



*PUBLIC INTEREST AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE*

# **FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING REPORT – 2018/2019**

**DECEMBER 2019**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Interest and Accountability Committee (PIAC) in furtherance of its mandate on compliance monitoring, and in response to demands from citizens to verify the existence and quality of projects funded with the Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA), has been undertaking physical monitoring of ABFA projects across the country since 2016.

The purpose of this exercise is to verify that petroleum revenue designated for specific projects have indeed and in fact, been utilized in the said manner.

PIAC commenced the inspection in 2016 with six projects in the then three regions of the North, and scaled it up in 2017 to 40 projects. In 2018, the Committee expanded this exercise to include the monitoring of 29 beneficiary schools under the Free SHS Programme. This was informed by the fact that the Programme benefited substantially from the ABFA since the selection of *Physical Infrastructure and Service Delivery in Education* as a priority area. In 2017, 59 percent (GH¢196,379,893.20) of utilised ABFA was spent on the Programme, with 50 percent (GH¢414,643,349.65) of utilised ABFA in 2018 going to support the programme. In 2019, an allocation of GH¢679,629,869, about 32 percent of projected ABFA was made for the programme from ABFA.

Given the significance of the sector and expenditure on the programme thus far, PIAC undertook monitoring exercises in 2018 and 2019 to evaluate the implementation of the Free SHS programme in 51 schools in eight (8) regions, namely, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Central, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West and Western.

- Schools - Mixed, Single-sex, Day, Boarding, Technical, and Vocational.

### Key Findings: Free SHS Monitoring

#### A. General Observations

- Early Reporting at Schools
- Timely and Adequate Supply of Textbooks
- Supply of Uniforms and Jerseys
- Increased Enrolment
- Improved Feeding Menu

#### B. Challenges

##### 1. Food Supplies

- Non-Involvement of Schools in the Selection of Suppliers
- Corruption Risks Associated with Food Supply
- Poor Quality and Un-Wholesomeness of Supplies
- Delays and Timeliness of Supplies

- Under/Over Supply of Food Items and Provisions
- 2. Enrolment
  - Under and Over Enrolment in Schools
- 3. Performance
  - Poor Grades
- 4. Text Books and Equipment
  - Elective Textbooks not Covered
  - Lack of Equipment for Technical and Vocational Courses
  - Textbooks Replacement Policy
- 5. Funding / Budgetary Allocations
  - Delays in Funds Disbursements
- 6. Retention of Utility Funds at the Free SHS Secretariat
- 7. Infrastructure
  - Insufficient Beds, Classrooms, Labs and Equipment
  - Poor/Inadequate Staff Quarters
  - Bed Bug Menace
  - Lack of/Poorly Resourced School Infirmaries
  - Lack of School Vehicles
- 8. Stalling of Operations of PTAs
- 9. Staffing
  - Teaching Staff
  - Non-Teaching Staff

### **Key Recommendations: Free SHS Monitoring**

1. The Committee encourages vigilance on the part of school authorities in monitoring the quality of supplies such as inspecting the expiry dates among others. This will prevent the suppliers from using the schools as dumping grounds.
2. In order to avoid the recurrence of over and under supply of food items, supply of food items by the Buffer Stock Company should be based on orders from the schools.
3. The Committee strongly recommends full transparency in the delivery of supplies to the schools and in particular the buffer Stock Company must ensure that all goods supplied are accompanied by advice on the value and quantity of the goods.
4. Cut-off grades (thresholds) for admitting students should be restored, as students with poor grades struggle with subjects during the course of the term. The Ghana Education Service should pay more attention to the basic schools to improve the quality of students for the second cycle schools
5. Technical and Vocational Schools should be adequately resourced with the necessary equipment and teaching materials.

## 1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

### 1.1 PIAC AS AN ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTION

The Public Interest and Accountability Committee (PIAC) is an additional public oversight body established under Section 51 of the Petroleum Revenue Management Act (PRMA), Act 815 (2011) to provide an independent oversight over the collection, allocation, and utilisation of Ghana's petroleum revenue. The Committee, supported by a Secretariat, is composed of 13 members, with each Member representing a constituency.

