Welcome to the November 2014 edition of the ‘Edu’ newsletter, the last before the festive season. Schools across the country would be preparing to close for the Christmas season and that got me thinking of ‘our day’, a special day that parents will prepare sumptuous meals for their wards to bring to school to celebrate the end of the school term. What was your favorite Christmas tradition as a school child? Let us share interesting stories with each other. In this festive edition we have the latest information from the ongoing projects and activities in the Education programme, interesting thoughts, upcoming events, and of course the hot topic: budget 2015 and the education sector. Hope this newsletter finds you well. Enjoy the read and merry Christmas in advance, Mama Laryea 😁.

**Hot topic: Budget 2015 and the education sector**

The Minister for Finance, Mr. Seth Terkper, presented to parliament on 19th November 2014 the budget statement and economic policy of the government of Ghana for the 2015 financial year. The commentary on the presented budget has been immense. Presented here are quick thoughts on the budget as it relates to the education sector, primarily the basic education subsector.

The overall observation is that the 2015 proposed budget for the education sector follows the trend of the previous year’s budget by restating the major broad themes of the education sector and inherently the sector’s challenges. The interventions to be applied to the basic education subsector remain broadly the same: eliminating schools under trees, free uniforms, free text books, capitation grant, expanded school feeding programme, Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) subsidies and the redeployment of teachers.

There may have been some improvements in the sector whilst having been undertaking these same interventions over the last couple of years, but going forward significant improvements in education outcomes and attainment are needed. It may be time for the education ministry to consider engaging in policy research activities to develop a clear understanding of the impact of the different interventions such as free
exercise books, free uniforms and school feeding it is applying now in order to learn lessons and target interventions better in the future. Still on interventions, while teacher professional management and development programs especially targeted at improving teacher attendance may be instrumental to improving learning outcomes, timely resource inflows to schools and effective decentralization will also be critical to raise the overall quality of education service delivery in the coming years. Looking back at past performance of the sector too, it would have been more helpful to have been given actual figures of, for instance, the amount of capitation grant paid out as compared to planned figures, and the timing of the releases, if any.

Nevertheless, it is a welcome development that an expected GH₵7.6 billion (Budget speech 2015: 28) is proposed for allocation to the Education Sector, from an apportioned GH₵5.8 billion in 2014, but this amount is expected to be dominated by wages and salaries expenditure. It is also welcome news that teacher absenteeism has been brought down from an estimated 27% to 11%. At the secondary education subsector, there are also proposed improvements with an anticipated construction of 73 new SHS, plus an existing 125 Senior High Schools targeted to be improved. Going forward, hopefully all these plans and interventions will contribute to improving the education sector in 2015.

Update on the PTPDM (Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management) policy support project

The implementation of the Pre-tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM) policy in Ghana has started in earnest. The project aim is to formulate a replicable career progression mechanism that utilises training records and School-Based INSET (SBI) and Cluster-Based INSET (CBI) practice of pre-tertiary teachers. One expected activity of the project will be reviewing and modifying the proposed career progression framework for teachers (including licensing and registration) for operationalization. The Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the National Teaching Council (NTC) in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has since the launch of the support project in April 2014 undertaken a number of activities in the first three pilot districts: Ajumako/Enyan/Essiam in the Central region, the Upper Manya Krobo district in the Eastern region, and the Shai Osudoku district in the Greater Accra region.

Following familiarisation visits to the pilot districts (and the development of materials for the Beginning teacher (handbook for the beginning teacher, guidelines for the beginning teacher and the organisation of School Based and Cluster Based INSET (SBI/CBI), a five day Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop has just been completed. The main objective of the workshop was threefold. First, to introduce the PTPDM policy to the pilot districts. Second, to receive further inputs for the materials developed, and third, to give trainers at the district level the background knowledge and skills to organise induction trainings for newly trained teachers in their various districts. From each district the following personel participated in the workshop: six District INSET Committee (DIC) members, four Circuit Supervisors (CS), two District Master Trainers (DMTs), 1 teacher from a Senior High School who will be in charge of INSET, and two District Teacher Support Team (DTST) members. The workshop
used group discussions and presentations as its key methodology. After each presentation, the whole house engaged in fruitful critique of the issues raised. In-depth discussion were had on the assessment systems to be used before a beginning teacher will be licensed, and the implications of a license being revoked, including on what the contents of the induction program for beginning teachers should be.

Aside of the ToT, a consultation mission from JICA headquarters visited Ghana from 24th to 26th November 2014 to review progress of the PTPDM project after six months of implementation. The mission members had indepth discussions with stakeholders of the project including the Deputy Minister of Education (Pre-tertiary) at the Ministry of Education, the Executive Secretary of the National Teaching Council (NTC), the Acting Deputy Director General and the Teacher Education Division of the GES. A site visit was also made to the Shai Osudoku District Education Office. The mission team found the project to be oncourse and well managed even after accommodating an earlier implementation of the pilot by one year.

Japanese teachers study tour to Ghana

JICA implements a study tour program for Japanese teachers to acquire a better understanding of the current situation in developing countries and to understand the relationship between developing countries and Japan. The teachers are expected to conduct lectures incorporating what they have studied in the countries visited upon their return to Japan. They are also expected to take active roles in their communities and educational institutions in order to promote education for international development. This year, it was the turn of 10 Japanese teachers and two support staff to visit Ghana. In Ghana the team visited a number of JICA project sites including the Adansi North district and Cape Coast. They also visited the Tetteh Quarshie Cocoa farm in Manpong, Eastern region. Below is the account of Yuki KAWAMURA, a teacher of the Marunouchi junior high school in the Aichi prefecture, who was part of the study team.

