



AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION MICRO-PROJECTS IN GHANA AN IMPACT ASSESSMENT CASE STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the lessons learnt around Human Rights Education (HRE) through a case study of two micro projects in Ghana. These micro projects are part of Amnesty International's Africa Human Rights Education (AHRE) Project, funded by the UK Department of International Development. Building on lessons learnt from the successes and shortcomings of the selected case study projects, the document outlines broader issues which require further deliberation in order to effectively design, implement and evaluate HRE projects.

In Ghana, the project is implemented by Maata-N-Tudu and Amnesty International Ghana. They work with 15 activists and local organizations in implementing a range of HRE projects.

The study was carried out by the Learning and Impact Unit, the International Projects Unit and the Africa Human Rights Education Project at the International Secretariat (IS) of Amnesty International in collaboration with project partners in Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

The overall exercise comprised three stages – the preparatory stage (**before** the field work), assessment on the ground (**during** the visit to the project sites in Ghana), and synthesis, analysis and documentation (**after** the visit). The details of each of these stages are given below.

BEFORE: The study team started by reviewing the relevant micro-project plans, monitoring frameworks and progress reports to develop initial ideas about:

- The specific changes the micro-projects were expected to contribute to.
- The strategies that were planned and used to bring about the change.
- Methods of assessing progress towards the change.
- The project stakeholders and those that needed to be consulted during the study.
- Methods of engaging with selected stakeholders.

DURING: The seven-day visit to Ghana started with a workshop which contributed to the development of the final methodology and work-plan for the study. The workshop focused largely on the following three aspects:

- Revising 'impact pathways' and 'monitoring frameworks' for the selected micro-projects.
- 'Stakeholder mapping' for the impact study.
- Finalizing methods, tools and work-plans for the study.

Initial findings were shared with partners at the end of the field work in a debriefing meeting.

AFTER: The collected data was analyzed and synthesised at two levels: 1) Specific analysis of change within the micro-projects, and 2) the broader learning and emerging issues. Inputs on initial findings were sought from the wider AHRE project community during the regional meeting in Togo. A series of discussions with relevant IS teams further informed and enriched the analysis. The final Learning Document was developed after incorporating suggestions from different stakeholders on the draft document.

UNDERSTANDING AND ASSESSING CHANGE

MICRO-PROJECT 1: PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

This micro-project is being implemented in partnership with the Federation of Women Lawyers. It aims to promote and defend the rights of women through community empowerment. The findings below are based on in-depth interactions with different stakeholders in the community.

KEY CHANGES

- **Change in societal attitude towards women:** Women are now increasingly being seen as human beings with equal rights. Wife beating has reduced, and women are now seen participating in community meetings. There have also been cases where women have gained access to land and where women were not subjected to forced marriages.
- **Decrease in domestic violence:** The micro project has contributed to reducing domestic violence by raising awareness about roles and responsibilities of both men and women, challenging and changing some cultural beliefs, and improving communication between husbands and wives.
- **Increased confidence of women and increased participation in community meetings:** Previously women did not feel confident enough to speak up in the presence of men. Now more women are attending more meetings, even travelling to other villages to do so. The divide between sexes is still very visible, however, and many women are still hesitant to speak in front of men.
- **Increase in enrolment of children in schools due to increased responsibility of parents:** Since the micro-project started, there has been attitudinal shift for parents and their involvement in their children's education. Parents are volunteering to bring children to school and support building infrastructure such as school toilets.
- **Women's access to land:** Traditionally, women have no inheritance rights, and therefore, up to now, have not had the opportunity to own land. Hence, the few cases where women are actually able to own land were seen as very significant.

KEY FACTORS BEHIND CHANGE

The following two aspects were identified as key contributing factors behind the changes observed:

- **Community ownership of the project:** FIDA has been highly successful in mobilizing community members in the project. The main reason behind this is the involvement of the community, in particular village elders, from the very onset of the micro project. As a result of strong community ownership of the project, issues that contradict their cultural beliefs could now be addressed without much resistance and with better results.
- **Initiatives to improve communication between men and women:** Rather than targeting men and women separately the project activities created a platform to bring both sexes together. Women felt that activities involving both men and women had been crucial in improving communication. This was seen as a key contributing factor in changing men's perceptions towards women, as well as resulting in a better understanding of roles and responsibilities between husband and wife in the household.

