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PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

GHANA

**COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS CONSTRUCTION PROJECT
(CREDIT 2278-GH)**

December 11, 1998

Operations Evaluation Department

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Currency Equivalents (annual averages)

Currency Unit = Cedi

April 1990	US\$ 1 =	313 Cedis
May 1991	US\$ 1 =	365 Cedis
Dec. 1994	US\$ 1 =	1,000 Cedis
June 1995	US\$ 1 =	1,100 Cedis
Aug. 1998	US\$1 =	2,325 Cedis

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSSCP	Community Secondary Schools Construction Project
EdSAC II	Second Education Sector Adjustment Project
ICR	Implementation Completion Report
IDA	International Development Association
MOE	Ministry of Education
RVP	Regional Vice-President

Fiscal Year

Government: January 1–December 31

Director-General, Operations Evaluation	:	Mr. Robert Picciotto
Director, Operations Evaluation Dept.	:	Ms. Elizabeth McAllister
Manager, Sector and Thematic Evaluations Group	:	Mr. Roger Slade
Task Manager	:	Ms. Linda A. Dove

December 11, 1998

MEMORANDUM TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS AND THE PRESIDENT

**SUBJECT: Performance Audit Report on Ghana
Community Secondary Schools Construction Project (Credit 2278-GH)**

The Ghana Community Secondary School Construction project, estimated to cost US\$19.6 million, was financed by Credit 2278-GH for US\$14.7 million equivalent. The credit was approved in FY91 and closed in FY95 after a two-year delay, with cancellation of US\$0.6 million. IDA financed the project when the government failed to find other donor financing. The project was to be implemented in the context of a major education sector adjustment program assisted by IDA under the second of two Education Sector Adjustment Credits (EdSAC I and II) and was to rely heavily on communities to build schools, thus defraying government costs.

The project was to ensure that every one of Ghana's 110 districts had two senior-secondary schools and that qualified junior-secondary graduates would have opportunities to enter effective and relevant day schools in their neighborhoods. Communities and district assemblies were to take responsibility for developing and running the schools. Workshops as well as libraries were to be built for a curriculum introducing vocational-technical subjects.

The Implementation Completion Report (ICR) described problems arising during implementation—lack of community preparation, poor school mapping and lax management of project expenditures and procurement. OED's audit brings out serious defects in project rationale, preparation and design of the curriculum and community components that led directly to disappointing outcomes. The project included vocational-technical workshops to support a new curriculum. But, as the RVP's office pointed out before negotiations, according to the Bank's own recent research findings, secondary level vocational-technical programs are ineffective in producing a skilled workforce and are too costly. Nevertheless, IDA went ahead with the project against its own policy because it had locked itself in, having already agreed to finance workshop equipment under EdSAC II. Also, the Ministry of Education vehemently supported the curriculum and the Minister of Education had publicly promised the schools but had no source of financing. IDA responded quickly to the urgent need for funds.

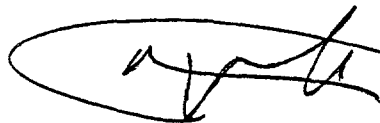
The schools were eventually built (with limited community participation) and have broadened access to secondary schooling for previously under-served communities. But they suffer from low student enrollment and high dropout rates, in part because students from poor communities live too far away to attend regularly. The libraries and workshops remain under-used and poorly maintained. Since project completion, the government, IDA and other donors have neglected the schools because they have focused on basic and tertiary education. The result is that the schools cannot provide effective training in the applied scientific and technological skills needed in the workforce nor in the core academic programs that could possibly attract more students. Nevertheless, examination results in the six project schools visited are no worse than average for the country, albeit the new examination is an imperfect instrument for measuring performance.

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OED agrees with the ICR's rating of outcome as satisfactory but considers it only marginally so. While the schools have been built, they have fallen short as effective and relevant day schools, and community support for them has been disappointing. OED disagrees with most of the other ICR ratings in the light of evidence on the ground. It rates institutional development impact as modest (ICR substantial) and sustainability as unlikely (ICR likely) because government has no plans for developing the schools, many communities cannot afford to do so, and some schools will fail unless issues of access, quality and affordability are addressed. OED rates IDA performance as unsatisfactory (ICR highly satisfactory) because quality assurance mechanisms broke down, leading to serious upstream shortcomings. The resulting implementation and operational problems were such that energetic project management and responsive IDA supervision in the field could not fully resolve them, and IDA thus failed to ensure the investments would reap maximum, long-term value.

The project has important implications for IDA and governments when sectoral agencies are faced with financing needs for investment projects.

