



Step by Step

Annual Report 2011

STEP by STEP

One day, during game time, children at SAP found the game 'Twister' in the cupboard. Twister is a game whereby participants have to twist themselves in all kind of positions by putting their hands and feet in the required positions. Since there was no teacher immediately available to explain and facilitate the game, the children invented their own game. They each stood on a colour, and any time the dice fell on their colour they stepped one place ahead. The one crossing first had won!

Like the children, SAP as an organisation also took some steps. The year 2011 was not a year of spectacular new activities for SAP. It was rather a year of consolidation, of strengthening our programmes and adding quality. We took steps to improve upon our education programme. We made some further steps in building up our research and advocacy activities, and in measuring the impact of what we do. We stepped up our efforts to reach out to the families of the children who participate in our programmes. And we stepped into the area of juvenile justice administration.

This report gives an overview of the many steps we have taken in 2011.

We wish you happy reading!



SAP Educational Centre has been open for 243 days in 2011

Number of individual children: **73**

Boys: **63**

Girls: **10**

Highest attendance for boys: **201** days

Highest attendance for girls: **94** days

Monthly Attendance of Children:

Highest: average **19.0** children per day

Lowest: average **5.7** children per day

Annual average: **12.3** children per day

Total **3,016** attendances in 2011

Special Attention Project (SAP) was founded in 2007, and offers support to children who live and work in the streets around Kaneshie Market in Accra. Special focus is at children who have learning difficulties. SAP operates an educational centre inside the Market where children from the target group receive individual education, practical support and help to re-integrate in their families.

SAP also creates awareness on learning difficulties and advocates for better support for pupils with learning difficulties in public basic schools. Research on this issue serves to strengthen advocacy efforts.

Lastly, SAP trains teachers on specific learning difficulties, both from the public and the private education sector.



Case study John, 15 years



When I started teaching John, he was 'very difficult': he was talkative, liked making noise, was unclean and fought a lot. In class, he could neither write his Christian name nor his surname. He did not know the mathematical symbols (+, -, ÷, x). He did not know the English alphabet, and had poor writing skills. Even though he dropped out from basic four, he could not colour well due to poor motor skills.

In the classroom of SAP, I took him through activities like writing in the air and in sand, drawing and colouring to improve his motor skills. I took him through sorting and matching and picture reading. I taught him the letters of the alphabet through the sounds they make. I started pre number work, counting of objects, numbers and numerals and single digit addition and subtraction. There are challenges however: John's concentration level is low, he is quite hyperactive (he cannot sit for an appreciable level of time) and does not always have a good attitude towards his teachers. He has a low retentive memory. But his hygiene is now good and his general learning abilities have improved.

Socially, John was this year re-integrated with his family and now stays again with his grandmother and does not sleep in the streets anymore. He still attends SAP's programme because it will be difficult for him to attend a mainstream school. After class, he spends part of his time to work at the market, so that he can have some money for himself. This way, he retains some of the autonomy he was used to when he lived on his own in the streets, while receiving education and being part of his family.

Barbara Asante,
Special Education Assistant

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Special Education Assistants and Internal Training

At the beginning of this year SAP created two positions for Special Education Assistant. This became possible because the educational programme was quite established and part of the daily teaching could be done by teachers who were no degree holders. Barbara Asante and Moses Obuobi joined the team; both of them have completed their Secondary Education. They were also to become job coaches for children who moved into external exposure periods. The two Education Assistants were given an initial two week orientation. They also received training on how to use the teaching and learning materials, and were taken through the process of individualised teaching. After that, they did initial teaching sessions and proceeded to teach small numbers of children in class.

During the year, they also joined training for all teachers on general classroom strategies and the following topics:

- Multiple Intelligences
- Pictorial teaching
- Tactile numbers
- Forms of correction
- Conducting initial assessment
- How to implement Individualised Education Plans (IEP)
- Development of a teaching philosophy
- How to manage children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia and Dyscalculia.

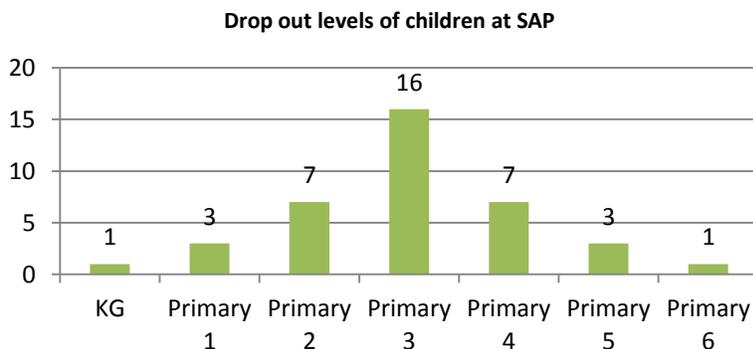


Initial challenges were in the area of authority and class control, and learning to regulate teachers' emotions. Effective implementation of new strategies required additional guidance. The results are quality individualised teaching, increased teacher knowledge and progress in learner outcomes.