The Committee as an accountability institution has a three-fold mandate as outlined in the PRMA:

1. Compliance Monitoring with the Act;
2. Provision of Platform for Public Debate on Spending Options of Petroleum Revenues; and
3. Provision of Independent Assessments on the Management and Use of Petroleum Revenues.

As a body committed to ensuring efficient, transparent, and accountable management of Ghana's petroleum revenues through active engagement with the Government and citizens, PIAC's public engagements and project inspections help to inform and empower the public to demand transparency and accountability from the government on the management and use of petroleum revenues. This is done to ensure inclusive, broad-based sustainable economic growth, and poverty reduction.

For PIAC, transparency implies that the citizens of Ghana are provided with sufficient information to know what rules guide the development of the country's petroleum resources, who is given the responsibility to develop these resources, and how much revenue is generated.

Accountability is the responsiveness of government to the demands of citizens regarding the management and utilisation of collected petroleum revenues. This means that the Committee provides a platform for the citizens to influence the decisions of the government in managing and utilising petroleum revenues, and in the process, the government becomes answerable to an informed citizenry.

## 2 FREE SHS MONITORING

This newly introduced segment of PIAC's monitoring exercise - the Free SHS Programme, classified under the Physical Infrastructure and Service Delivery in Education priority area - receives substantial funding from the ABFA.

PIAC in 2018 visited twenty-nine (29) Schools in five (5) regions and twenty-two (22) in four (4) regions in 2019, to monitor and acquaint itself with the implementation processes of the Programme. Selection of the types of schools visited were based on the following criteria;

- Gender - Mixed and Single-Sex.
- Accommodation Status - Day and Boarding.
- Programme - Grammar, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and Grammar/Technical.
- Endowment - Less Endowed/Rural and Model Schools

Below are the schools visited:

1. Techiman Senior High School
2. Nkoranza Senior High/ Technical School
3. Atebubu Senior High School
4. Kwame Danso Senior High/Technical School
5. Presbyterian Secondary School (PRESEC), Bechem
6. Mim Senior High School (MISEC)
7. Berekum Senior High School
8. Odumaseman Senior High School
9. Notre Dame Girls' Senior High School
10. Cape Coast Technical Institute
11. Aggrey Memorial Ame Zion Senior High School
12. Holy Child Senior High Senior
13. Ghana National College
14. Wesley Girls' High School
15. Mfantshipim Senior High School
16. Bunkpurugu Senior High Technical School
17. Walewale Senior High Technical School
18. Tamale Senior High School
19. Northern School of Business
20. Buipe Senior High School
21. Sandema Senior High Secondary School
22. Fumbisi Senior High/Agric Secondary School
23. Bolgatanga Senior High School
24. Navrongo Senior High School

25. Funsu Senior High School
26. Kanton Senior High School
27. Wa Senior High School
28. Lawra Senior High School
29. St. John's Vocational/Technical Institute
30. Twifo Praso Senior High School
31. Apam Senior High School
32. Komenda Senior High School
33. Edinaman Senior High School
34. Assin North Senior High/Technical School
35. Ningo Senior High School
36. St. John's Grammar Senior High School
37. Tema Senior High School
38. Accra Girls Senior High School
39. Akontombra Senior High School
40. Shama Senior High School
41. Sefwi-Wiawso Senior High School
42. Bibiani Senior High School
43. St. Mary's Boys Senior High School
44. Archbishop Porter Girls Senior High School
45. Half-Assini Senior High School
46. Dadieso Senior High School
47. Asankragua Senior High School
48. Yaa Asantewaa Senior High School
49. Kumasi Academy Senior High School
50. Mansoman Senior High School
51. Dwamena Akenten Senior High School

### 3 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Key Findings: Free SHS Monitoring

##### General Observations

- 1. Early Reporting at Schools:** The programme has ensured timely reporting of students to school at the beginning of each term, as compared to previous years. Students no longer wait for school fees to be provided for them before they report to school.
- 2. Timely and Adequate Supply of Textbooks:** Core textbooks have been adequately provided in all schools visited albeit late in some instances. Generally, the books are supplied in good quantities.
- 3. Supply of Uniforms and Jerseys:** Though there were few reported cases of certain schools not obtaining preferred school colours, supply of uniforms and jerseys were delivered in good time.
- 4. Increased Enrolment:** The Programme has occasioned increased enrolment in 41 percent of schools visited, particularly enrolment of girls.
- 5. Improved Feeding Menu:** Food variety and quality have generally improved under the Programme. Some food items such as sardines and eggs which was previously not on the menu have been included.

