to school, especially among girls and marginalized groups in post Covid-19 era. It was implemented in partnership with Craft Education and EdTech Hub with funding support from the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The intervention focused on the provision of relevant information to support the caregiver’s decision on children's attendance to school.

The project is modelled on the following assumptions that; if we provide contextually appropriate messaging about education and access to education to carers and teachers, then, we can support participation in the formal education of learners (especially girls and marginalized learners). So, we support substantial average gains in (learning adjusted) years of schooling.

The study 6100 beneficiaries. These participants received various categories of messages in all the 3 phases of the research. These participants were targeted from 6 regions, 10 districts, and 100 communities in Ghana. These regions included Northern, North-East, Savannah, Upper East, Upper West, and Ashanti Region of Ghana. The beneficiary districts included Nanumba North, North-East Gonja, East Mamprusi, Talensi, Wa-west, Nanton, Kumbungu, Sekyere Afram Plains, and Bosome Freho districts.

Among others, the experiment benefited teacher and parents in the following ways:

The Messages to Teachers complemented and reinforced Teacher’s ethos and professional responsibilities. Teachers were also reminded through these messages to keep accurate school data of learners. Through the regular tracking of learner’s school attendance, teachers are now able to identify the support learners need and the pedagogies to improve on their learning. The project provided relevant data to teachers to be able to engage parents on children’s school attendance behavior. The messages also enabled teachers to innovate and use effective methods that not only retain learners in school but also ensure better learning outcomes.

Parents on the other hand were also regularly reminded and encouraged of their responsibilities to the learners’ school attendance and provision of their educational needs. These initiatives promoted school visitations by parents in the intervention schools. Parents have also been encouraged to enroll their children in school.

5.1.6 The Empowerment for Life Programme

The Empowerment for Life (E4L) program is implemented by Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA), YEFL-Ghana, School for Life (SfL) and Changing Lives and Innovative Partnerships (CLIP) with funding from Civil Society in Development (CISU), and Ghana Venskab (GV).

The program is being implemented mainly in five districts (Savelugu, Karaga, Mion, Kumbungu and Saboba) in the Northern Region of Ghana but uses evidence from the local level to influence policies and practices at the national level.

Under the Empowerment for Life Programme, beneficiary teachers from the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) model demonstrated improved understanding and application of the model during their lessons in schools. The District
Teacher Support Teams closely supported teachers in beneficiary schools, enhancing their capacities with the necessary knowledge, skill sets, and expertise for effective implementation of the TPD model.

The areas of capacity support provided to teachers included the following:

- **Role of Education**: Teachers were trained on the significance of education in promoting informed and active citizenship among students.

- **Teacher and Pupil Relations**: Teachers received guidance on fostering positive teacher-pupil relationships in the classroom which is crucial for a conducive learning environment.

- **Child-Friendly Atmosphere and Classroom Management**: Teachers were equipped with strategies to create a child-friendly atmosphere in the classroom and effective classroom management techniques.

- **Reflective Teaching Practice**: Teachers were encouraged to engage in reflective teaching practices and learned various approaches to enhance their teaching methodologies.

- **Reflection Sessions and Experience Sharing**: Teachers participated in reflection sessions and were encouraged to share their experiences which further promoted continuous improvement in their teaching practices.

- **School and Community Relations**: Teachers were provided with insights into building and maintaining positive relationships between the school and the community.

The Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) networks in all program districts actively support girls education. These school governance structures have received training to strengthen their capacity to conduct sensitization sessions to address barriers to girls education. These sessions successfully engaged community stakeholders in creating supportive structures to further enhance girls access to and retention in education.

In the Karaga district, the PTA and SMC networks utilized radio discussions and addressed issues like low parental support for girls education, improving enrolment and completion rates at Karaga Girls Model School, and advocated sexual reproductive health and the rights of the girl child. Similarly, in the Savelugu district, radio discussions focused on concerns such as school dropout among girls and inadequate school infrastructure.

