

Learning through Play Progress Report

Country: Ghana

Organization: AGREDS

Date submitted: July 9, 2013

Period: October 1, 2010-May 31, 2013

Description of Results (Please refer to your annual work plan in describing the results below)

1. What were your **LTP activities** during the past eight months?

- 1.1. Sensitization carried out among 16,770 parents (11,739 females, 5,031 males) in major 35 communities of AGREDS and 4 partners (Presby Child Development Program, Gumani Child Development Program, Gushegu Area Child Development Program and School for Life) on the concept and importance of LTP
- 1.2. Organized 31 weekly meetings with 35 LTP groups of 875 members in 18 project communities and discussed LTP activities
- 1.3. Held a meetings with CCFC partner on LTP issues
- 1.4. Trained 20 stakeholders in Yendi and Bimbilla areas in LTP approach
- 1.5. 154 Traditional Birth Attendance (TBAs) trained on the LTP approach
- 1.6. Trained 200 Child to Child club members on the LTP concept approach
- 1.7. Trained 67 young girls of our vocational skills training center on the LTP approach
- 1.8. Trained 1,050 Micro Enterprise Development (MED) group members on the LTP approach
- 1.9. Trained 44 new LTP trainers/facilitators of three partners (Presby Child Development Program, Gumani Child Development Program and Gushegu Area Child Development Program on the LTP approach
- 1.10. 69 LTP groups of 1,675 parents (1,172 females, 503 males) in 35 communities including 3 partners trained on the concept. They comprised of mothers, women, men, grandmothers, traditional birth attendants
- 1.11. 48 school teachers at our 13 Early Childhood Development Centers (ECD) trained on the LTP approach
- 1.12. One (1) consultative workshop organized with 35 community LTP facilitators (6 women, 27 men), 8 health extension workers and 48 teachers at Kindergarten to assess the LTP project performance
- 1.13. Translated, Printed and distributed 500 adapt Dagbani LTP calendars for parents

- 1.14. *Printed and distributed 460 English LTP calendars, 100 parent guide, 100 training guide to facilitators and parents for LTP trainings and education activities*
- 1.15. *Assisted 35 LTP facilitators in 18 project communities to develop their weekly action plans for LTP approach in year three*
- 1.16. *Reviewed monitoring plan/checklist for monitoring LTP activities in 18 project communities*
- 1.17. *Carried out weekly monitoring of LTP activities in 18 program communities*
- 1.18. *Attended LTP Conference in Ethiopia by LTP Coordinator*
- 1.19. *Organized Regional LTP Conference with some partners, stakeholders and facilitators in Tamale*
- 1.20. *Conducted video documentary of LTP activities in 8 project communities for use by parents and for documentary purposes*
- 1.21. *Carried out health and nutrition assessment and provided nutrition supplements for 2,450 children under five years in project area*
- 1.22. *Mainstreamed LTP into existing programs of education, health & nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Micro Enterprise Development (MED), Child Protection, Gender, Environmental Protection etc.*
- 1.23. *Organized 1 consultative review workshop with 22 stakeholders (District Directors of Ghana Education Service, Social Welfare, Ghana Health Services, Environmental Health and Sanitation Division, School for Life, Department of Human Rights (CHRAJ), Department of Community Development, 2 traditional authorities etc) other stakeholders on the LTP project in Nanumba North, South and Yendi Districts*

2. What were the **outcomes** from these activities?

- 2.1. *Parents understanding of child development has increased –They have seen the need for good nutrition for a good start for children; no longer head and legs of the fowl for the child, pregnant women need to be well fed and loved, the link between play and children’s development.*
- 2.2. *Parents understood how some negative cultural practices affected the natural rights of children thus ignoring their best interest- play.*
- 2.3. *They understood that play is relevant for the healthy, physical, mental and emotional development of children.*
- 2.4. *Parents got to know that play refreshes the mind and body which further enhance children concentration on a particular subject or issue.*