##### Concerns

###### 1. Food Supplies

- **Non-involvement of Schools in the Selection of Suppliers:** The Buffer Stock Company without consultations with the schools does selection of suppliers. Although this is a positive step in the fight against procurement breaches, it also comes with challenges such as determination of supply requirements leading to over/under supply, delays in supplies and replacement of rejected supplies, among others.
- **Corruption Risks Associated with Food Supply:** The lack of advice to recipient schools on the value of goods supplied portends a corruption risk as the lack of transparency provides cover for cost manipulation. The lack of cost information also makes it difficult to complete the school accounts. The schools indicated that their request for advice has so far been ignored. There is no transparency in the selection of suppliers.
- **Poor Quality and Un-Wholesomeness of Supplies:** The quality of some foods supplied were poor, and in a particular case, burnt maize, and weevil-infested flour were supplied. In some cases, foods such as milk and flour supplied are near expiry.
- **Delays and Timeliness of Supplies:** Food items usually arrive weeks after reopening, compelling school authorities to rely on the fees of final year students.



The challenges with delayed release of funds and food items will hamper the reopening or operations of the school when the programme covers all levels of students.

- **Under/Over Supply of Food Items and Provisions:** Aside delays in food supplies, there is no prior estimation or verification of the quantities required by the schools before deliveries are made. This leads to under or over supply of food items. Some schools sometimes receive supplies in large quantities. In cases where items are close to expiry, or there is limited space for storage, they are compelled to reject some of the items.

## 2. Enrolment

- **Under and Over Enrolment in Schools:** There are mixed results in enrolment depending on the region and school. Except for a few schools, the implementation of the Free SHS programme did not lead to significant increases in enrolment in the schools inspected.

It was, however, observed that there has been a significant increase in the number of students opting for boarding, thereby putting pressure on the residential facilities. Many of the affected schools are coping by converting classrooms into boarding facilities, thereby constraining classroom space.