In the Saboba district, the PTA and SMC networks conducted a series of campaigns and sensitization sessions at the area council level. These sessions targeted community stakeholders, including traditional leaders, opinion leaders, parents, and youth groups, to address barriers to girls' education and emphasize the importance of community support. As a result, there was a significant increase of 20% in enrolment at Namongbani D/A Primary School. Additionally, the PTA and SMC networks successfully intervened and rescued a school girl from early child marriage who has since returned to school with the support of the PTA and SMC networks.

The E4L learner boards model has contributed to Learners' Participation in the Democratic Process in Schools. This platform has created a culture of accountability. The Learner Boards have proven to be functionally effective in all program districts, with regular meetings and capacity support through coaching and mentoring by resource teachers. Learner Board members are now more conscious of issues in their schools and communities as they are now more empowered to take action and advocate for positive changes.
In the Karaga district, the Learner Board members of Nuru-Islam E/A Primary School engaged with the headteacher to address the issue of broken furniture in their school, advocating the necessity for repairs. Similarly, the Learner Boards of Shebo D/A Primary School engaged with the SMC and PTA networks to repair broken furniture in the school.

**Girls’ Club Brought Sixteen School Girls Back to School in Pishigu Community**

The recent endeavors of the Pishigu D/A Primary Girls’ Club have sparked widespread interest among girls in the township, leading to the remarkable return of 16 girls who had previously left school. Two standout events, namely; the ‘girls camp’ and the inter-club drama and debate session, where girls’ clubs from Nuri-Islam E/A Primary and Pishigu D/A Primary schools united, captivated the community’s attention. These activities not only became the talk of the town but also garnered significant interest from both parents and students which ultimately motivated the return of the sixteen (16) girls to school.

On their first day of return to school, the girls indicated that, their colleagues who participated in the camp activities shared with them the joy and fun of the event. The ‘returnees’ also expressed their happiness about how the Girls Club encouraged them to return to school so as to benefit from the event.

Alimatu Bukari, a primary six pupil of Pishigu D/A Primary and one of the returnee girls expressed her excitement when she noted: “Hearing of the fun activities at the girls’ camp made me returned to school. My friends told me they did music and dance and debate which I also want to do”. The holiday girls camp continues to be a game-changer capable of propelling a significant number of girls to either return or stay at school. On daily basis, the Girls Club concept continues to stimulate the curiosity and passion of the young girls they learn through play, fun and games.

5.1.5  Parental Learning for Uninterrupted Schooling (PLUS) Project

In 2023, about 80 teachers from Kumbungu and Naton districts were trained on several child development support areas such as child protection and safeguarding, parents’ teacher relationships including other technical teacher-focus content. Also, about 50 GES officials including Training Officers (TOs) and School Improvement Support Officers (ISOs) received training and capacity
enhancement on how to support parental participation in children’s learning.

The PLUS project also supported 80 community volunteers across all 40 communities in Nanton and Kumbungu Districts. Through this initiative, SfL also supported the production and distribution of various teaching and learning resources to teachers, volunteers, and parents across the 40 communities in the Nanton and Kumbung districts.

Furthermore, an estimated 20,000 people directly and indirectly benefited from our community-based sensitization and mass advocacy drives through durbars and stakeholders’ meetings in the two Districts. Women and children, who are the most vulnerable in these communities, were targeted. Community cultural and traditional Information, Education, and Communication structures and mediums were used to create awareness of the need for parents to get involved and support the learning needs of their children.

The PLUS project also contributed to increasing the capacity of parents in project communities to support and get involved in the learning of their children. These knowledge-sharing platforms provided parents the opportunity to learn simple and innovative child–learning pedagogy and methodology on how to support children’s learning at home.

Three Thousand six hundred (3600) parents have been mobilized across the 40 communities to form 120 Parental Learning Groups/Circles. These groups are community-led, owned and facilitated by a trained community-resident volunteer with oversight from community leadership on its operations and functionality. These Parental Learning Circles (PLCs) have been trained to develop their action plans and meeting schedules and choose their meeting/learning agenda for each monthly meeting.