- *Of critical importance for IDA is rigorous internal review to ensure that projects' quality-at-entry is not compromised.* In this case, the process was flawed. The review identified key issues undermining the project's rationale and readiness for implementation but Board presentation went ahead nevertheless.
- *Flexibility can be taken too far when, in the interests of responsiveness to the client, IDA's standards of excellence in project identification, appraisal and processing are compromised.* In this case, IDA should have reexamined its prior commitment to poorly justified components under EdSAC II, presenting the project to the Board only when assured it was fully aligned with the best global practices, human capital needs, sectoral capacities and good prospects for sustainability.
- *Borrowers considering external assistance need to be sure that sectoral projects are well prepared before approving their inclusion in the development budget. Without strong oversight, projects may temporarily fill gaps in a ministry's agenda, but they may be inadequately prepared and lead to sub-optimal investments for the country.* In this case, urgent action to salvage investments in senior-secondary workshop facilities is needed so that they can be turned to more productive uses.
- *Community participation components require rigorous design, including analysis of community capabilities, communication mechanisms to encourage information flows, incentives and training to build ownership and skills, and institutional and regulatory frameworks to sustain them.* In this case, the project failed the communities by neglecting these aspects.



Attachment

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<p>This report was prepared by Linda A. Dove who audited the project in February 1998. Pilar Barquero provided administrative support.</p>
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Principal Ratings

<i>Loan 2278-GH</i>	
Outcome	Marginally satisfactory
Sustainability	Unlikely
Institutional Development	Modest
Borrower Performance	Satisfactory
Bank Performance	Unsatisfactory

Key Staff Responsible

	<i>Task Manager</i>	<i>Division Chief</i>	<i>Country Director</i>
Appraisal	N. Bennett	J. de Merode	E.R. Lim
Midterm	N. Bennett	J. de Merode	E.R. Lim
Completion	M. Kilo	I. Porter	O. Lafourcade (Acting)

Preface

This is a Performance Audit Report on the Ghana Community Secondary School Construction Project (CSSCP), an investment in school building with a critical community participation component. The CSSCP, estimated to cost US\$15.1 million, was supported by Credit 2278-GH for US\$14.7 million equivalent to fill a financing gap in the government's program to expand access to senior-secondary schooling. The credit was approved on June 25, 1991, and closed after a two-year delay in June 1995, at a cost of US\$19.6 million equivalent. The International Development Association (IDA) provided the financing in the context of its support for the Second Education Sector Adjustment Project (EdSAC II, Credit 2140-GH). This coincided with the second phase of an International Monetary Fund adjustment program designed to reverse the serious economic crisis of the 1980s and invested heavily in secondary education.

The audit report derives from an Operations Evaluation Department mission to Ghana in February 1998 which reviewed the performance of EdSAC II and the CSSCP.¹ The mission included school visits and interviews with beneficiaries and senior government officials. Documentary sources for Credit 2278-GH include the Implementation Completion Report (ICR) (no. 15212, December 20, 1995), the Staff Appraisal Report (SAR), and the project files. The forthcoming OED report on EdSAC II provides additional insights on the context in which CSSCP was developed.

The author expresses her deep appreciation to all who helped provide the material for the review, in particular, the Ghanaian government, schools and communities who were generous in sharing their experience and views.

Following customary procedures, copies of the draft audit report were sent to the relevant government officials and agencies for their review. Comments received from the Ministry of Education were included in the text and footnotes of the report. The region's comments were included in Annex B.

1. OED audited EdSAC I (Credit 1744-GH) in Performance Audit Report no. 13575, September 30, 1994.

1. Introduction

1.1 This review tells a story about the Ghana Community Secondary Schools Project not revealed in the ICR. It is a story of misjudgment by IDA, which presented for Board approval a project that was inadequately justified, prepared and designed and supported costly investments in vocational training in secondary schools against Bank policy. It is also a story about the government's strong commitment to implement the project despite severe problems and its subsequent, paradoxical neglect of the project schools. In the three years since project completion, the schools have not yet begun to provide the benefits anticipated for students and communities, and they are in serious trouble. However, it is not too late to improve the situation if the school authorities at policy and operational levels have the will to do so.

Project Objectives and Context

1.2 The CSSCP was to help expand access to a new, three-year, senior-secondary program for qualified junior-secondary graduates in areas lacking senior-secondary school facilities. As described in the SAR, the project had three main objectives. It aimed to ensure, first, that qualified junior-secondary school graduates from "backward and deprived" areas would have opportunities to enter effective and relevant day schools in their neighborhoods; second, that essential physical facilities would be constructed for about 140 new schools and would be ready for use at the beginning of the 1992 and 1993 school years; third, that local communities and district assemblies would take responsibility for the development and running of the new secondary schools and feel that the schools were "their schools." The schools were to develop libraries serving the community as well as the students, and would be rewarded with pickup trucks if they built toilets for students and staff. They were to include workshops suitable for vocational and technical programs.

1.3 The Ministry of Education's (MOE) leadership was strongly committed to the vocational subjects because it believed that the country needed schools that directly produced skilled technical workers for middle-level occupations. IDA was already supporting secondary level vocational-technical education and financing large investments in workshop equipment as part of EdSAC II which had been launched the previous year. Opposed to vocationalized teaching in secondary schools on principle, it was financing the component reluctantly, staff say, as a price to pay for maintaining positive country relations and its influence on budgetary and cost-efficiency reforms vital to the education sector. IDA staff involved at the time felt that IDA's opportunities for dialogue, and its options in responding to the country's undoubted need for more equitable and relevant education programs, were restricted by the socialistic principles of the then military government.¹

1. The MOE has commented that the project focus on providing equitable access and work-oriented programs had nothing to do with political ideology but was dictated by social and economic realities.