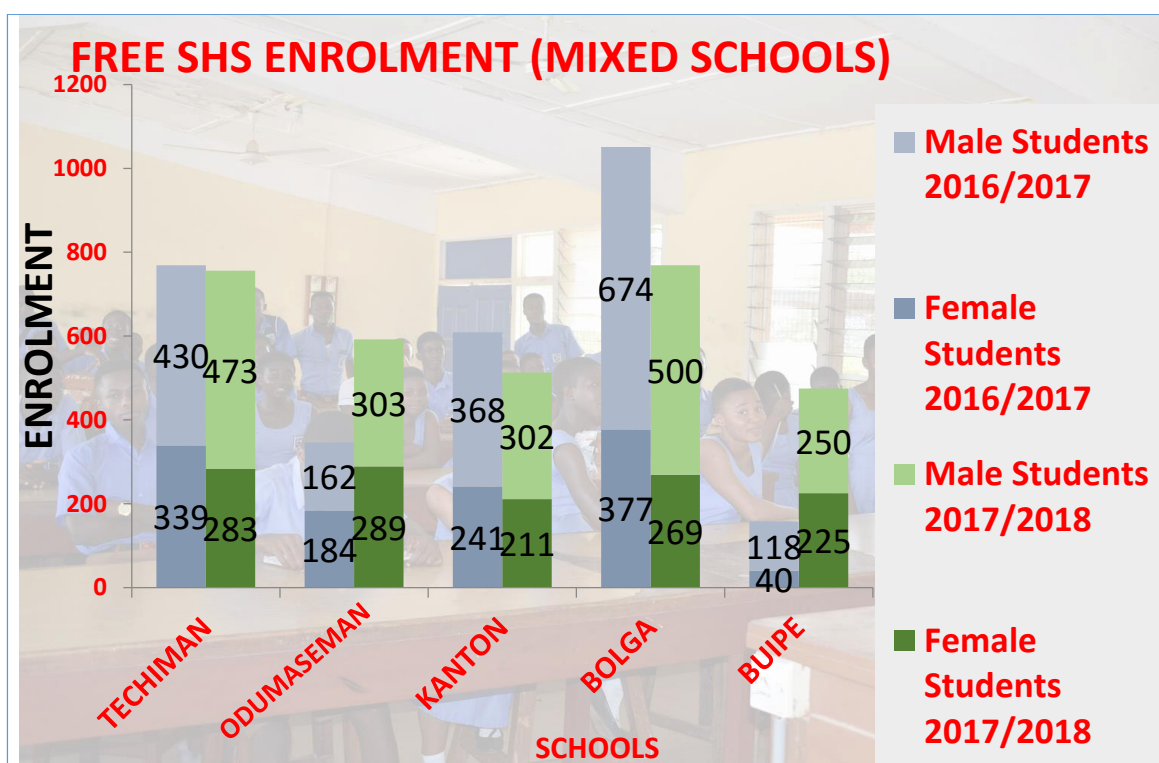


Figure 1: Free SHS Enrolment (Mixed Schools)

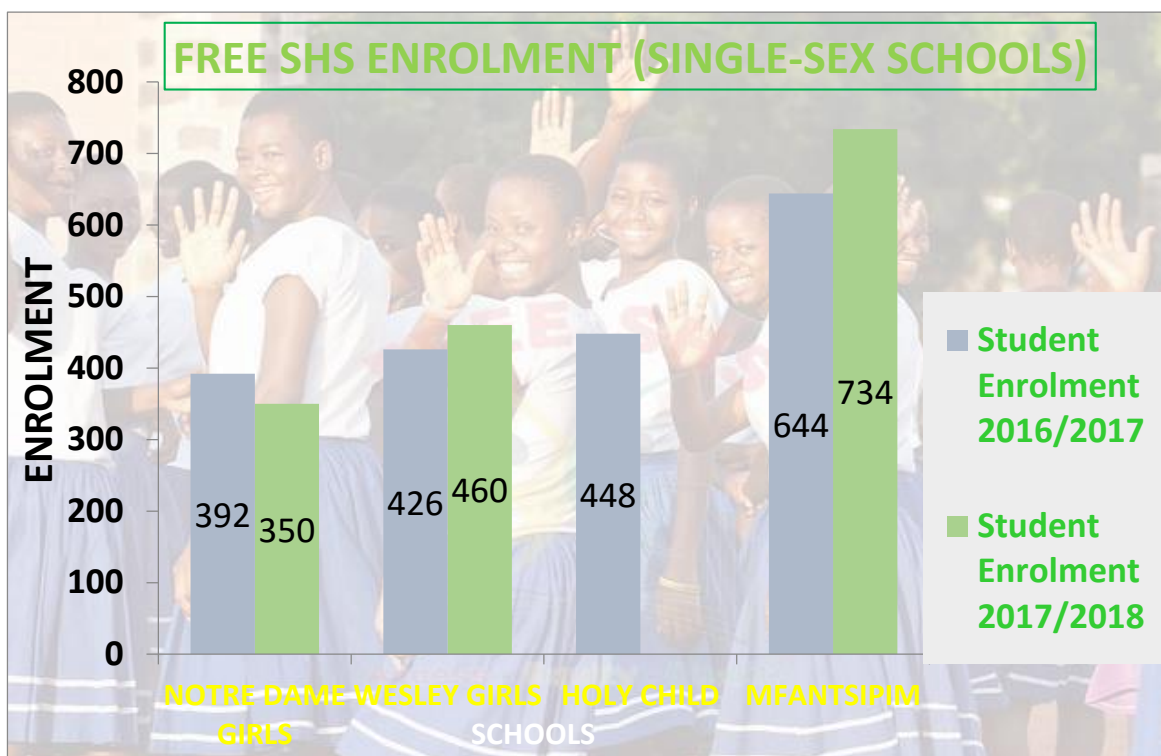


Figure 2: Free SHS Enrolment (Single-Sex Schools)

### 3. Performance

- **Poor Grades:** The abolition of cut-off grades in the admission of students has led to a situation of dumping of poor-grade students in particularly deprived schools. This puts pressure on teachers and students, thereby affecting performance.