- 2.5. *Parents understood the ways to effectively communicate with children using facial expressions, verbal and touching to stimulate language development.*
- 2.6. *Parents and caregivers recognize the need for early brain development, good parenting practices and interaction with their children right from pregnancy.*
- 2.7. *They understood the importance of play for child physical, mental and social development, and appropriate play materials to produce to play with children at the various developmental stages.*
- 2.8. *Parents and caregivers understood how to respond to, cater for and assist infants to play, walk, climb and do physical exercises.*
- 2.9. *Enhanced parental care and support: Parents now work tirelessly to provide the necessities of life to meet the needs of their children. They are more responsive to children needs and provide support.*
- 2.10. *Increased child protection issues: They assist in promoting child right by making sure the right environments are created for children to play, learn and be attended to.*
- 2.11. *Enhanced self learning among children: Children have the opportunity to play, learn and do things among themselves which at will.*
- 2.12. *Improved freedoms: Children are able to express their ideas freely to their parents and others.*
- 2.13. *Increased child confidence: They feel secure and self –confidence because, their parents showed them love and care rather than shouting and beating them.*
- 2.14. *Exploring their environment through play: Children became active in exploring new things through play. They are eager to know new things by asking deferent questions and observing different objects by using different playing materials or object.*

- 2.15. Increased communication: *Children are able to communicate easily and freely with parents and their peers.*
- 2.16. Enhance relationship: *Children freely interact and play among themselves whilst they play.*
- 2.17. Enhance character: *Children are more open and honest. They are not afraid to inform parents the wrong things they have done. This is because parents no longer beat them at the least opportunity but rather give them advice.*
- 2.18. Improved school performance: *Children participation in school activities has increased as the right environment and opportunity is provided for them to play, learn and explore. This made children became physically and mentally active.*
- 2.19. Improved relationship between parents and children: *children are happy to be with their parents, parents no longer shout at children at the least opportunity.*
- 2.20. Increased attachment: *Parents make time to play with their children. "Playing with children does not spoil them as we used to believe, it's rather seen as fun"*
- 2.21. Enhance parents interested in their children's education by providing them with relevant learning materials and care.
- 2.22. Improved communication between parents and children. *They are assisting infants to communicate and also patiently responding to their questions and request.*
- 2.23. Family ties/unity is fostered through bringing fathers, mothers, children and other family members together to express their thoughts and participate collectively alike in family decision making processes.
- 2.24. Enhance participation in family activities: *Fathers are more involved in babysitting of the child when the mother is busy with household chores.*

- 2.25. *Relationship between husbands and wives improved-No more beating of wives by husbands at will: Women; “Our husbands are now very understanding and supportive. They take us or support us to go for antenatal and weighing sessions”*
- 2.26. *Relationship among community members (females, males & children) is enhanced as LTP bring members together to make very important decisions*
- 2.27. *Cooperating and supportive husbands are no longer seen as “having been married or controlled” by their wives.*
- 2.28. *Pregnant women who want to go for antenatal care are no longer seen as “weak” and “extravagant”*
- 2.29. *Increased knowledge and skills of stakeholders in project area in LTP. Stakeholders at the district level have good understanding of the LTP project and have incorporated LTP in their activities.*
- 2.30. *Relationship among stakeholders in project area is enhanced. LTP has brought all the relevant agencies and NGOs together for planning, implementing and monitoring LTP activities in schools and in communities.*
3. Was there any variance between planned activities (in your work plan) for this past eight month and the actual activities you did? Please explain.
- 3.1. *. Sensitization carried out among 16,770 parents (11,739 females, 5,031 males) in major 35 communities of AGREDS and 4 partners (Presby Child Development Program, Gumani Child Development Program, Gushegu Area Child Development Program and School for Life) on the concept and importance of LTP was not what was planned. This was done based on the effort of the organization to scale up the LTP approach and also based upon demand by some of our partners*
- 3.2. *Training carried out for 20 stakeholders in Yendi and Bimbilla areas in LTP approach to enable stakeholders understand and to support or commit themselves to the LTP approach and for it acceptance in the program area of operation*