MICRO-PROJECT 2: ENHANCING THE EDUCATION OF THE GIRL-CHILD THROUGH CHILD RIGHTS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

This micro-project is being implemented in partnership with three teachers from Ghana Education Services (GES). It aims to increase enrolment, retention and completion of the girl-child at both Junior and Senior High School level by increasing child rights awareness in three schools. The findings outlined in this case study, however, are limited to in-depth interactions with stakeholders related to only one of the project schools.

KEY CHANGES

- **Increased retention of girls in school:** Due to the sensitization of both children and parents, girls are not dropping out even when they have to repeat classes. Earlier they used to drop-out when they had to repeat the class. The fact that more girls are continuing school indicates a reduction in the practice of kayayo (a local term for when teenage boys and girls go to Accra to earn money, often leading to them dropping out of school).
- **Parents and guardians are more responsible towards the education of their children:** Both teachers and children agreed that since the sensitization programmes of the projects, parents became more interested and involved in encouraging their children's education.
- **Improved school attendance and academic performance of children:** Children are attending school more regularly and are more serious about their education. This could lead to improved academic performance, but as of yet, higher attendance rates has not translated into improved success rates, particularly among girls.
- **Enhanced confidence and awareness among children:** Various micro project activities have contributed to increased awareness of child rights among students, helping especially girls to be more confident and bold when approaching their parents and teachers on issues and problems.
- **Increased enrolment of children:** The overall enrolment of children in school has increased especially during the academic year 2010-2011. School records indicate, however, that the increase is more significant in the case of boys and not so much in the case of girls who were the primary focus of the project.

KEY FACTORS BEHIND CHANGE

The following three aspects have been identified as key contributing factors behind the changes observed:

- **Initiatives to improve communication between children, parents and teachers:** Holding regular sensitization meetings with parents and children has improved communication, and therefore, relationships between children, parents and teachers. These meetings have not only sensitized children, parents and teachers about their respective roles and responsibilities, but also providing a common platform for interaction.

- **Activities that engage and motivate children:** Activities such as quizzes and debates which promote the participation of children were very effective in encouraging their involvement in, and ownership of, project activities.
- **Coordination with other external actors:** Involvement of other stakeholders such as the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and various officials from GES in different project activities has further added value to the project. Their involvement as resource persons has enhanced awareness and knowledge on child rights issues and promoted broader sustainability of the project.

KEY ISSUES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

The following issues are broader learning from the specific findings of both case studies, which have been outlined below to stimulate further discussions within the organization on the design, implementation and assessment of effective HRE projects.

- **Focus of the micro-project:** Because of the scope of micro-projects, it is often important to focus on a particular issue; spreading out too thinly may result in not achieving anything concrete at the end of the project or producing less than desirable impact. On the other hand, issues such as women's rights are often multi-layered and contain numerous interrelated aspects which may be difficult to incorporate into a single project. Focusing on only one aspect may seem like merely trying to address the tip of an iceberg, but it may not be possible to address the wider issues considering the scope of the project and resources available. Hence, the micro-projects need to be clear about how their specific focus can be used as leverage for influencing or changing the situation as a whole.

How can we narrow the project focus while ensuring that it becomes an effective entry-point in addressing broader issues?

- **Engaging duty bearers:** The majority of micro-projects focus on building awareness of the rights holders. In doing so, some projects directly or indirectly engage with one or more duty-bearer institutions while some focus only on the relevant communities. Those who are pursuing the latter strategy place more emphasis on community mediation and are often sympathetic to the community's discomfort in involving external institutions, particularly the government. Although community mediations contribute to community empowerment, not everything can be resolved within a community. It is therefore important not to avoid engaging with government institutions because of discomfort in engaging with them or because of disagreements with their approach to the work. On the contrary, it is important that such projects complement the work done by the government, with the aim of promoting accountability, rather than act as a substitute to their role and obligations. This requires considerable efforts to build the capacity and confidence of community members in order for them to approach government institutions as well as sensitize officials and tackle the systemic bureaucracy.

How can HRE projects involve and engage with duty bearers in HRE processes as a way of building their awareness as well as ensuring their accountability?

- **Linking with broader campaigns for greater impact:** The focus of the micro-projects is sensitization and building awareness around a number of human rights issues, largely among the different strata of the community and among selected duty bearers in some instances. In order to achieve greater impact it is important that awareness and sensitization ensuing from HRE results in positive actions and eventually change. It should lead to changes in the attitudes and behaviours of different actors as well as empowerment of the communities involved so that they are able to claim their rights. Particularly considering the forces that are against these communities – such as poverty, patriarchy, strong cultural beliefs that enforce harmful traditional practices – it is likely that the small successes of the micro-projects may end up becoming 'beautiful sand castles built during low-tide'. Unless these successes are reinforced by linking them with broader campaigns or other initiatives that further build their capacity to engage with duty bearers and claim their rights, they may not be sustainable.