5.1.6 STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR GIRLS’ EDUCATION (SAGE)

The Strategic Actions for Girls Education project (SAGE) embarked on innovative actions and policy advocacy to support the creation of enabling environment particularly for girls transitioning from the Complementary Basic Education programme (CBE). The SAGE initiative also engaged with, and advocated CBE financing and large-scale implementation of the programme by local authorities and the central government. The strategy is to highlight the critical issues and benchmark these against the government (both local and central government) own set-targets and commitments. The project is being implemented across 10 communities in 2 districts (Tolon and Nanton) in the Northern region. With funding support from the STAR-Ghana Foundation, the SAGE intervention forms part of the Gender Rights and Empowerment Programme (G-REP) under the FCDO’s Partnership Beyond Aid Programme.

The SAGE project has a special focus on contributing to tackling the OOSC problem by:

a. facilitating enabling environment for girls transitioning from the Complementary Basic Education Program to retain and complete formal basic education;

b. embarking on advocacy and policy influencing to promote government/local financing of the CBE programme.

The combined approaches of working with local and national state actors presents a window to effectively influence actions and decisions at the various levels of the education policy chain. At the local level, we worked with the communities, schools, district education directorates, the districts offices of the CEA and the district assemblies. Yet, at the national level, our approach to SAGE implementation ensured a strategic collaboration with other like-mined CSO’s where our joint advocacy actions are targeted at the Ministries of Finance and Education, parliament, the CEA and the national media. The goal of this strategic approach
is to get the government to commit more resources for CBE financing and to further encourage the local assemblies to also dedicate significant finance to the CBE program locally and enhance safe facilities in the project schools.

It is exciting to note that, the SAGE project is building on and contributing in sustaining the gains of previous and current project that target OOSC in the operational districts. For instance, in the Tolon district in particular, the project has selected the schools where the girls from the Strategic Approaches to Girls Education (STAGE), implemented by World Education project, have been successfully transitioned. The girls are directly benefitting from the activities of SAGE and their progress being monitored to assess how the SAGE project is supporting them to stay in school. SAGE also supports girls who transition into formal schools from the Ghana Education Outcome Project (GEOP) implemented in both project districts. This does not only enhance complementarity of efforts but also encourages synergy and augment results.

Though the Girls Learning Circles have just been formed, the initiative has already demonstrated huge potential for delivering impact. For instance, through the efforts of the Learning Circles Team, two siblings (Alhassan Sherifa and Alhassan Zakia) from the Zoggu Primary School in the Nanton district have been prevented from dropping out of School. These girls had almost dropped out of school due to a prolong period of staying out of school occasioned by nationwide strike of teachers but for the timely intervention of the Learning Circles. The siblings did not return to school for more than 2 weeks after schools had resumed. This was brought to the attention of the project team by the Learning Circles Group. Upon follow-up visits and discussions with the girls and their mother by the project team and the head teacher, the girls are back in school.

The empowerment and mentoring sessions held for the young girls have proven to be an effective approach in addressing their assertiveness. These sessions have opened the minds of some of the girls and helped to shape their thoughts on the change they expect in their lives and of their communities. Through this approach, SAGE is building a cadre of young women who can effect change in their schools and communities. Their knowledge levels are being enhanced in identifying who they are. They are also provided with relevant skills and information on their sexual reproductive health and rights.

It is observed from the intervention schools that, so far, attendance among girls, especially those benefiting from our intervention, have significantly improved as a result of the weekly activities held in the schools. This was remarked by the Girls Education Coordinator of the Nanton District Education Directorate, Madam Zubaida in a meeting with the directorate during a visit by FCDO representatives.