During our 10 days in Ghana, we visited several institutions including cocoa farms and a chocolate factory. We could take many pictures and movies to show our students. We also bought things like maps and musical instruments. We wanted to bring home the ‘real things’ so that our students can actually see and touch them. July 30th became a memorable day for us. We were given a wonderful opportunity to meet the most adorable students at a school in Adansi North. We introduced some traditional Japanese activities and asked about school life, interests and dreams. By talking individually to students and teachers, we learned vividly about daily life in Ghana. All of us became deeply attached to people in Ghana thanks to their hospitality. We were enthusiastic about telling students in Japan about our experience. Before my visit to Ghana, students’ images of Ghana were ‘chocolate, hot and poor.’ Unfortunately, many of Japanese people do not know much about neither Ghana nor Africa. However, I had believed that it is not true and I wanted to be the one to change such images and prejudice. That is why I had an opportunity to give a class to tell what I really saw, listened, and felt about Ghana in Japan.

I started the class with some quizzes using pictures from Ghana. Everyone looked at the pictures with curiosity and listened to my stories with sparkling eyes. They were amazed by women carrying heavy things on their heads. They screamed with delight when they saw pictures of fufu, jollof rice and roasted plantain. Girls were
interested in women’s fashion. When I told them that some schools are closed on rainy days, they felt envious. They listened with great interest to stories of students of the same age and enjoyed the cross-cultural comparison between the two countries. They realized that they had preconceived ideas and that they shared many things in common with the students in Ghana. By the end of the lesson, students had gotten happier and had developed more accurate images of Ghana. They wish to visit Ghana in the future. Some of them are interested in working at international organizations or helping people in Africa. I am definitely sure that my students will achieve that dream one day. In my next lesson, I would like to introduce the roles of JICA volunteers in Ghana.

Ms. Yoshida Kana, a JICA volunteer, on her experience in Ghana

Ms. Yoshida Kana is a JICA volunteer working in Dompoase, in the Ashanti Region as a primary school teacher. Ms. Yoshida writes about her experience as follows.

I work at Adansi North, at the District Education office in Dompoase, in the Ashanti region. The district has 86 primary schools, 54 Junior High Schools, and four high schools. I mainly visit primary schools to teach mathematics and science. One of the difficulties of teaching in Ghana is the lack of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs). So, I make them by using things around us and introduce these things in the classroom. There are two purposes for the use of TLMs. One is for students to make them interested and understand better what is being taught them. Another is for teachers to teach. After each lesson or School Based or Cluster Based INSET (SBI/CBI), we as teachers try to make TLMs together. The cheapest and easiest item to make TLMs is best to use, so having ideas is everything.

In June, I organized a Math and Science workshop in collaboration with the GES and volunteers in the Akrokerre College of Education. Around 300 college students and teachers participated in this workshop for two days. It had two stages. The first stage was to introduce 10 TLMs to know wide ideas, and the second stage was for participants make and use TLMs by their hands to get deep knowledge. The workshop helped to improve practical knowledge so participants would be able to use them when they go back to their own schools.

When I do my work, I always think about how I can motivate teachers. Of course TLMs and teaching skills are important, but most important thing is motivation to teach. So I tried to make a workshop involving some teachers who has high motivation as organizers. From the preparation stage, we used their ideas and practiced presentations together, all these processes I believe are important as contents to motivate teachers. Someone’s hard work could encourage others. Motivation may infect one person to another person.

Finally, I received a teacher’s award from the Ministry of Education in 2013 for being the best volunteer teacher from JICA. In acceptance, I would like to really appreciate all the people who are supporting my work. They include members of the GES; they always help me, JICA staff who give advice,
protect and keep me safe, and other volunteers, and my friends and family in Japan who encourage me. This award is for not only me but also all of us. I can be here because of many people who support me always. Thank you.

An upcoming project: expert for decentralised education management

As reported in the August 2014 edition of this newsletter, one more exciting project forthcoming in 2015 is the **expert for decentralised education management**. The predecessor project was the Advisory Unit on Decentralised Education Management (AUDEM), which was supported by Mr. Daisuke Kanazawa, a JICA Expert who completed his assignment period at the end of September 2013. At the request of the GES, a proposed follow up, now approved, is to have another expert for Decentralised Education Management attached to the Basic Education Division of the GES, but this time focused on strengthening the capacity of the GES on decentralized education management between the school and **district level**. The assignment period is anticipated to be February 2015. More details will be published in the next edition but in the interim, outputs of the AUDEM’s work are available at [https://sites.google.com/site/audembed/](https://sites.google.com/site/audembed/)

Some more interesting thought(s) / fact(s)

- There’s a school of thought that seems to suggest if you wave a laptop or something shiny and digital at the classroom, learning will somehow mysteriously improve, but is that the case? Read the full details from [www.bbc.com/news/business-30177056](http://www.bbc.com/news/business-30177056) (last accessed: 28/11/2014).

Upcoming event(s) in the Education sector

- 11 new education related JICA volunteers would be arriving in March 2015; they range from primary school science and mathematics teachers to Senior Volunteers in electronic engineering for a polytechnic. Let us welcome them warmly when they arrive.

Useful websites

- Checkout the JICA Ghana website for information on JICA’s activities in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia: [www.jica.go.jp/ghana/english/index.html](http://www.jica.go.jp/ghana/english/index.html)
- Don’t forget we are online, old/new copies of this newsletter are available via the JICA Ghana English website: [www.jica.go.jp/ghana/english/office/others/newsletter.html](http://www.jica.go.jp/ghana/english/office/others/newsletter.html)

Have your say: and finally thank you for your reports, views and comments which make up this newsletter. Keep them coming including your feedback on the **hot topic** in this issue, the address to use is: gn_oso_rep@jica.go.jp Thank you.