What better ways could there be to sustain and/or build on the awareness generated through HRE? Is it necessary that HRE should always be linked to campaigns? Does HRE always have to be a means to an end? Can HRE be an end in itself?

- **Entry point for HRE:** Some projects are targeting formal institutions like schools as an entry point for HRE, while others are directly approaching communities. The choice of an effective entry point for HRE often depends on the issue being addressed. Targeting specific groups, such as students and parents, may contribute to enhancing the capacity of these groups. Here, the assumption is that the individuals directly benefiting from the project will act as change agents – a bridge between the school and the community – by disseminating the knowledge more widely in their respective communities. However, it is also possible that these individuals do not represent all strata of the society and that the wider dissemination does not reach the whole community, usually the more marginalized sections of the community. Engaging directly with the community, on the other hand, may lead to awareness and empowerment of wider strata of the community and possibly to greater sustainability, since the knowledge is retained within the community. This may require considerable capacity building of some community members who are well placed to facilitate, lead and continue the process in the community. Establishing such change agents and structures in the community would require an HRE approach that promotes critical consciousness, self-reflection and support within the community. Hence, it will entail more intense investment in leadership development, community facilitation and conflict resolution.

What should be the criteria for deciding the effective entry point for HRE? How can we effectively engage directly with the community in imparting HRE? How do we foster and sustain change agents that relay the HRE message to the wider community?

- **Building effective partnerships:** Partnering with local NGOs that have been working with communities over time is crucial to the success of community mobilization projects, as local NGOs already have knowledge and experience of working in the local context, and have already gained the trust of the communities which can take years to build. It is important to ensure that project partners are involved right from the project conception and design stage to ensure better ownership and relevance of the project in the local context. Sustaining the outcomes of the project require alignment and integration of the HRE initiatives in the wider programmes and campaigns of the implementing partners.

How can we identify and engage (possible) partners from the conception stage of a partnership project so as to ensure that partnerships are built on a more equal footing? How can we sustain organizational relationships built through partnership projects to ensure wider and continued civil society mobilization against human rights violations?

■ **Ensuring active participation:** Two broader issues arise from this case study around active participation. The first is regarding *when and how* we seek the participation of rights holders. It is important to seek their consent and involve them in the implementation of a project; however, their participation should also be ensured when designing the project plan, and involving them in decision making processes is necessary to overcome the influence of power imbalance between them and the project partners. The second issue concerns *who* are participating. It is important to ensure that our processes provide the space and opportunity for the participation of all social groups within the community, especially those who are more marginalized. Understanding and assessing who is not participating, and why, is crucial. Participation of limited powerful social groups (such as men, village elders) risks perpetuating the very power relations which we are trying to address through the projects.

How can we ensure participation at all stages of the project – particularly in planning and evaluating the project, and not only during project implementation? How do we guarantee that we are ensuring active participation of all sections of the community and not just involving more powerful groups, thus perpetuating the existing power relations?

■ **On impact assessment methodology:** The participatory nature of the study process was appreciated by all stakeholders. Those who were engaged in the process felt that this exercise helped to build their capacity for using simple methods and tools to self-assess the impact of their project. They did not feel that the process was like the usual, more conventional evaluations – “*where external evaluators come with pre-prepared sets of questions and tools*”. Although the process was participatory, the language barrier limited the flow and depth of participation to a great extent during community discussions. More visual tools would have ensured more participation at community level. However, this would require more time in the communities, which was one of the constraints for this study. Spending more time would also have been beneficial to build trust between the community and external members of the study team as well as in understanding social power relationships. At times the community members did not seem very comfortable in opening up. During such situations facilitations and probing by project participants from local partners, who had established trust through longer-term association with the community, were very helpful. In order to ensure wider community perspectives were captured, different methods were adopted involving wider community discussions, interactions in smaller groups, and one-to-one interviews. The study team believes the use of a variety of methods has reduced the possibility of only capturing perspectives of more vocal and powerful community members.

How can we ensure effective community participation in participatory review and reflection exercises? How do we ensure that we are capturing the perceptions of all sections of the community, particularly those who are more marginalized?