### 4. Elective Text Books and Equipment

- **Elective Textbooks Supply:** Elective textbooks are not covered under the policy. However, this has not been clearly communicated to parents by government, leading to a situation where some parents are refusing to take responsibility for the purchase of these textbooks for their wards. This situation is negatively impacting on the quality of teaching and learning in the schools.
- **Equipment for Technical and Vocational courses:** There was a recurring problem in the technical and vocational institutions where practical learning materials and equipment supplied by government were inadequate or non-existent.
- **Textbooks Replacement Policy:** Students are required to leave core textbooks behind when progressing to a higher class. The absence of a textbook replacement scheme is also adding to the challenge to effective teaching and learning.

## 5. Funding / Budgetary Allocations

- **Delays in Funds Disbursed:** Funds disbursed to schools are based on the enrolment figures submitted by the schools and reconciled with the Free SHS Secretariat. Some schools experience delays in receipt of funds, sometimes transferred in tranches within or across terms. About 85 percent of the schools visited had to rely on the funds of the non-free SHS students to cater for all streams of students until funds are disbursed from the Free SHS Secretariat. If this is not addressed, it will impact negatively on the running of the schools when the programme runs full stream.

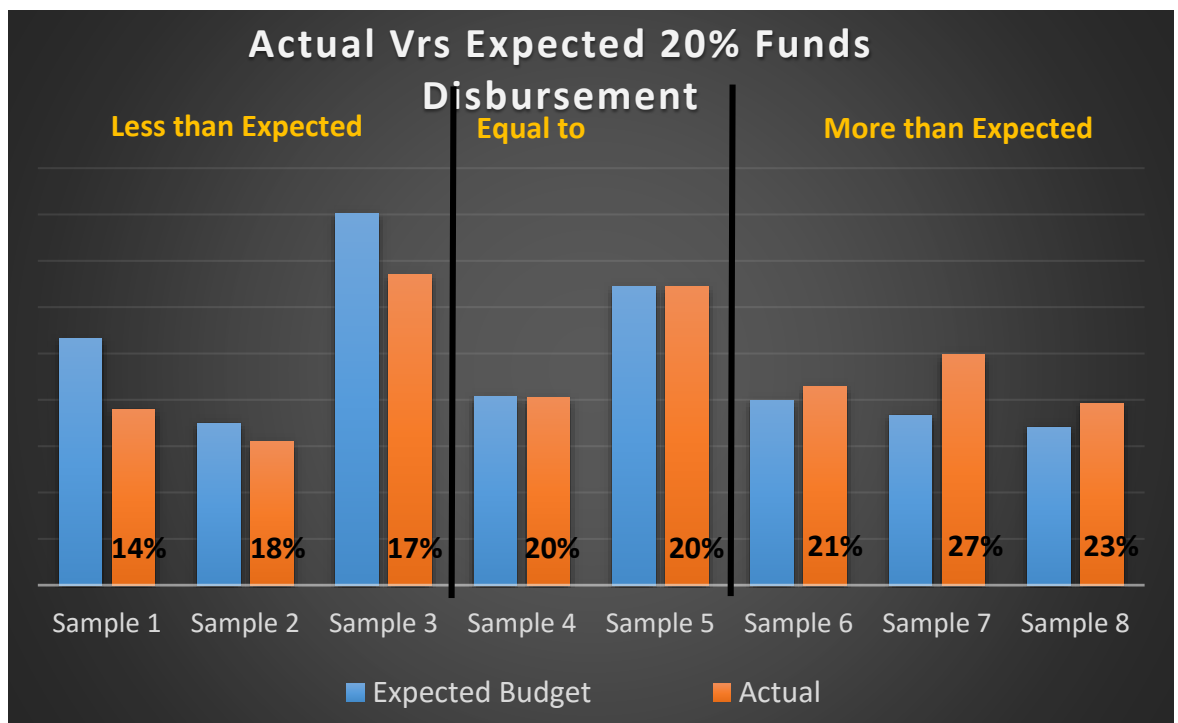


Figure 3: Actual versus Expected 20% Funds Disbursement

## 6. Utilities

- Funds to cover the payment of utility bills are retained at the Free SHS Secretariat, a cost being borne by the schools, mostly from the fees of the non-free SHS students. The utility service providers have threatened some schools with disconnection.

## 7. Infrastructure

- **Insufficient Beds, Classrooms, Labs and Equipment:** A total of 42 out of the 51 schools visited, particularly those in the rural areas, have no assembly hall, no dining hall, and no standard administration block amongst other facilities. These

infrastructural challenges need to be addressed if the Free SHS programme is to make an impact.

- **Poor/Inadequate Staff Quarters:** Many of the schools face the challenge of inadequate staff quarters. Other schools with such projects which were started in the past, have been abandoned. In some schools, no staff, except the head teacher lives on campus.
- **Bed Bug Menace:** Despite efforts to fumigate some schools, a lot of schools are still under the attack of bed bugs. This has become a national crisis and requires a coordinated national effort to address the situation through the conversion of wooden beds into metal beds and improved hygiene among students.
- **School Infirmaries:** A total of 39 out of 51 schools inspected did not have any health facility or sick bay. Schools lucky enough to have sickbays and in some cases nurses, did not have essential drugs in the sick bay. This puts the lives of students and staff at risk in times of medical emergency.
