

REPORT ON SEMINAR ON ICT IN EDUCATION IN NORTHERN REGION

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TAMALE

The Ghana ICT for accelerated development (ICT4D) policy which came into being in 2003 and hinged on 14 pillars has as its second pillar, *promoting ICTs in Education-the deployment exploitation of ICT's in education*. ICT as a subject was subsequently introduced into the schools curriculum in 2007. Since its introduction however, it is not clear how much has been done in rolling out appropriate infrastructure and training of the human resources needed. It is in the spirit of this that GINKS organised an advocacy seminar to discuss what the current trend is and what can be done

Briefing participants on the purpose of the seminar, the Director of SavSign, Mr. Agbenyo Stephen, stated that it was high time stakeholders in education reassessed how much of the second pillar is achieved and what challenges are currently confronting the introduction of ICT into our educational system. While entreating participants to actively involve themselves in the discussions, he gave an in depth presentation into the activities of GINKS, how it began, the vision, mission as well as the activities of GINKS. He urged participants to particularly take advantage of the Northern ICT4D Forum that is held on the last Thursday of every month to learn and share knowledge as well as network.

Making his presentation on the topic *The State of ICT's in Northern Ghana*, Mr. Felix Osei Tutu, IT administrator of the Regional Advisory Information and Network System (RAINS), extrapolated the activities of RAINS which included the empowerment of the female child and communities. Among their achievements, he mentioned, is their establishment of the first and only female Senior High School in Northern Region; Tamale Girls Senior High School, which has been absorbed by the government and the setting up of a computer centre in Bole and Gushegu District. He emphasized rather pathetically that the Government's quest to promote the study of Information Communication Technology in basic schools throughout the country is failing in the Northern sector. This was captured in the report of a survey conducted by some Non Governmental Organizations that are into ICT in the three Northern Regions that revealed that 50% of basic schools are not connected to the electrical grid. According to the report,

only 15% of basic schools in the three regions of the north have some form of Internet connectivity. He also added the non availability of qualified ICT tutors to teach the subject in basic schools as one of the key issues hampering the introduction of ICT into schools.

Highlighting the challenges of teaching ICT in our schools, Mr. Felix mentioned among other challenges, the lack of computers, lack of school infrastructure, lack of electricity, lack of ICT tutors, conflicting laws and policies especially the policy forbidding Senior High school students' from using mobile phones while at the same time encouraging the use of ICT in schools.

Ending his presentation, Mr. Felix said that the way forward for promoting ICT's in Northern Ghana is to task the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) to help raise more funds for the purchase of ICT facilities to support government achieve it's ICT4AD objectives.

He added that NGO's operating in the North should also see the need to support in the areas of ICT by providing computers, Televisions, cell phones and other ICT tools as well as support capacity building for teachers. He added that community members must seek support from communication providers to help in the development of ICT.

The second presentation, which bothered on *ICT's in Education in Northern Ghana: Private Public Partnership*, Mr. Nsiah Asare of Filla Consult and a member of the Northern ICT Innovator's Group, said that the private sector has become a very strong engine in driving the national development agenda and ICT is not an exception. He stated that there is the urgent need for government to strengthen the already existing ties with the Private sector since the provision and maintenance of ICT equipment cannot be the sole responsibility of the government.

The representative of the Northern Regional Education Directorate, Chief Ewutomah Abdul Razak reiterated the poor state of ICT teaching and learning in schools and admitted that very little efforts are being put in place to produce very competent ICT teachers to handle the subject which has become an examinable subject for all Junior High School students. He was however, glad that Colleges of Education are currently

training students to come and handle ICT in schools but was quick to add that the challenges of the lack of either the computers or electricity, which has bedeviled the introduction of ICT, will still stifle the progress of mainstreaming ICT into our educational system. Chief Ewutomah challenged head teachers to always avail themselves for ICT training and not leave into the hands of some teachers since as school administrators, it will not only build their capacities but will go a long way to help them appreciate better the issues of ICT in general.

Mr Nsiah A. Philip from ISODEC Ghana suggested that Parents should be invited to such vital advocacy seminars in order to hear from them and also expose them to the realities and challenges that confront their wards' education. He mentioned that since a research conducted by SavSign indicated that about 65.4% of schools had their computers from their PTA's, it was incumbent to involve parents in most school related discussions. Mr. Philip urged SavSign and GINKS to contact the SADA office and see how to establish a collaborative partnership with them for the empowerment of Females in ICT4D.

The administrator of RAINS Mrs. Mavis Kotoka was grateful to SavSign for forming the Female ICT Teachers Association (FICTTA) and added that this year's World Women's Day celebrations aimed at ICT empowerment of Females all over the world because ICT has become a basic necessity in our daily lives and it will be sad and pathetic for women to wait only to struggle to catch up with the men as it is happening with education. She, therefore, urged all Community Based Organizations to try not only to embrace ICT but also incorporate the capacity building of women in ICT in their programmes annually.

Making a presentation on the FICTTA, the Director of Savana Signatures, Mr. Stephen Agbenyo said the aims and objective of FICTTA are to have an increase in the number of female ICT teachers, build the capacity of female ICT teachers, raise awareness of ICT among female teachers and advocate more professional development for women teachers in the area of technology. Ending his presentation, Mr. Agbenyo stated that, membership of the association is open to any self-motivated female teacher and encouraged more female teachers to join and equip themselves for the global ICT revolution that is holding sway of the world now.

The regional representative of the Ghana Education Service Chief Ewuntomah opined that ICT has become a vital tool for human development and urged the members of FICTTA to count themselves lucky to belong to such an association. He then declared the association duly launched.