1.4 IDA's reasons for processing the project as quickly as possible had much to do with staff's eagerness to be responsive to the borrower which faced serious economic and fiscal constraints; to the MOE which needed investment funds; and to IDA's regional management which was keen to commit funds within the current fiscal year if the project were ready in time. The MOE wanted to build the schools in the context of an expansion of the school system under the government's ten-year reform and restructuring program begun in 1987. IDA presented the project rapidly for Board approval via special procedures on the grounds that the preparation had already been done for what was an "emergency" operation. By 1991, MOE had put in place a basic education cycle comprising six years of primary and three years of junior-secondary schooling, and had phased out the common entrance examination for entry to junior-secondary level to encourage all students to complete nine years of schooling. A new grade 9 examination was to select only top-performing students for more advanced secondary education at senior level. About 63 percent of the age-group was enrolled in the basic schools and these students were expected shortly to clamor for admission to the senior level, putting pressure on the limited space available. The CSSCP was to widen access to senior schools in previously under-served areas, thus widening educational opportunities. The workshops to be built in the schools would allow the IDA-financed equipment to be installed and commissioned in purpose-built facilities.

Project Rationale

1.5 IDA's sense of crisis and urgency permeates the documentation on the project's early development. Processing was rushed. The appraisal was not documented according to customary reporting procedures and field negotiations took place despite serious doubts about the project rationale expressed by the Africa Regional Vice-President's (RVP) office² Project files describe the operation as filling a financing gap in the government's investment plans.³ They declare that senior-secondary school buildings were urgently needed to accommodate the increased numbers of students graduating from junior-secondary school and that the project was ready for implementation because it built on community consultation and a school-mapping exercise (conducted by 60 of the client's staff). They cited successful experience with government-community partnership under an ongoing program in other sectors to justify going ahead with this innovative approach.⁴ Under the project, the government would match community inputs in labor, cash and kind with the funds needed to finish building the schools. Despite IDA's advocacy for the community participation, school sites were not all identified or checked for accessibility and communities were not equipped for start-up, despite initial enthusiasm. Overall, the component was too rapidly and superficially prepared and appraised, as the ICR candidly acknowledges.

2. The SAR states that the appraisal mission took place in April 1991 but the pre-appraisal review meeting took place on May 3 and Negotiations on May 21. The ICR records that only 3.5 staff weeks were used from project identification through Board approval on June 25.

3. IDA's Executive Project Summary, dated May 1, 1991, stated that government matching funds were not sufficient to finish 143 schools already started by communities. IDA staff say that the financing gap existed because the African Development Bank did not come through with plans to finance the schools and other donors did not subsequently step in. Also, even before official negotiations had begun, in the run-up to democratic elections, the Minister of Education had promised that each district would get two senior-secondary schools, thus putting IDA under considerable pressure to finance the project.

4. The Program of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment.

1.6 Internal doubts about the project surfaced the day before negotiations were to take place with the government. The RVP office expressed its concerns on the project rationale in a memo to the project department's director. The fact that "communities are fired up to build these schools and we cannot let them down," the memo said, was not sufficient rationale for IDA to invest in senior-secondary education. It continued:

"Nor can issues of equity between north and south or between deprived and well-off areas justify the operation since only 11 percent of the classrooms to be built are in the north and, in general, with a net enrollment rate in primary school...that probably does not exceed 65 percent...less advantaged regions should first be provided with basic education facilities. Those communities that 'need' senior-secondary facilities are already relatively better off by virtue of their already having junior-secondary schools. This does not deny the need for development of senior-secondary education, which we would certainly support. But two issues are of concern...First...we are supporting a government policy of diversified vocational curriculum in secondary school contrary to Bank policy;⁵ and second...we are supporting government policy of a transition rate of 50 percent by 1996 between junior- and senior-secondary school, despite the fact that the rapid growth of junior-secondary education will make the achievement of this objective impossible without seriously jeopardizing the quality of senior-secondary education."

1.7 The RVP's office obviously did not view the project rationale as sufficiently grounded. Yet the memo ended by giving approval for in-country negotiations with the government to go ahead the next day. Furthermore, in its final comment, the memo softened its objections by suggesting that IDA's support of the diversified curriculum would not be a problem because *the program would not be implementable or sustainable*.⁶

"With regard to diversified curricula, we understand that the department has an agreement with the government that it will not introduce the vocational curriculum into any school unless it has the staff and equipment available. *The constraint on government finances will therefore de facto prevent widespread introduction of the diversified curriculum (although there is still a risk that the government will have the staff and equipment to introduce the curriculum in some schools but will not have the means to sustain it...).*"

1.8 This argument appears to underplay the potentially embarrassing fact that EdSAC I was already supporting the diversified curriculum. The memo ended by commending the project staff's approach to resolving the outstanding differences on the pace of enrollment expansion through dialogue rather than as part of the project.

