



**GHANA CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT  
(CDD-GHANA)**

**Findings of a study on:  
*Teacher absence in public primary schools in Ghana***

**Conducted in 30 Public Primary Schools in 3 Districts**

***Presented at the PETS forum on:***

**Thursday June 19<sup>th</sup> 2008**

## PERIOD AND METHODS

- The study was conducted between February 25 and March 14, 2008 in 30 randomly selected schools in 3 districts.
- It involved:
  - face-to-face interviews with teachers and head teachers of the sample schools.
  - focus group discussions with the leadership of School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs).
  - unannounced visits to the schools to record teacher attendance. Most of the schools were visited at least twice during the week of the study.

## COVERAGE

- The staff population of the sample schools was 192, consisting of 162 teachers and 30 head teachers.
- Of these numbers 134 teachers and 28 head teachers were interviewed.
- Two (2) head teachers and twenty eight (28) teachers were absent on the days the research team conducted the interviews in their schools.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Teacher absence seems high in Ghanaian public primary schools:** The average teacher absence rate in our pilot schools is 27 percent.
- **It is slightly higher in urban schools (50 percent absent at least once) than in rural schools (46 percent) and also higher among male (35 percent absent at least once) than female teachers (23 percent).**
- **Head teachers are more frequently absent (26 percent absent at least twice) than the regular teachers (14 percent).**
- **Professional (trained) teachers are absent more frequently (22 percent absent at least twice) than non-professional teachers (9 percent).**
- **Supervision is poor:** only 57 percent of teachers interviewed receive monthly circuit supervisors visits.
- **Sanctioning of teachers is rare.** 87 percent of teachers have never been sanctioned. However, most teachers (63 percent) endorse the proposition that teachers should not be paid for days that they were absent without reason.

## **REASONS FOR TEACHER ABSENCE:**

- ill health,
- salary collection,
- funerals and
- long distance education

## IMPORTANT CORRELATIONS

- **Schools with active Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) record significantly low teacher absence rates.** It is worth noting that teacher absence rates in schools located near the circuit supervisor and/or local government education offices are not significantly different.
- **Schools that are equipped with or have access to the following facilities record significantly lower teacher absence rates:** Pupils desks; staff common rooms; water; healthcare facilities and bus stations.

## SOME QUOTATIONS TO END

- ... *'today is the community market day and we are all eager to get to the market before the day ends... it is not only the teachers who are eager to go; the children as well' ...*
- ... *'there is a funeral of a teacher in the next community and the teachers have gone there to mourn with the bereaved family ... when we heard that you were coming, I opted to stay back and meet with you ... It is a holiday for the pupils and since tomorrow is Friday, most of the teachers will return only on Monday' ...*
- ... *'the teachers pursuing long distance education hold their lessons on Fridays that is why every Friday the school is always 'empty' ...*
- ... *'it is the end of the month and we have to go to town to take our salaries ... it takes the whole day since the market truck goes only once and returns the following day' ...*

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Strengthen supervision in public schools. Government's proposal to established an independent National Inspectorate Board should be taken with all seriousness and urgency.
- Promote Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in all schools to enhance effective supervision.
- Reschedule long distance education lessons to Saturday or better still establish sandwich programs during school holidays to cater for teachers pursuing further education
- Arrange for teachers to draw salaries in or near school locations. The newly introduced electronic payment system is very timely.
- Access to healthcare in remote locations should be pursued more vigorously.