- 3.3. 154 Traditional Birth Attendance (TBAs) trained on the LTP approach further educate and advise pregnant women and nursing mothers that come to them for prenatal and antenatal care services
- 3.4. Trained 200 Child to Child club members on the LTP concept approach to understand the essence of play and encourage it among their peers and younger siblings. This also gives children opportunity to demand for it both in school and at home
- 3.5. Trained 67 young girls of our vocational skills training center on the LTP approach as some of them are getting matured for marriage. They will also help to educate their parents and peers in the various communities that they are coming from on the concept of the LTP so that more and more people will benefit from the project
- 3.6. Trained 1,050 Micro Enterprise Development (MED) group members on the LTP approach. The MED clients most of which are mothers and traders who can further educate other traders on the approach
- 3.7. Trained 44 new LTP trainers/facilitators of three partners (Presby Child Development Program, Gumani Child Development Program and Gushegu Area Child Development Program on the LTP approach
- 3.8. Carried out health and nutrition assessment and provided nutrition supplements for 2,450 children less than five years in project area.
- 3.9. Mainstreamed LTP education in meetings and trainings of existing programs like education, health & nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Micro Enterprise Development (MED), Child Protection, Gender, Environmental Protection etc.
- 3.10. 825 parents in 17 communities of 3 partners formed and trained on the concept. They comprised of mothers, women, men, grandmothers, traditional birth attendants
- 3.11. Translated, Printed and distributed 500 adapt Dagbani LTP calendars for parents
- 3.12. Attended LTP Conference in Ethiopia by LTP Coordinator
- 3.13. Organized Regional LTP Conference with some partners, stakeholders and facilitators in Tamale

4. How many new LTP trainers received training this reporting period (include numbers for male and female trainers)?

4.1. The program carried out LTP training for 64 LTP trainers thus 44 facilitators (24 females and 20 males) and 22 LTP stakeholders (4 females and 18 males) in project area

5. How many parents, caregivers received LTP training this reporting period (please list # of female and # of male parents and caregivers)?

5.1. 2946 parents and caregivers made up of 2338 females and 608 males received training on the LTP approach. This included 1675 LTP clients (1172 females, 503 males), 1,050 MED clients (945 women, 105 men), 154 Traditional Birth Attendance (TBAs) who are all women and 67 young girls of our vocational skills training center.

6. How many children benefitted from having their parents/caregiver receive LTP training?

6.1. 5,225 children benefited from having their parents/caregivers receive training on the LTP approach both at home and in school. This included 200 (100 girls, 100 boys) school Child to Child club members in 10 project schools in the program area.

Local Context

1. Please include a brief paragraph describing the local context (social, economic, politico, environmental) as it may have affected project results. (For example: weather conditions, a natural disaster, political instability, elections, etc...)

Events or factors that affected project results included economic, social and political. Majority of the parents are peasant farmers and market women. During the rainy season, LTP activities are affected as some of the parents come from farm and market very late and tired and are unable to participate in LTP group meetings and also create enough time to practice play with their children. This was also experience during the political season where most parents spent more of their time in political activities

and discussions. This affected project results negatively. However, parents used some social events such as wedding and naming ceremonies to promote LTP activities to scale up LTP activities in the project area. This also affected the project results positively.

2. What changes have you needed to make to your LTP project due to changes in the local context?

Time schedule for LTP group meetings should be fixed after supper to enable parents participate. This is important because after coming back from farm, the women will have to cook and wash the bowls before they can make time to participate in any meeting or community activity. Mothers who are traders travel to very far communities to do their business and return late in the evening. This makes it difficult to schedule meetings during the day in the rainy season, since farming is a major economic activity in the project area which parents depend on for their livelihood. One of the changes to be made is for us to adjust our meeting to fit into their meeting times, which usually is late in the evening. It is only on Fridays that such meetings can be held in the morning and evening before and after their Friday prayers which are their free days. There is also the need to adopt strategies that will promote LTP approach in social events such as wedding, naming and other social gatherings where necessary.

Lessons Learned – Three Years

1. What lessons have you learned about Learning Through Play and delivering this type of program to your community during the past THREE YEARS?

1.1. LTP approach is practicable and easy to be explained to other parents and community members to understand and to apply. It forms part of age long day-to-day activities, which makes its application easier.