"With regard to the [transition] rate from junior- to senior-secondary, we understand that, instead of including any specific measures as part of the project, the department [responsible for the project] proposes raising the topic during

5. The RVP staff's comment that a diversified curriculum (general academic and vocationally-oriented subjects combined) was against Bank policy is open to misinterpretation because the Bank has never been against a curriculum that prepares students to be effective in the workplace in areas such as applied sciences, computer technologies and business. Rather, it has criticized narrow, specialized, vocational training in schools that is better done on the job.

6. Italics added for emphasis in paras. 1.6–1.8.

negotiations and including the discussion in the minutes of negotiation. We commend your department's excellent working relationship with education officials in Ghana and support your approach of ongoing dialogue over formalistic conditionality. We hope that this approach can incorporate transparency in raising issues where we may not agree with the government's intended course of action. *In these circumstances, we believe that you are best placed to determine the readiness of the operation for negotiations."*

1.9 A follow-up memo the next day confirmed the RVP's approval for the project to be negotiated, using as a basis for the decision "government assurances" that there would be no further expansion in the number of senior-secondary school places for the next three years *beyond what would be provided by the project.* "Hence, it appears that the government, while preserving a 50 percent transition rate (for political reasons?), agrees to reduce the transition rate to a level below 30 percent in the interim. We suggest that you...pursue this...with the government to demonstrate the desirability of adjusting the 50 percent target to one which is more realistic and transparent." Finally, after asking for student enrollment and financial data "*because the project justification on grounds of reducing regional disparities and inequities is weak,*" the memo recommended, "*the operation's justification be based more on other benefits that the project is expected to generate.*"

1.10 Negotiations went ahead the next day as planned and the Board approved a credit of US\$14.7 million equivalent at the end of the fiscal year. The project was to be implemented in 16 months by staff also serving the management unit responsible for EdSAC II.

2. Project Implementation

Community Participation

2.1 Because the component was not thoroughly prepared, community participation during project implementation did not meet IDA's expectations. Two initial problems were an unforeseeable delay between community mobilization and project launch due to challenges to the Minister of Education's choice of supervising architects and engineers that prevented start up until the busy harvest season, and administrative delays in getting the matching funds to the communities which further deflated their enthusiasm. During implementation, other problems caused further delays. Government matching funds were initially channeled through the district assemblies.⁷ But the district administrators were inadequately briefed on the project and sometimes used the funds to meet other priorities.⁸ Sometimes, commercial banks transferred funds to the wrong district accounts. In 1993, the inability or unwillingness of communities to contribute led to a revision of the credit agreement, reducing community contributions to project costs from 30 to 10 percent and increasing the IDA contribution in line. After discussions with

7. This was the plan, although a similar one had not worked for earlier projects in Ghana, as noted in the files by IDA staff during preparation.

8. Joseph R.A. Ayce, *The measurement of decentralization: the Ghanaian Experience 1988-92*, African Affairs, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 31-50.

IDA, contractors were authorized to do the work instead of the communities and they were paid directly by the project once technical auditors had certified satisfactory completion. This arrangement was effective in getting the schools built. But it did nothing to build district-level and community support and may have discouraged local ownership of the “government” schools.

2.2 These implementation problems stemmed not only, as the ICR suggests, from inadequate communication with the communities at the preparation stage but also from a total absence in the project design of activities that would have built community participation. Apparently, few, if any, credit funds were spent on supporting community participation during implementation, over 95 percent of project expenditures being spent on physical components (Table 2.1.). IDA staff currently working with education in Ghana look back on the project as “a simple hardware investment.”

Table 2.1: Project Expenditures

<i>Category</i>	<i>US\$</i>
Multi-purpose buildings	6,708,645
Generator shelters	212,403
Staff houses	5,138,325
Vehicles	1,750,668
Technical auditors	491,259
SUBTOTAL: Physical inputs	14,389,957
Teaching materials (library books)	718,482
GRAND TOTAL	15,108,439

School Catchment Areas

2.3 Bank experience from 40 years of school construction projects shows that the siting of schools is a complex technical and political process that can seriously delay projects if not completed upstream. In this case, the school mapping exercise was quickly outdated and the site selection process was incomplete at project effectiveness. The idea was for the schools within a district to be sited near their feeder schools so as to be accessible to students. According to the ICR, about 100 of the project schools were actually converted and upgraded junior-secondary facilities on existing sites and the remainder were new facilities on new sites. But, reportedly, many schools turned out to be inappropriately situated in relation to where students actually lived, especially in rural areas with dispersed populations. Compounding the problem was an MOE decision to provide only day schools—a decision consistent with a budget-reducing policy agreed with IDA under the EdSAC operations that removed costly subsidies for living expenses for students in secondary and higher education. The mission visited one school in a poor, rural area which illustrates how distance from schools causes major problems for the day school students.