Below are some success stories from our comminutes where the SAGE Project is implemented:

**Escape from child marriage: The compelling story of Azara**

Sualehu Azara is a 17-year-old young, beautiful and brilliant girl in Zoggu, a community in the Nanton district of the Northern Region. Azara lives with her parent and attend Zoggu D/A primary school. She is one of the girls in the school who takes her studies seriously and actively participate in the SAGE girls learning club and school activities.

Strangely, at some point in 2023, it was noticed that Azara’s behaviour and attitude towards schooling began to change. She began playing truancy, gradually and constantly absenting herself from school, was continuously less punctual, and barely participated in school activities. Her teachers were worried and tried to find out from her what the problem was, but Azara never opened up. Upon the headteacher’s investigation, it was revealed that Azara’s parent had planned to force her into an early marriage with a rich old man in their community.

Upon getting wind of Azara’s parents intentions, the SAGE project team with the help of the headteacher quickly visited Azara’s parents and spoke to them about the consequence of their intended actions. The parents were also encouraged to allow young Azara continue her education. Hesitant at first, her parents finally heeded the call for a continuous education of Azara. Thankfully, Azara was allowed to continue her education. Azara is currently in JHS1 and doing very well in school. She expressed her appreciation to School for Life for the timely intervention that makes it possible for her to continue her education. In her words, “I am grateful to School for Life for saving my life and providing me hope for the future”.
The USAID/Ghana Strengthening Accountability in Ghana’s Education System (SAGES)-System Strengthening Activity (SSA) is another intervention through which School for Life contributed to enhancing school governance. The Activity is a $50 million, 5-year (2023-2028) cooperative agreement between USAID and CARE International. CARE International in Ghana is working with School for Life and other partners (Afrikids, CDA, GNECC and Crown Agents) in a consortium to implement the Activity. The Activity is aimed at supporting Ghana’s Ministry of Education (MOE) and its agencies to strengthen accountability for learning in Ghana’s primary schools.

The primary objectives of the activity include; Strengthen the enabling environment for education accountability in primary education, Improving the performance of education system actors and improving the effectiveness of their interactions with each other, in support of education accountability, and Improving education management and citizen engagement in USAID’s Zone of Influence (ZOI).

The SAGES Activity was successfully launched at the regional level in the Northern and Northeast regions. District launches and roadshows were organized in the 8 ZOI districts covering 2 Assemblies in the North East region and 6 Assemblies in the Northern region. In the 8 districts, the Activity covers a total of 691 public primary schools.

1. Stepping into a new role with a smile: The story of Hanifa Fuseini Mumuni, a newly employed M&E and Data Officer of School for Life under the SAGES Activity

Ms. Hanifa Fuseini Mumuni is a 27-year-old young graduate in Geography and Rural Development from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). She is one of the newly recruited M&E and Data officers among the many female officers recruited under the USAID/Ghana SAGES Systems Strengthening Activity. Sharing her excitement and motivation for taking up the M&E and Data Officer position at School for Life, Ms. Mumuni observed that, as a female, she and her colleagues have the duty to break the status quo if they were to achieve equitable and inclusive development. Remarking about her excitement, Ms. Mumuni said:
“The motivation I have is to be among the first few women to build a successful career in Monitoring and Evaluation and to be a good example for young ladies to have confidence in themselves in whatever professional choices they make. My interest in MEL roles stemmed from the experience I acquired as a Teaching Assistant at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST).”

She further explained that she developed the interest in becoming an M&E person when she had the opportunity of working with her supervisor at KNUST to review and analyse data of literary pieces for academic publications.

During her onboarding orientation, Ms. Mumuni further remarked that for the past two weeks, she observed her confidence level rose higher and her knowledge enhanced even before stepping into the field. This excites her and made her anxious to get to the field to contribute her best to the success of School for Life and the USAID/Ghana SAGES Systems-Strengthening Activity. According to her, the opportunity to serve School for Life as District MEL and Data officer got her excited for embracing a lead role in breaking the status quo and fulfilling her aspirations of leading change that favours women empowerment.