- 1.2. *Parents do not require a lot of resources to practice LTP. What is needed is their willingness and time.*
- 1.3. *Parents appreciate and understand LTP better when they practice it regularly.*
- 1.4. *LTP enables community members to share common ideas, experiences and very interesting traditional or cultural practices together.*
- 1.5. *It shows that parents still have a “bit of childhood” in them and they long to exhibit it. LTP gives them an opportunity to do so.*
- 1.6. *LTP can be easily mainstreamed into other existing programs – education, health, MED, etc*
- 1.7. *The more one educate others about LTP, the more one is been taught and the other way round.*

2. How has the project involved (grown or changed) in response to lessons learned?

- 2.1. *Adult literacy classes for women and men which the organization is running is integrated in some of the LTP groups and will be extended to other LTP groups to enable LTP clients read and interpret the scripts in the LTP calendars*
- 2.2. *The increased awareness of parents/caregivers on the importance of the LTP compelled them to work very hard to remove all social and other barriers that can derail the LTP project. Parents are more committed to their children’s development than before and are working around the clock to create the environment for teaching and learning to take place.*

- 2.3. *Steps to identify and upgrade the skills of local artisans to manufacture durable and very important toys for use by parents, children and schools in project area are underway. This will create jobs and income in the local economy. and will be taken seriously with our stakeholders and community members*
- 2.4. *More and more community leaders and members, stakeholders and institutions will be collaborated and networked with to scaling up and adaption of LTP approach across all regions of Ghana*

1. What has your project done to engage the community in LTP activities?

Community chiefs and their elders including community structures such as the Parent Committees, Water Sanitation and Hygiene Committees, PTAs, SMCs, Disaster Management Committees, Gender Advocacy Committees, MED groups among others were educated on the LTP approach. LTP has also been integrated in their activities in the project communities. The organization has again integrated LTP in its program activities and other meetings with community members in the project area.

LTP training

How are people using the LTP training that they have received over the three year project?

People who received LTP trainings over the three years including our stakeholders and partners are using it to educate others and also practice it with their children. The health extension officers and the Traditional Birth Attendance (TBAs) are educating pregnant and nursing mothers who come to them or at the clinics in project communities where they are located. Parents used the training they have received to practice with their children at home. They also discuss LTP issues whenever they have social gatherings such as naming ceremonies, weddings and funeral ceremonies where people come from many other communities. LTP members also discuss LTP activities or educate other community members whenever they organize community meetings or gatherings. LTP is also currently been practiced at the 9 ECD centers in our program schools by school teachers who have received LTP training. At individual levels, parents share their LTP experience with others on their way to or from market, farms, etc

Unintended impacts

Have there been any positive and/or negative impacts as result of your project that you did not expect to happen?

Parents and children skills with regard to toy making and use of toys have increased. Some children have developed their skills as a result of making toys for their younger siblings to play. The LTP approach has also helped to promote parental care and support to their families. Fathers have begun to go to hospital/clinic with their wives and sick children instead of leaving that to the mothers alone. Parents are also more interested in their children's education and are committed to ensure they provide them with the necessary support to enable them continue their education to high levels. They are also more concern about their children health and nutrition and make effort to provide good meals to their children.

The LTP approach has also improved unity at community and home levels and thus reduced domestic violence against women and children. Parents now place at the center, the interest of their children in most community and family decisions. There is existence of cohesion and harmony in homes and the community at large due to the LTP approach. Children are happier and that reflected in their school attendance and participation in school activities. This ultimately led to enhance their academic performance.

Resources

1. What LTP resources were printed and distributed this reporting period?

Please include # of calendars or # of other resources printed and distributed.

- a. 1,280 LTP calendars translated into Dagbani Language, printed and distributed for LTP clients
- b. Printed and distributed 2450 LTP materials comprising 1450 LTP calendars, 250 parent guide and 250 training guide (English) for LTP trainings and education activities

2. What additional resources been developed to support the LTP program during the past three years?

- a. *Develop videos of LTP activities in 8 project communities and distributed for LTP education*
- b. *Local songs, drama, drumming and dancing to local music, folklores, and games etc.*
- c. *Assorted locally manufactured toys and objects made up of materials like clay, rags, sticks, empty containers, bones, tree pods rubber, papers, cardboards etc*

The Multiplier Effect

Has the Learning through Play program been integrated in to any other programs or organizations in your community?