Box 2.1: Distance from School

A new senior-secondary technical school visited in a poor, rural area where the population was sparse did not attract students in the way that schools nearer the seat of district government did. After several years of operation, the school's enrollment had declined drastically. At the time of the visit, one month after the beginning of the school year, 120 first-year students had registered, but only 50 had presented themselves, down from 320 first-year students in the year the school opened. Before the staff bungalows were built, the headmaster himself had to commute to school and used to pick up students on the way. But now there is no school bus or regular public transport. Despite low enrollments, the school had a full complement of 13 teachers, as well as 9 non-teaching staff. It had managed to graduate 97 students in 1997. Several former students, the headmaster said, had graduated from the school to study for a diploma in agriculture or had found work in construction or hotels. He explained that the prime reason for low enrollment and early dropout was the absence of a hostel for students, some of whom lived up to 15 kilometers away. He said that the community was too poor to provide a hostel from its own resources and the two staffhouses were also inadequate. Rapid teacher turnover was a constant worry and local support for the school was being lost. The complaint about lack of accommodation was echoed emphatically elsewhere.

2.4 Observers say that low enrollment is not only due to remoteness but to other issues about educational quality and the high cost of tuition. The issue obviously needs much more study and remedial action on a school-by-school basis than has hitherto been done.

IDA Supervision

2.5 IDA received high marks from project managers for being ready to investigate problems on the ground and for helping resolve them flexibly and quickly, as the ICR attests. The project officer in the field—who had previously helped develop the EdSACs and was currently identifying several new subsectoral projects in education—was largely responsible for this responsiveness to the project's needs. For example, a serious problem arose because, expecting that implementation would be speedy, IDA had decided that price inflation clauses were not necessary in construction contracts. When this expectation proved unrealistic and implementation dragged on, rapid price rises eroded contract values, leading many small contractors into financial difficulties. Some of them then abandoned the work. IDA's project officer spent many days troubleshooting at the problem sites and collaborating with local authorities to resolve the problems. The IDA team also worked hard to ensure that the project funds were fully committed and spent, extending the credit closing date to allow schools to be completed and ensuring that project funds disbursed were eventually traced and accounted for.

Project Management

2.6 Despite a false start due to design shortcomings in the construction component, project management did a remarkable job in ensuring that most of the work at remote sites was eventually completed. In no small measure, this was due to the diligence of the technical auditors, whose records show detailed tracking of the stages of construction at every school and of the quality of the work. Financial management, in contrast, was lax. Auditors visited schools in 1994 to find that the accounting of funds from MOE at the district level was "almost non-existent, follow-up of contractors' use of funds was insufficient, and in some cases, lack of bidding was a

problem.”⁹ On occasion, project staff visited the construction sites to mobilize communities and resolve problems. The project schools could have benefited, however, from more advice from experts, not only on community participation, but also on how to use facilities appropriately for specialist subjects and student project activities. This might have encouraged more effective implementation of the new school programs.

3. Outcomes

3.1 Notwithstanding the implementation problems stemming from faulty design, the project satisfactorily achieved its target of building new schools in every district, and its main objective of making more student places available at the senior-secondary level. In 1995, out of 169 schools, 125 were completed, 43 were uncompleted and one school was excluded from the project due to a legal dispute about the site. Of the uncompleted works, 23 schools were between 40–70 percent completed and 20 schools were 40 percent or less completed. The project extended and upgraded school facilities to provide space for an average of 106 additional students and 20 teachers per school in the new classrooms, libraries and workshops. Extra staffroom space allows teachers to prepare lessons and mark students’ work in comfort. About 370 teachers and their families are able to live on the school campuses in the additional staff housing provided. Altogether, the number of schools newly designated senior-secondary schools, both public and private, doubled in five years. After project completion, MOE banned the building of additional schools for a while but the outgoing Minister recently lifted the restriction.

**Table 3.1: Ghana: Community Secondary Schools Construction Project
Senior-Secondary Schools by Region**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Existing Schools 1990–91</i>	<i>Jun. 92</i>	<i>Mar. 95</i>	<i>Jun. 96</i>
North	11	29	30	28
Upper East	7	16	18	19
Upper West	6	12	16	17
NORTHERN	24	57	64	64
Greater Accra	25	33	47	42
Eastern	45	68	78	80
Volta	37	59	71	73
Central	26	43	54	52
Western	21	38	42	42
Ashanti	48	72	91	91
Brong Ahafo	28	42	56	55
SOUTHERN	230	355	439	435
GHANA	254	412	503	499

Note: The total number of senior-secondary schools declined in 1996 due to a decline in the number of private schools.