- **Lack of School Vehicles:** 87 percent of the schools visited did not have any vehicle or where there is a vehicle, there is no driver. A case in point was when the PIAC team arrived just in time to save a student who had just had an asthma attack in one of the schools that had no infirmary and no vehicle to convey the student to a health facility.

#### 8. Operations of PTAs

- While the Ghana Education Service's (GES) moratorium on the operations of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) may have been well-intended, this has deprived schools of the additional infrastructure that the PTAs traditionally provide. Most of the developmental projects that the PTAs initiated have been abandoned.

#### 9. Staffing

- **Teaching Staff:** The critical teaching staff running the double-track system have no holidays or breaks, as they need to be present during each track to teach. The heads of these schools also stay throughout the system in order to perform administrative duties associated with each track.
- **Non-Teaching Staff:** Supporting staff such as kitchen staff, security, cleaners are inadequate, and are also required to be present during each track thereby exerting additional stress on these staff.

#### Key Recommendations: Free SHS Monitoring

1. The Committee encourages vigilance on the part of school authorities in monitoring the quality of supplies such as inspecting the expiry dates among others. This will prevent the suppliers from using the schools as dumping grounds.
2. In order to avoid the recurrence of over and under supply of food items, supply of these items by the Buffer Stock Company should be based on orders from the schools.

3. Supply contracts for uniforms and house vests should be given out early enough to forestall delays.
4. The Committee strongly recommends full transparency in the delivery of supplies to the schools and in particular the Buffer Stock Company must ensure that all goods supplied are accompanied by advice on the value and quantity of the goods.
5. Cut-off grades (thresholds) for admitting students should be restored, as students with poor grades struggle with subjects during the course of the term. The Ghana Education Service should pay more attention to the basic schools to improve the quality of students for the second cycle schools.
6. Government must ensure that disbursements to the schools are done expeditiously as the non-free SHS students phase out, to avoid closure of the schools and disruptions to the academic calendar.
7. Technical and Vocational Schools should be adequately resourced with the necessary equipment and teaching materials.
8. Government must expedite action on the provision of infrastructure facilities to end the double track system, extend contact hours, and relieve staff of the attendant extra pressures.
9. The Committee welcomes the streamlining of the guidelines on the operations of the PTAs, where Parents Associations are now allowed to operate as voluntary associations outside the control of the school authorities.