

FIVE YEARS STRATEGY PLAN ACID-GHANA 2024 -2028

The document presents Africa Center for Inclusive Development (ACID-Ghana) Medium Term Development Strategy Plan (MTDS) for 2024-2028. The organization is working to address the needs of vulnerable children, their families, women and youth in the remote areas for them to realize their full potentials in the society. The MTDS is align with key national and global agreed policies to improve socio-economic development of Northern Ghana. We believe that when ACID-Ghana efforts directed towards building inclusive health services for vulnerable groups, full participation and rights to decision making in the society, access to inclusive and equitable education, agro-processing, skills training and enterprise development, climate resilience, livelihood and social cohesion. This will address both short-term needs and long-term growth for inclusive and equitable services for all.

HEALTH SECTOR 2024-2028

Ghana's has make progress in abortion law, one of the most liberal in sub-Saharan Africa but unsafe abortion remains a matter of concern and is the among biggest contributing factors to maternal mortality due to complications of unsafe abortions (GSS et al. 2009). This constitute approximately 15–30% of maternal mortality in the country due to untrained or unauthorized providers which has increase the risk of unsafe abortion and danger to woman's life.

The proportion of women who had undergone unsafe abortions was 45% in 2007 (Sundaram, et al, 2012) but increased to 62% by 2017, according to statistics from the recent wave of the GMHS. To achieve SDG 3.1 target of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030, a global annual reduction rate of 7.3% is necessary to reduce unsafe abortions among women and girls is very important in meeting this target since they constitute nearly a third of global induced abortion fatalities. There are also insufficient life skills, inadequate interventions; poverty, curiosity, early marriage and peer pressure are some of the drivers of girls and young women unsafe sex.

In addition, unmet need for Family Planning among girls and young women, contraceptive failure and contraceptive discontinuation and other factors often result in unwanted pregnancies. Most pregnant girls and young women resort to abortion due to fear of social stigma, expulsion from school/work, financial constraints, denial of pregnancy by spouse, or as an alternative to contraception and inadequate access to Safe Abortion Care often influence girls and young women to resort to unsafe abortion.

The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana provides a visionary and mandatory advantage for an inclusive society, in which all persons with disabilities (PWDs) enjoy the same rights and opportunities in all spheres of the national life, without discrimination. The Ghana Disability of 2006, Act 715, is more elaborate in specific details with benchmarks for achieving an inclusive and accessible Ghana, within public and private sector institutions. Notwithstanding the positive legal environment and Projects initiatives by both Government and the private sector, young/children with disabilities in Ghana continue to experience many challenges in accessing rehabilitation services, no avenue for assembling children for screening and assessment, physiotherapy, speech therapy and counseling services at the districts levels.

ACID-Ghana focuses on three below strategic areas to address vulnerable children enrolment, retention and completion for quality education in mainstream schools

- Provide corrective surgery and rehabilitation to children with disabilities
- Increased access to family planning and reproductive health with HIV and maternal and child health (MCH)
- Improved rural communities access to portable water, sanitation and hygiene facilities

EDUCATION SECTOR 2024-2028

Vulnerable children are the most marginalized group in the northern Ghana. This group lack access to education and other social services and sometimes regarded as unproductive and incapable of contributing in a positive way to the societies and economic burden to the family and the society. This is due to socio-cultural and environmental barriers, promoting by ignorant of community members and lack of support from both family and government bodies responsible for their protection and welfare.

There is general low level of education for persons with disabilities in Ghana and this is manifest by the continuous low enrolment and retention for these vulnerable children. As much as 50% of school-

going-age of vulnerable children are out of school. The remote nature of community schools, no rehabilitation services to support their education, high levels of poverty, food insecurity and community schools structures which are not friendly denied them access to such schools.

There is also lack of awareness or low expectation among parents and communities which put them at risk and social exclusion as well as their participation and involvement in decision making within the family and outside family are absent.

Teacher's skills to handle and teach vulnerable are inadequate and as a result, they are not getting quality education in the remote areas which is a barrier to access education, even where it exist, they find it difficult to recruit and retain them in resource poor areas. This means that their enrolment, retention and completion levels in basic education are very lower. This make them to drop from school, as a result high illiteracy rate and are begging on the street and other social vices attributes to them.