3.2 Three years after project completion, the facilities visited are still in fair-to-good condition and schools have toilets and pickup trucks.¹⁰ One school has won an award for the cleanest and healthiest environment and another has planted a flower garden to brighten the

9. Communication from the IDA project officer to the MOE, dated August 8, 1994.

10. The mission visited six of the schools in the south of Ghana where conditions are better than in the poorer, more remote areas of the north.

campus. In general, though, the schools are not attractive places for learning. Two headmasters commented that the strictly functional school buildings were not impressive enough for the communities to be proud of them. However, the staff and students had taken little initiative to decorate, clean and tidy the buildings and grounds, with the result that they looked unnecessarily drab. Cupboards in workshops were in disarray and junk was mixed indiscriminately with teaching materials. Old scribbles remained on chalkboards. In one school, the teacher said—with no discernible embarrassment—that the writing was left there from the previous term.

3.3 The libraries built are spacious and ought to be valuable resources for students who lack home-study space. Unfortunately, they are not. Those visited were unused and dusty, or locked up. Exceptionally, in one school the students were reading under the teacher-librarian's supervision but the library shelves held few titles and, though the novels were well-thumbed, other titles looked unattractive for student or community readers.

3.4 In 1994, IDA reported that half the schools visited had not used the science or agriculture equipment and much of the technical equipment was delivered late, had not been commissioned, or had broken down, while workshop tools were of poor quality.¹¹ Four years later, the workshops and laboratories for vocational-technical subjects are still being used only patchily. In two schools visited, some elements of the practical curriculum (home economics and fine arts) are being properly taught by enthusiastic teachers trained in their fields. In the woodwork area of a third school, examples of students' work from the previous term were scattered around and the floor was inches deep in wood shavings, old and new. In the same school, however, a cupboard was full of unpacked science equipment and chemicals. In most schools, woodwork and metalwork machinery lacked maintenance and was not in use. Everywhere, staff complained that consumable materials for science, woodwork, metalwork and home economics were in very short supply.

3.5 All the schools visited during school hours were engaged in the business of teaching and learning, though not to the optimum extent. Classroom teaching was going on, but not workshop training, though recent activity was apparent in three workshops. Students were orderly. They had exercise books but few textbooks. Teachers used chalk-and-talk methods exclusively. Headmasters said they lacked the essential training and teaching aids for project-based teaching. Teachers and non-teaching staff used the staffroom facilities heavily. Some used them to prepare lessons, but others used them to chat or listen to music on the radio.

3.6 Schools are not managing physical facilities efficiently to meet the new curriculum requirements and the needs of students and teachers. From the perspective of headmasters interviewed, student hostels and staff housing are the first priority. This certainly poses a policy dilemma that demands early resolution. School heads say also that the schools need assembly halls to bring staff, students and community together. And they want larger workshops and laboratories. The evidence for these claims, however, is not altogether convincing. While assembly halls would be ideal, other large spaces, indoors and out, can be found. And more than one month after the beginning of the school year, the teaching space available in schools visited was by no means fully used. In several, some classrooms appeared entirely unused. In most schools, simple rearrangement of workshop furniture and equipment would allow classroom space to be opened up when practical work is not scheduled. In one school, furniture was strewn

11. The MOE has commented that it had never had evidence that the tools were of poor quality.

haphazardly around a workshop that could have accommodated 30 students if arranged appropriately.

3.7 The schools were expected to cope with a surge in enrollments as students graduated from the basic level. At all but one of the schools visited headmasters were concerned that their enrollments were declining. Two of the more established schools had reasonable enrollments of more than 500 and one of them had actually increased its first-year enrollments in 1998. But in three schools, competition from more prestigious neighbouring schools depressed their ability to attract students. All this suggests that demand for senior-secondary schooling is highly elastic and especially sensitive to the quality of the educational services offered near students' homes. The ICR found it "ironic" that communities in more deprived areas were more eager to contribute to the project schools than those in better-endowed, metropolitan areas. The reasons, however, are not difficult to discern. The disadvantaged communities saw the new schools as the sole option for secondary education in their localities while the communities in better-off areas still hoped to get their children into reputable traditional schools, especially where there was boarding accommodation. The recent decline in enrollments, however, suggests that schools showing poor results cannot maintain community support for very long.

3.8 The project objective of providing effective and relevant day schools is as yet unattainable except for the more resourceful schools in the more favored locations. The project's laudable intention that the district assemblies and communities would take responsibility for developing and running the schools turned out badly. Apart from the defects inherent in the design of the component, a severe constraint is that the central government, not the district authorities is still fully responsible for the senior-secondary schools, unlike for primary schools. Some district assemblies do, in practice, allocate small expenditures for the schools. In one school visited, for example, the district is to repair a roof, and in another school with no access to water on site the district transports some water to the school from time to time. But district budgets and expenditures for operational and maintenance needs are extremely small because primary schools and other sectors compete for funds. Non-salary recurrent budgets are severely limited from central sources and, in any case, the central authorities do no systematic data gathering on the precise needs of schools in different localities. Resourceful schools make efforts to attract funds from nongovernmental organizations and private patrons to help maintain and repair their facilities. Unresourceful schools languish without the means to operate effectively. In fairness to the project, however, it operates in a difficult and changing administrative environment, complicated by the slow progress in government decentralization and in budgetary, accounting and inspection processes.