School for Life has made significant gains in achieving gender parity in its staffing. The ratio of females to males is being enhanced following the start of the USAID/Ghana SAGES Systems-Strengthening Activity. Consequently, more opportunities are being offered to women to make meaningful contributions to community development. Ms. Mumuni is one of the female M&E and Data Officers at School for Life. Over the years, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning and Knowledge Management (MEL & KM) have been an area in development work mainly dominated by males. The recruitment of at least 2 female M&E and Data Officers as part of the School for Life MEL and Knowledge Management team under the SAGES Systems-Strengthening Activity is a good step towards breaking the male dominance and empowering young women to advance their career in this field. In its strides to ensure gender parity in all fields and functions in the organization, it is refreshing to note that out of the 17 officers recruited for the School Community Engagement Officer position, 10 of them (59 percent) are women. School for Life continues to ensure women’s empowerment in its staffing and community-level engagement.
6.0 NATIONAL-LEVEL ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNS

In our quest to promote equitable access to quality education delivery, we stepped up advocacy efforts at the national and sub-national levels by engaging relevant basic education actors.

School for Life’s national and sub-national level advocacy initiatives is in recognition that transparency and accountability are critical to the attainment of access to equitable quality education delivery for Ghanaian children. Furthermore, School for Life envisions this high-level interactions as opportunity to step up efforts in ensuring there is increased responsiveness from duty bearers towards quality education delivery.

6.1 Engagement with the Director General of the Ghana Education Service

In furtherance of promoting accountability and transparency in education delivery, in 2023, School for Life facilitated an engagement meeting with the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service to bring to the Service’s attention the critical evidence uncovered in our operational areas related to equitable access to education delivery in rural Ghana. Among the critical issues that were highlighted during the meeting included the Capitation grant, teacher deployment and rationalisation, and the inadequacy of teaching and learning resources.

The GES assured that the Capitation grant from next year will be paid in full and timely to all public basic schools so that schools can promptly address minor issues as they arise. On the issue of teacher deployment and rationalisation, the GES promised that they will have further reflections on the policy and how it is being implemented. Concerning the critical issue of inadequate teaching and learning materials in schools, the education directorate indicated its willingness to step up efforts in ensuring that schools have what is required to simulate effective teaching and learning.

6.2 Engagement with Parliamentary Select Committees

In 2023, School for Life held critical engagement sessions with the Parliamentary Select Committees on Education and Children, Gender and Social Protection. The engagement sought to further deepen the organisation’s efforts in ensuring accountability by duty bearers.

More importantly, these engagements provided School for Life the opportunity to ask relevant questions directly to the law makers on ensuring equitable quality education provision in the most deprived communities of Ghana. Specifically, critical issues including the school feeding programme, capitation grants, and the deplorable state of school infrastructure in rural basic schools in Ghana were discussed. The parliamentary-level engagement also enabled us to understand the policy influencing processes of Parliament and how CSOs can effectively use the Parliamentary set up to influence educational policies and practice in Ghana.

Figure 26: A pose with the Parliamentary Select Committees on Education and Committee on Gender, Children and Social Protection
6.3 Collaboration with Like-minded CSOs

Our strategic collaborations with other like-minded national CSOs and the national media in embarking on joint actions in the pursuit of advocating quality education has been immensely felt within the reporting year. We partnered with the Multi Media to produce the second series of the Ghana’s School of Shame which further highlighted ground-breaking gaps in the education delivery in public basic schools across our project areas. Also, we have strengthened our collaboration with the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC), Africa Education Watch (Eduwatch), Associates for Change (AfC), STAR- Ghana Foundation (SGF) and together, we have embarked on a number of different collective advocacy drives for the provision of quality and equity in education. This included the “#FoundationFirst Campaign” drawing government’s attention to the many challenges facing foundation education in the country. Through our efforts, we also embarked on a literacy campaign which culminated in marking the 2023 International Literacy Day through which we raised strong awareness among the people while calling on the government to step up investment in literacy in our communities and schools.