What we learned is that regular training is essential and that all teachers need adequate knowledge on IEP preparation. We also experienced again that multi-sensory approaches work best for our children, and that teaching and learning materials are key. And the lower the teacher-pupil rate, the higher the learning outcome.

Bernard Boaheng,
Deputy Project Coordinator / Head of Education

We were able to confirm the level of 38 of our children at which they dropped out from mainstream education, prior to coming to the streets. The pattern is as follows:



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Parents & Care givers workshops

The Parents & Care Givers workshops were started about two years ago. It targets relatives of the children who have cared for them on a daily basis for a period of time. The workshops started as a platform to transfer knowledge on learning difficulties, for participants to learn how to handle their children when they return home so that they can stay.

Over time, it transformed into more interactive workshops. Participants now introduce themselves and also give a brief chat about their child. This follows by teaching on a topic relating to care for children with learning difficulties, including practical advice. Then follow contributions from participants and after some discussion the next point is presented. In the end there is question time. The workshops thus have become a platform for parents and care givers to share their frustrations and sometimes anger, and to receive encouragement, support and stress-relief. They share their experiences with other parents, and feel that they are not alone. More importantly, they learn that there is hope and that their child can change for the better.

Parents are encouraged to remain objective and to show a good attitude towards their children. They learn how to help the child feel good about themselves, despite all the challenges. They also are advised not to beat their children but rather withhold privileges in case the child intentionally misbehaves. Parents also learn how to organise the daily activities for their children, so that they can remember what they have to do.

A challenge is that not all parents honour the invitation to the workshops; average attendance is 50% of those who are invited. Low literacy levels call for reduction in the amount of information that is shared and the way it is conveyed.

This year, we have received many reports of improvement of children's behaviour when they are at home. Parents experience less stress and express a better understanding of their children's learning difficulties. We have learned that increased knowledge solves many problems and enables parents to help children to organise their daily activities and advocate for them when necessary.

Patience Bening,

Special Educator and Facilitator of the Workshops

Interventions in 2011:

Family Surveys carried out on: **32** children

Reintegrated with their families: **10** children

Returned to the streets after being sent home: **13** children

Referred to other NGO's: **4** children

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Education on Learning Difficulties integrated in Family Surveys

Integration of education on learning difficulties in the family surveys enabled SAP to take its awareness creation on learning difficulties across the country. Earlier on, we would just try to re-integrate children with their families. This time around, intensive education of the families on the learning difficulties of their children was added. This was done by taking parents and other relatives through basic information during family visits. Characteristics and the reasons behind behavioural traits of the children were explained. This was met with some challenges because many parents attribute the behavioural patterns of their children to spiritual reasons. Many of them had sought for help from spiritual healers but to no avail. Consequently, SAP tries to keep in contact with a family after a child has gone back home, and parents call frequently to seek for advice.

The main lesson we learned from the family visits is that poverty, parental neglect and broken homes are factors that aggravate the educational and social problems of children with learning difficulties.

Ishmael Hammond,

Social Worker and Research Assistant





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Assessment in the streets

This year, Social Work at SAP standardised its way of data collection in the field. This brought SAP a step closer to standard record keeping and effective and quick response to children found in the streets. Fieldwork data collection was categorised in three main stages: (1) Engagement, (2) Assessment and (3) Admission and Participation in SAP's programme. Engagement covers the first contacts with the child, whereby an idea is formed about their background. Assessment means that the child is asked to write its name, identify basic colours, identify and write the alphabet, write some numerals and do some basic mathematics. Admission is when, based on the assessment, the educational team of SAP admits the child and conducts a diagnostic test to determine where the actual difficulties lie.

This development gave us a fair idea of the duration between engagement and admission of new children. It also gave us sufficient information of the child regarding educational capabilities, reasons for leaving home and some basic information on their life in the streets. This way, we do not involve ourselves with children who are out of school for reasons other than learning difficulties, to make sure that we do not divert from our target group.

It nevertheless has some challenges. Key among them is that children frequently move from one place to another, making the completion of the exercise sometimes stretch through a long period of time. The improvement is however that we now know exactly where to continue from once they reappear.

Ishmael Hammond,
Social Worker and Research Assistant

Case study Yaw, 12 years



Yaw: initially his learning was very weak. He could speak very little English, he did not know the letters, and could do some basic mathematics. A particular problem was movement; he found it difficult to sit stable, and would often in class put his leg up, lie down on the floor or put his head down while he was doing an assignment.