4. Findings and Issues

4.1 In that the project's physical investments have increased the availability of senior-secondary school places—the main objective and the focus of implementation activity—its immediate outcome may be judged satisfactory. But this judgment must be heavily qualified because the project has so far failed to achieve complementary objectives for student and community beneficiaries. The communities and district authorities have not taken responsibility for running and developing the new schools as "their schools," and, as a result, the development of the schools as educational institutions has been modest. Moreover, school facilities are

unlikely to last for their full life if resources for maintenance and repairs are not found and management and funding responsibilities are not clarified. Given the ongoing need for workshop and library supplies, the ambitious school programs cannot be implemented with current levels of funding and school managers and teachers require sustained and heavy technical support. The upshot is that the schools have not achieved full enrollment and are nowhere near accomplishing the objective of being effective and relevant day schools serving students in under-served communities.

4.2 The project's disappointing impact is attributable at root to upstream misjudgments by IDA which led the borrower into unwise investments, as well as the government's failure, since project completion, to support the long-term development of senior-secondary education in project schools. The vocational-technical component was unsound in principle, as IDA had previously recognized when appraising EdSAC II. Yet that project's investments in workshop equipment apparently locked IDA into providing the workshop facilities also when other financing fell through. In retrospect, it appears that an opportunity to re-examine the size and scope of these investments and to ensure they had long-term value for the country was sacrificed in the immediate funding "emergency." Instead, IDA approved the project hoping that the investments would not all be made and the curriculum would not be implemented in line with the MOE's intentions! As a result, the high cost of the schools undermines the cost-efficiency and budgetary aims of the underlying reform program. Once the decision was taken to support the questionable investments, however, IDA and the government collaborated well to implement the component.

4.3 The community participation component, though critically important, was also less than fully effective because it was under-financed, under-designed and did not include a plan of action to guide implementation. The economic and financial analysis needed *at the local level* to ensure funding and sustainability issues were addressed was not done. Having experience under other community programs, the borrower must bear some responsibility for defects in the preparation. During implementation, project management was consumed by the chronic problems of school construction and could pay only sporadic attention to the community aspects. The result is that, even if communities were "fired up" to start the project, as IDA staff claimed, they are by no means enthusiastic now that the schools are built. Once the project was completed and IDA and the government turned their attention elsewhere, the work needed to ensure that the project would have development impact was left to local initiatives that were uneven at best. On balance, despite the project management unit's superhuman efforts to achieve project implementation targets satisfactorily, borrower performance overall has to be considered less than fully satisfactory.

4.4 The two issues raised by the RVP's office before negotiations have not yet been satisfactorily addressed. The transition rate from junior- to senior-secondary level has not risen sufficiently to fill the schools to capacity and, as the RVP's office anticipated, the schools have neither the resources nor the capacity to implement the new curriculum adequately. Resulting problems need urgent attention.

- In rural areas, the remoteness of students' homes from the senior-secondary school sites is inevitable but if regional disparities in access are to be overcome, new ways must be found to help students attend school regularly. The immediate need is for a mechanism to empower local stakeholders to find local solutions to local problems. The solutions will not be without cost and some subsidization of poor students will

be required. Where schools cannot be made viable and enrollments are unlikely to rise, hard decisions need to be made to turn the schools over to other uses, thus recouping some of the investment costs.

- In the absence of a firm decision to abolish the vocational-technical programs in their present form, the schools have the worst of all worlds. They do not offer sound vocational training and they cannot yet offer sound programs in core subject areas to develop sophisticated cognitive and applied skills which the modern workforce needs. Moreover, the MOE has not made the major efforts required to communicate with parents about the goals and content of the new curriculum, with the result that misunderstandings are widespread. Some commentators suggest that the MOE is just too hard-pressed in other areas and is allowing the controversial subjects to wither away rather than risk engendering public debate. Others suggest that it is willing to allow the new schools to operate as second-tier institutions that can absorb “excess” demand for secondary education in established schools. Whatever the reasons for the MOE’s inattention, ignoring the curriculum problem will only put at risk the education of a generation of students. The issue is not simply to choose between vocational and academic programs—because all students at senior-secondary level must be prepared to be productive. Rather, the issue is how to help students to apply problem-solving and scientific skills useful in the world of work in ways that would be relevant and affordable. At the same time, the MOE needs to launch a public communications campaign to spread awareness of the rationale behind the new curriculum and to win support for the schools.

Lessons

4.5 The project has important implications for IDA and governments when sectoral agencies are faced with financing needs for investment projects.