6.4 National Convening on Education

Also, in 2023, SfL held a national convening involving state and non-state actors to engender policy discourse and critical reflections on the state of basic education in Ghana with particular focus on the regions of northern Ghana including the Oti region. The forum brought together policy actors from the Ministry of Education, the Parliamentary Select Committee of Education of the Ghanaian Parliament, Regional, Municipal and District Assemblies, Municipal and District Education Directorates, traditional authority and a host of other CSOs and the media. Figure 29. North East regional minister making a contribution Figure 28. Former Northern regional Director of Education contributing to the discussion at the forum

During the convening, compelling evidence on the drawbacks of quality education delivery in Northern Ghana was shared. The presentations triggered broad discussions and critical commitments made by the representatives of the MMDAs to prioritize the construction and supply of desks/furniture in their composite budgets.
7.0 APPROACHES ADOPTED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR INTERVENTIONS

7.1 Approaches to Advocacy and Policy Influencing (API)

At School for Life, we deploy API activities at several stages in our programme, built into the design of the project. We advocate at two levels: the national and sub-national level. At the national level, School for Life engages with key education stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, Parliament (specifically the education select committee among others). At the sub-national level, we engage with a wide variety of organizations, from grassroot community engagement and school leaders to Municipal and District Assemblies, Traditional Authorities and Regional Coordinating Council. The focus of their work at the district level is on policy implementation.

School for Life’s approach to advocacy takes multiple forms but can be summarised by the collection of evidence on the state of education in a context. The evidence is then shared with local and national leaders to affect change. We collect data from a wide range of sources and further translate the data into usable forms for easy understanding. In addition, we empower citizens to collect as much evidence as possible and also support them to disseminate it.

School for Life adopts multi-platforms for effective data dissemination. This includes the use of mainstream media (radio, television and print), and social media (Facebook, X, and Instagram) to share relevant evidence to the public. School for Life also engages with government officials directly to share and discuss evidence generated from our work.

Furthermore, School for Life works in consortium with other CSOs to deliver our Advocacy and Policy Influencing activities. Through these initiatives, our organization has enhanced our models of networks, strength and cooperation among other partners in the course of our work.

7.1.1 School Score Cards

School for Life has used the School Score Card tool together with other tools in social accountability activities with CSOs such as the GDCA. This technique allows citizen groups and CSOs to conduct a needs analysis of their community’s schools. The cards adopt a number of predetermined categories and help the citizens and CSOs to prioritize most pressing changes. Once the score cards are completed and the key issues identified, they then take the information to local leaders and school leadership teams to advocate change. An example of how this is done is through the town hall meetings. At these meetings, key stakeholders, including local leaders and media, are invited and provided with opportunities to respond to the issues raised and to follow up on previously agreed actions committed to. In 2023, School for Life recorded relevant API successes using this tool. For example, we successfully used this approach to advocate a range of new school furniture in the localities we operate in. As a result, about 200-300 items of furniture were dispatched to some schools including Bakpaba M.A Primary in the Northeast Gonja district.

In the Ghanaian context, this citizen-led advocacy approach is empowering communities by offering them opportunities and platforms to engage with and hold system actors to account,
There is also evidence of success in this approach being combined with other API strategies. For example, in this context the information gathered is utilised as a primary source of evidence for the youth parliaments, which in turn use it to hold a range of actors to account.

This includes school management committees, District Assemblies and the District Directorate of education and MPs. A key learning from the implementation of the score card activities, is that they should be made as simple as possible, with no specialist knowledge required to ensure approach are accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. Another key learning is that it is not enough to score a school once. Follow up sessions are necessary to support positive change. See appendix 1 for score card sample.
8.0 FUNDRAISING

Fundraising initiatives and efforts yielded great results for School for Life in the year 2023. In the course of the year we secured a grant from the STAR Ghana Foundation with funding support from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom, to implement the SAGE project with a grant size of about US$ 97,800 to be implemented from 2023 to 2025.