The organization has mainstreamed LTP into community meetings with groups and committees such as the Parent Committee, School Management Committees, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committees and Environmental Management Committees. Other community gatherings in which LTP is integrated include community education and sensitization on ; child protection, HIV/AIDS, gender, health and nutrition, education, child and family sponsorship, environmental management and disaster preparedness awareness. LTP activities are also carried out in our 10 program schools as well as our Micro Enterprise Development (MED) program group meetings. This has increased the number of beneficiaries of the LTP project in the project area.

Gender Equality

1. What have been activities and outcomes in relation to GENDER EQUALITY?

The activities of the LTP were meant to promote gender equality. It provided both males and females equal opportunities to participate and practice LTP. Issues in relation to gender were incorporated during the planning and implementing stages of the LTP activities. Women are given fair representation in community committees that are formed to carry out development activities in the communities and constitute 60%. Women also composed of about 70% of LTP clients who actively take part in all LTP activities. Issues of gender are mainstreamed in to the LTP activities since both sexes play crucial roles in the implementation. These have boosted their confidence and empower them to take part and contribute to the development agenda of their communities. This has promoted the participation women in family decision making process and the involvement of men to support women to caring for their children

2. How are women and girls benefitting from your LTP project?

Women play equal roles like men in planning and implementation as long as the LTP project in communities is concern. They are allowed to participate equally during LTP group meetings and other community programs. They now freely contribute and express their views just like the children in matters concerning the community, family and everybody at large whenever the need arises. The project places emphasis on building awareness on the need for mothers and fathers to get more involved in taking care of their children 0-5 years using the LTP methodology.

3. How are men and boys benefitting from your LTP project?

The LTP project involved fathers who also play an important role in children upbringing. The practice until now has been that mothers are the ones to baby sit or care for these children. The involvement of the fathers is a greater step for the successful implementation of the LTP project. This has encouraged parents to enrolled girls just like boys to school as a priority which used not to be so. Boys were given the first priority when it comes to sending children to school because the men always had the believe that girls had little to offer them. Equal treatments are given to both girls and boys to ensure equity in the development of children in communities.

Project Management

1. Are there any project management issues that have affected the project implementation and results? Please explain.

The management of AGREDS as well as our partner CCFC played critical roles to ensure the project was on track to meet the desire goals and objectives. A lot of inputs and contributions were made at various levels during planning, implementation and monitoring of the LTP project. They ensured the resources are used efficiently to the benefit of the target beneficiaries. This ultimately contributed to effective implementation of the LTP project

2. Please explain how the project is dealing with any project management issues.

The implementation of the project has given light to how we plan, implement and monitor programs that intend to benefit children. The organization as we develop our annual operation plans has to plan it in a

manner that we incorporate issues of LTP across all the program intervention areas in order to sustain the LTP project. We also considered running the LTP project in a way that old age traditional knowledge can be stored or reserved through proper documentation for use of parents for their children and children yet unborn. Management also considered looking for alternative ways of sourcing funds outside Hincks Dellcrest to support the LTP project either locally, nationally or internationally

Other comments regarding this Three Year Project?

Parental education is an unavoidable step for the development of early childhood. LTP has enable parents and caregivers to realize that Early Childhood Development is an important stage for healthy, wellbeing and life-long social & emotional development of children. Integrated approach or a multi-sectoral approach (development partners, civil society organizations and grass root communities including children & parents who are the first care providers is one of the ways to promote and sustain the LTP project. All stakeholders, governmental & nongovernmental organizations and parents/caregivers alike ought to create the necessary conducive environment for children to explore and take relevant measures to scale up LTP in the region and beyond.

Reported by:

Issahaku Zakaria

LTP Project Coordinator

AGREDS, Ghana