- *Of critical importance for IDA is rigorous internal review of projects to ensure that quality-at-entry is not compromised.* In this case, the process was flawed. A review identified key issues undermining the project's rationale and readiness for implementation but Board presentation went ahead nevertheless.
- *Flexibility can be taken too far when, in the interests of responsiveness to the client, IDA's standards of excellence in project identification, appraisal and processing are compromised.* In this case, IDA should have reexamined its prior commitment to poorly justified components under EdSAC II, presenting the project to the Board only when assured the project was fully aligned with the best global practices, human capital needs, sectoral capacities and good prospects for sustainability.
- *Borrowers considering external financing need to be sure that sectoral projects are well prepared before approving their inclusion in the development budget. Without strong oversight, projects may temporarily meet gaps in an agency's agenda, but they may be inadequately prepared and lead to sub-optimal investments for the country.* In this case, urgent action to salvage investments in senior-secondary workshop facilities is needed so that they can be turned to more productive uses.
- *Community participation components require rigorous design, including analysis of community capabilities, communication mechanisms to encourage information flows, incentives and training to build ownership and skills, and institutional and regulatory frameworks to sustain them.* In this case, the project failed the communities by neglecting to put resources into these aspects.

Basic Data Sheet

COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS CONSTRUCTION PROJECT (CREDIT 2278-GH)

Key Project Data *(amounts in US\$ million)*

	<i>Appraisal estimate</i>	<i>Actual or current estimate</i>	<i>Actual as % of appraisal estimate</i>
Total project costs	19.624	15.108	77
Loan amount	14.696	14.852	101
Cancellation	0.591		
Date physical components completed: December 1994			

Cumulative Estimated and Actual Disbursements

	<i>FY92</i>	<i>FY93</i>	<i>FY94</i>	<i>FY95</i>
Appraisal estimate	10.00	14.70		
Actual	7.627	12.202	14.527	14.696
Actual as % of appraisal	76.3	83.0	98.8	101
Date of final disbursement: June 30, 1995				

Project Dates

<i>Steps in project cycle</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Identification	n.a.	December 1989
Preparation	n.a.	March 1991
Executive Project Summary	n.a.	May 1, 1991
Appraisal	n.a.	May 10, 1991
Negotiations	n.a.	May 21, 1991
Board presentation	n.a.	June 25, 1991
Signing	n.a.	July 8, 1991
Effectiveness	n.a.	August 7, 1991
Project completion	December 31, 1992	December 31, 1994
Credit closing	June 30, 1993	June 30, 1995

Staff Inputs (staff weeks)

<i>Stage of project cycle</i>	<i>Actual Staff Weeks</i>
Preappraisal	2.1
Appraisal	—
Negotiations	1.4
Supervision	34.6
TOTAL	38.1

Mission Data

<i>Stage of project cycle</i>	<i>Date (month/year)</i>	<i>No. of staff in field</i>	<i>Duration of mission (# of days)</i>	<i>Specializations represented^a</i>	<i>Performance rating</i>	
					<i>Implement- tation status</i>	<i>Development objectives</i>
Identification	Dec. 1989	n/a				
Preappraisal	March 1991	n/a		EP, OA		
EPS—Board	May-June 1991	2		EP, OA		
Effectiveness	August 1991	2		EP, OA		
Supervision	Dec. 1991	2	5	EP, OA	1	1
	July 1992	2	8	EP, OA	2	2
	Sept. 1993	4	9	EP, OA, PO	2	2
	Sept. 1994	4	12	EP, PO, ED	S	S
	Dec. 1994	3	12	EP, PO, ED	S	S
	May 1995	4	10	IS, ED, ED, PS	S	S

a. ED=Education Specialist; EP=Principal Education Planner; IS=Sr. Implementation Specialist; OA=Operations Analyst; OO=Sr. Operations Officer; PO=Project Officer; PS=Procurement Specialist.

Other Project Data

Borrower/Executing Agency: Republic of Ghana /Provisional National Defense Council (Ministry of Education)

RELATED OPERATION

<i>Operation</i>	<i>Credit no.</i>	<i>Amount (US\$ million)</i>	<i>Board date</i>
Second Education Sector Adjustment Credit	2140	50.00	May 24, 1990

Region's Comments on OED Findings¹

The Region disagrees with OED's determination of Bank Performance as unsatisfactory. It is our view that the staff involved in these operations performed their duties with commitment and diligence. In a difficult and highly political environment, they collectively reached judgments that can be questioned with the benefit of hindsight, and with the benefit of the lessons from these very operations, which were highly innovative at the time. However, these judgments were reached carefully and deliberately, and were taken in the interests of the client. This is especially the case for EDSAC2, which was a high-profile operation, that received close and senior scrutiny throughout its preparation and implementation. Performance of Bank staff should not be judged on the basis of whether a collective judgment is now supported or not supported, but rather by the care, consideration and motives with which the judgment was made. In this sense, Bank performance, especially with respect to EDSAC2, cannot be judged as less than satisfactory, and to reach such a judgment sends a very wrong signal at a time when we wish to encourage well-prepared risk-taking and innovation.

1. These comments are also applied to Second Education Sector Adjustment Credit (Credit 2140–GH). See the forthcoming audit report.