School for Life partnered with CARE International in Ghana and other Partners in a Consortium led by CARE and secured funding from the USAID through which we are implementing the USAID/Ghana Strengthening Accountability in Ghana’s Education System (SAGES) in the 17 Zones of Influence districts. School for Life is handling 8 of the 17 districts. The total grant size is US$50 million. The other partners of the consortium are Afrikids, Community Development Alliance (CDA), Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC), and Crown Agents.

Another exciting partnership in the year was with the WEENorth. Through this exciting partnership, we provided empowerment sessions for young ladies undergoing skills training in carpentry, plumbing, electricals and masonry at Tahama Yili Training Center.

In the year 2023, PLUS Project and the EdTech project ended successfully with the donors fully satisfied with the partnership.

9. FINANCE AND EXPENDITURE PERFORMANCE

For the year 2023, School for Life received a total income in an amount of Thirty-two million, four hundred and Eleven thousand, Five hundred and Twelve Ghana Cedis (GH¢32, 411, 512) and spent a total amount of Thirty Million, One Hundred and Forty-six Thousand, Five hundred and forty-four Ghana Cedis (GH¢30, 146, 544), closing the year with Two Million, Two hundred and Sixty-four Thousand, Nine hundred and Sixty-Eight Ghana Cedis (GH¢2, 264, 968).

Out of the total amount received, the Ghana Education Outcomes Project constituted about 71% (GH¢23, 132, 171), the Complementary Basic Education/Second Chance Project constituted 9% (GH¢3, 077, 015), the Citizen Led Action on Educational Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana accounted 8% (GH¢2, 440, 932). The SAGES SSA Activity and the Empowerment for Life Programme accounted 4% (GH¢1, 187, 378) and 2% (GH¢783, 950) respectively. The other inflows representing 6% (GH¢1, 790, 066) came from the CRAFT Education Activity, Alinea Activity, SAGE Project, YOU Trust Foundation, Ghana Venskab and Assets disposals.

The total amount spent comprised of GH¢20, 933, 354 for Project Activities, GH¢6, 142, 479 for direct project Staff and Administrative staff Costs, GH¢2, 329, 434 for Capital Costs and GH¢740, 663 for administrative expenses.

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<th>Percentage Contribution of Income by Projects</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ghana Education Outcomes Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAGES SSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complementary Basic Education/Second Chance Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizen Led Action on Educational Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment for Life Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRAFT Education Activity, Alinea Activity, SAGE Project, YOU Trust Foundation, Ghana Venskab and Assets disposals.</td>
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10. STAFF RETREAT

Passionate about the progressive development and welfare of our staff and recognising that review and reflections are critical processes in engendering learning, we held a fun filled annual staff retreat bringing together all staff from our project areas to connect and socialize whiles learning. The retreat offered the staff and the organisation opportunities to do introspections on decisions and actions within the 2023-year period. It also promoted team building and bonding among the staff. It was a way to motivate our staff by engaging them fun filled learning activities with the intention of creatively renewing commitment, improve upon productivity and lead to a reinvigorated staff delivering results to maximum capacity. Among other things, the retreat sought to achieve the following:

- To promote teambuilding, socialisation and bonding among staff
- Provide a platform to take staff feedback on the operations of SfL and what can be done to improve our work.
- To bring understanding of all staff on the status of projects implementation and appreciate the gains of each project. Major milestones chalked and key challenges and lessons
- To initiate processes of designing and developing annual workplan for FY 2024

The major highlight of the retreat was the introduction of a basket of fun activities including aerobics, inter-project games, bonding activities, poetry, exchanging gifts and a musical performance by an artist. This brought light to the event signalling the importance of such a gathering. The visit to the Mole Park brought staff further closer to nature where some people for the first time came close to animals like the elephant. Nostalgic moments indeed.
Staff participating in sporting activities

Staff entertaining themselves during the performance of a guest artist

Staff participating in team building games

Staff exchanging gifts