In the past months, I have taken him through the letters/sounds A to D with the aid of drawing, cutting and pasting (with glue). He has also done more mathematics, and learned the parts of the human body. He has started on combination sounds and has done a lot of writing exercises to improve his skills. He learned five basic colours and five basic shapes. I taught him numbers 1 – 100. He also has been doing various jigsaw puzzles.

Yaw has difficulty remembering sounds, so every day we recall the previous day's sound before we move on to the lesson for the day. With maths, he still sometimes forgets to 'carry forward', so I have to remind him. He can now write most of the alphabet, but still forgets letters. He also needs guidance on whether to write on the base line, drop line or upper line. He still has difficulty sitting stable, which impacts negatively on his class work. Life in the streets sometimes makes him moody, which results in poor concentration.

But he now knows all the basic shapes and colours, can write numbers to 100 and is learning numbers over 100. There is a willingness to learn and to speak good English.

Yaw and his younger brother Kofi visited their uncle together with the Social Worker of SAP. The uncle promised to send them to their grandmother in Kumasi, but was not heard of again. Before Christmas, the boys expressed a strong wish to go by themselves, and SAP facilitated their journey to Kumasi.

Moses Obuobi,
Special Education Assistant



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Phasing of Education Programme

The education programme of SAP is focused on remediation of learning difficulties. For the first two years that the programme ran, the focus was mainly at reading, writing and mathematics. However, reality is that many children cannot go back to mainstream basic schooling. Therefore, we have started to integrate practical activities into the programme, and we have added a second phase whereby older children can go for exposure at workplaces.

The aim is to expose children to various economic activities, and to keep them involved in our programme. We have contracted professionals ('Resource Persons') who come to share their time and expertise once a week. The lessons are done with small groups of children (about 4 pupils at a time), and last thirty minutes to one hour. The Resource Persons had to learn to move at the pace of the children, and were given training and help to draw a programme for their lessons. The activities are evaluated weekly. The programme includes some typical trades like bead work and cooking, and also lessons like story-telling, drama and music/dance.



One key challenge was making the transition from a 'lecture type' of teaching to a lesson where children actively carry out the activities. Time keeping was also a learning point-some resource persons came in very late whilst some others did not turn up for no apparent reason. Proper coordination between the practical lessons and the classroom programme is also vital. Despite the challenges, the programme has yielded good results. The concentration span of children had increased because there is more variety in the programme. The Resource Persons have been able to adjust to the learning abilities of the children. And the children show interest in the lessons.

The external exposure periods are now part of the education programme. The aim is to let children try out a profession and to experience regular working life. Not many children have yet been able to complete an exposure; they often give up within a few weeks and express interest in coming back to join the day's programme. Playfulness and lack of focus often play a role. We have learned that it

is important to make the exposures part of education, so that it is part of the learning process and not a failure if the child does not complete the exposure period. The exposures are monitored by the Education Assistants who are very familiar with the learning abilities and challenges of the children.

Bernard Boaheng,
Deputy Project Coordinator / Head of Education

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Education of Parents and Teachers at Community Schools

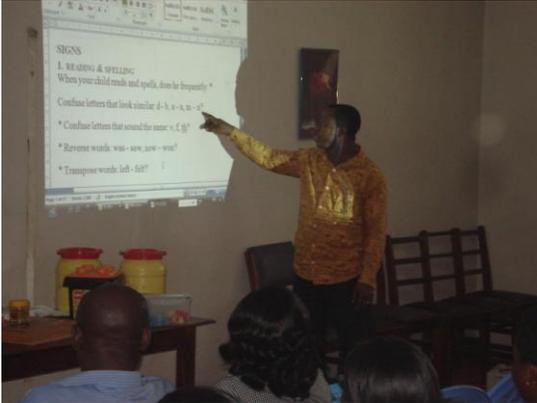
SAP decided to move into the communities to spread the message of Learning Difficulties in the year under review. At Weija cluster of schools and at a private school at Mamprobi, we were able to provide a one (1) day in-service training for a total of forty (40) teachers. Teachers received general information about signs, symptoms and management strategies on Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD). Teachers also were taken through the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Disability Act (2006) and the rights of children with disabilities including children with SpLD. Thirty four (34) parents were also sensitised at a community school at Teshie during a Parent-Teacher Association meeting.



Through the effort of individual teachers who had an interest in learning difficulties, more attempts were made to organise such programmes at schools. A major restraint however was timing: most private schools have tight schedules, and Heads were reluctant to fit in an additional programme. Moreover, private schools are profit-based and often focused at exam results, to the detriment of slow learners. Another challenge is that, unlike the public schools, there is no system to disseminate information among private schools. This means SAP relies mostly on individual contacts to reach out to these schools.