Research study has pointed out the fact that closing the enrolment and completion gaps in northern Ghana will require more innovative and complementary approaches in the formal education system to improve data of vulnerable children in the enrolment and completion gap. In addition, there is no comprehensive data on the number of vulnerable children in the school or not in school in northern Ghana as well as the country as a whole.

ACID-Ghana focuses on three strategic areas below to address vulnerable children enrolment, retention and completion for quality education in mainstream schools

- Increased enrolment, retention and completion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools through appropriate strategies for quality basic education in mainstream schools
- Established literacy and numeracy Centers
- Strengthened the capacities of DPO's and PSGs to track and monitor implementation of inclusive education through Community-Led Monitoring

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE SECTOR 2024-2028

Resilience is the capacity of vulnerable households, families, communities and systems to face uncertainty and the risk of shocks, to withstand and respond effectively to shocks, as well as to recover and adapt in a sustainable manner. Also natural disasters such as drought, flooding causing damage to smallholders' farmers, human lives and rural infrastructure, loss of soil productivity, reduced biodiversity and decline in local food supply. Land degradation and forest loss has resulted into soil erosion and loss of significant amounts of productive top soil per hectare every year. It also affect shortage of fodder for grazing animals and migration of youth to urban centers due to harsh economic and climatic conditions and lack of biological diversity.

The climate vulnerability also affect livelihoods of the people and conflict over declining resources—are making the lives of the people more poorest. The climate vulnerability also causes high poverty incidence, conflict or health crisis, deprivation, feelings of exclusion/neglect, weak governance, bushfires, drought, flooding events, land degradation, deforestation etc.

ACID-Ghana focuses on four strategic areas below to address food insecurity, restoration of degraded lands, improve biodiversity, climate change, strengthen local institutions, and improve economic opportunities for the youth, insecurity, extremism, and conflict over resources.

- To build an innovative practice to address climate change
- To improve food security through sustainable agriculture practices and technology
- To restore degraded lands through integrated tree planting and management to improve livelihood and biodiversity conservation.
- To strengthen social trust and cohesion to mitigate violent extremism, community resilience, self-reliance and community investments policies

WOMEN AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SECTOR 2024-2028

Women and youth including persons with disabilities in northern Ghana has business ideas but lack financial and technology knowledge to start business. Also who are already existing in the game have constrained by several problems, including limited size and economics of scale, poor product quality, lack of diversification and innovation, poor access to credit etc.

This uncompetitive and enable environment discouraged entrepreneurs to venture out to establish enterprises in the agro processing and digital tech sectors. The existing business or large enterprises monopolized the situation, which has discouraged young entrepreneurs, first generation entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs shifting from job seeking role to job creator's role. In order to make the agro-sector and digital space to be more inclusive and comprehensive model, there is the need to bring in best practices in enterprise management, technical expertise, access to finance, networking with relevant partners etc. The following are identified constraints faced by these groups of disadvantaged entrepreneurial group ranges from:

- Lack of knowledge and awareness on statutory rules & regulations, enterprise management skills, business planning skills etc. required for establishing as well as operating a business which prevents them to venture out for an entrepreneurial career even though the potentiality of these individuals are very high with project ideas that can be commercialized if well mentored.
- Either the starters or ideas stage entrepreneurs do not have the initial backup support, they get discouraged from starting an enterprise or, if they start, they fail in their initial stages of operations.
- The availability of financial credit for start-ups in northern Ghana is almost non-existent. The commercial banking system support existing businesses with a preference for trade financing, terms such as high collateral, prominent guarantors, rate of interest, which excludes the start-up entrepreneurs.
- The starter entrepreneur in northern Ghana has limited knowledge of the market or access to the markets. Inability to break through markets for their products or services drastically affects the cash flow as well as profitability, which leads to closure of the business. In addition, these entrepreneurs need support to package their product or service in order to attract buyers as well as needs assistance in strategizing market entry. Absence of service providers in these areas in northern Ghana who can guide and mentor limits, the growth of start-up enterprises

ACID-Ghana focuses on three strategic areas below to address women and youth unemployment in northern Ghana through agriculture crops value chain on rice, sheabutter, maize, soyabeans, groundnuts, digital technology, solar water pumping irrigation technology and solar energy entrepreneurship. The organization will build sustainable business incubations models around these areas. This will foster SME growth, build their capacity agribusiness, technology, add economic value to their community, or sector, creating ancillary economic opportunities and ultimately jobs, supported to be sustainable and sensitized to be inclusive and decent. The following are key strategy areas it will work on:

- Mobilized and strengthen women into cooperative groups for agro-processing and enterprises development
- Enhanced self-reliance and livelihood of youth through employable skills training.
- Developed ACID-Ghana incubations and acceleration program to offer training and digital incubation services to young men and women

ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION SECTOR 2024-2028

The efforts of Government to decentralize decision making through the establishment of the local government structures has not been successful at bringing the people into the policy making and implementation processes. The local government law put in place to empower district assemblies to implement plans with the people, have not been able serve effective platforms for mobilizing and inputting the opinions, interests, and needs of citizen in the public policy and resource allocation processes. The major components of the stated decentralization/local government policy objectives that are yet to be achieved include:

- devolution of central administrative authority to the district level;
- fusion of governmental agencies in any given region, district or locality into one administrative unit through the process of institutional integration, manpower absorption, composite budgeting and provision of funds for the decentralized services;
- divestiture of the centre of implementation responsibilities and their transfer to the districts;
- assignment of functions and responsibilities to the various levels of government;
- promotion of popular grass root participation;

Government's inability to fully implement these provisions/policies, the local government system suffers from several cascading constraints centered on the limited capacities of the decentralized structures to fulfil their deliberative, legislative and executive functions. These make some of the policies to fail because local government structures made decisions about policies but have little knowledge of the priorities of the intended beneficiary communities.

At the district levels, district assemblies and other decentralized structures of local governance are ill-equipped and lack of human resource to perform their duties effectively. This limited their technical expertise and competencies to function effectively.

Also further constraints affected the ability of district assemblies to facilitate the effective functioning of sub-district structures such as the Area and Town Councils, as well as, the Unit Committees, which are expect to bring governance closer to the doorsteps of the people. Some district assemblies have also demonstrated inability or unwillingness to engage in constructive dialogue and interaction with relevant civil society organizations and the private to map out strategies for promoting the growth and expansion of the local economy and to ensure transparency and accountability in governance.

Consequently, the opportunities for co-opting the expertise of the CSOs and the private sector to enhance development planning and management at the local level are lost. This has created a number of setbacks at district level that include: the over reliance of local government structures on the centrally managed District Assemblies' Common Fund for development funding; the duplication and/or wastage of time, money and other resources in the running of parallel program which lead to limited value addition to resources provided by government. In the absence of effective systems of monitoring to ensure accountability, the internally generated resources from most district assemblies are not properly managed and/or used for development processes.

The quality, quantity, and timeliness of information exchange between the national and decentralized structures are another major challenge for the effectiveness of the decentralized local government structures in policy formulation and implementation. It is common knowledge that statistical data from local government sources are often unreliable for meaningful development planning due to a myriad of factors. In many cases, the information available is incomplete, inadequate or outdated. In brief, the foregoing weaknesses of the state-sponsored structures of local governance to offer credible platforms of engagement of civil society have eroded the potential for democratic accountability at all levels of local governance. Consequently, many district assemblies especially those in the rural areas have not been effective in providing direction and guidance in the development of their respective citizens.

Weak civil society participation in promoting good governance, which has impact civil society in promoting good governance at the local level, due to a number of factors inherent in the nature and modes of operation of civil society groups and actors. The voices, views and aspirations of the 70% plus of Ghana's citizenry that lives in the informal sector such as the wayside carpenters, garage operators, farmers, food sellers, market women, dressmakers, hairdressers, etc often go uncaptured in the civil society realms. The trades unions and other workers unions like doctors, teachers' unions have frequently engaged government and succeeded in claiming their entitlements from the state, operators in the private informal sector have continued to wallow in the margins of the public policy processes, unable to articulate, much less secure their rights from the state.

ACID-Ghana focuses on three strategic areas below to increase engagement of formal and informal civil society groups in the participation, transparency, accountability, policy advocacy and learning to address the real needs of the poor.

- Citizens participation increased in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of local government policies and program.
- Capacity of civil society organizations strengthened and mobilized to engaged in evidence based advocacy on service delivery
- Developed knowledge and learning platform as a core program for best practices and learning sharing