Evans Perry-Quao,
Advocacy Officer





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Training of teachers:

Outcomes of impact assessment:

Problems observed in pupils in mainstream schools:

- Reading & writing: 42% of problems observed
- Attention & Hyperactivity: 14%
- Social behaviour problems: 13%
- Motor & coordination problems: 13%
- Mathematics: 10%
- Memory problems: 8%

Number of teachers trained by respondents: 952

Number of children with learning problems assisted by respondents: 343

Problems encountered when assisting children: *parents do not cooperate, large class sizes, no teaching and learning materials, children feel stigmatised.*

Impact Assessment on Teacher Training

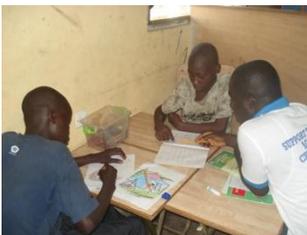
As part of increased efforts to measure our achievements and evaluate the impact of our programmes we carried out an impact assessment on the Training of teachers that we have carried out over the past two years. A total of seventy (70) Resource Teachers of the Ghana Education service had been trained by SAP, for which sixty eight (68) questionnaires were sent out. Forty two (42) of the teachers filled the questionnaires that were sent to them. Important findings came out of the assessment, ranging from non availability of Teaching and Learning Materials to lack of cooperation from parents of children with learning difficulties. See the box for more specific outcomes. We have learned that a considerable number of Resource Teachers that we trained have put an effort to assist children with learning difficulties in their schools. A number of teachers however had resigned their posts or were transferred to other positions, and could not be reached. In the future, SAP will also ask participants of training programmes to fill in a questionnaire on the situation in their districts concerning children with learning difficulties. Together with a survey six (6) months after their training, this will enable us even better to measure our impact and monitor progress.

Evans Perry-Quao,
Advocacy Officer

Case study Akua, 6 years

Akua was a pupil of a Preparatory School at Anyaa-Accra and she dropped out as a result of long distance from home to school, her mother's inability to cater for her educational needs and traits of learning disabilities. She was having difficulties in fine motor skills, numerals and reading. For instance she saw certain letters (b, d, p) and numerals (2, 5, 6, and 9) backward and upside down.

At SAP, Akua has been receiving differentiated instruction on pre mathematical skills (e.g. counting, joining dot-to-dot, simple operation involving varied objects, numbers and numerals within 20) pre- reading activities (e.g. letter recognition and sounds) and fine motor skills (e.g. colouring, water-paint). The table on the right shows her progress.



Akua stays with her mother, who is a trader at Kaneshie Market. The educational team of SAP regularly meets with the mother to discuss Akua's progress and to prepare the mother for taking responsibility for Akua's education.

Padmore Quansah,
Intern, University of Education, Winneba

o = Pre- Instruction
√ = During Instruction

Activity	No (0%)	Emergent (50%)	Established (75%)
Ability to write name		o	√
Ability to recognize letters of the alphabet		o	√
Word recognition	o	√	
Fine motor skills		o	√
Ability to recognize numerals within 20		o	√
Ability to recognize, differentiate among +, ×, ÷, -	o	√	



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Student Placement

This year, SAP for the first time received a student from the University of Education, Winneba. It is a placement for Padmore Quansah, a final year student from the Special Education Department. The mentor at SAP received training from the University in mentorship at the beginning of the placement.

The student was taken through a three week orientation to acquaint himself with the various departments of SAP. He was also taken through the teaching materials and their usage. After that, he observed other teachers at SAP and was then given one child to work with. Gradually, the number of children he taught was increased to three or four.

One challenge is that because SAP is not a regular school, the intern does not always meet the required number of lessons per week. Irregular attendance of children makes it difficult to do evaluation on children he has taught.

On the other hand, the presence of the intern means that the teacher-pupil rate has dropped, meaning that children get more individual attention. He has also contributed positively to other teachers' store of knowledge.

We have learned that interns with a teaching background fit well at SAP. All interns need to be given training on learning difficulties before they can be effective.

Bernard Boaheng,
Deputy Project Coordinator / Head of
Education



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Study on Juvenile Justice and Learning Difficulties

This year, SAP conducted a study into the possible link between learning difficulties and children in conflict with the law. We suspected that many juveniles involved in all kinds of delinquencies are actually children or young people who have a learning difficulty. In the study, also the knowledge levels of laws of Ghana on juveniles for various professional in the juvenile justice administration were surveyed. Finally, we wanted to know whether there is any consideration for learning difficulties when it comes to commitment and rehabilitation.

We went to various locations for remand and rehabilitation and did educational screening of the children. The children were also interviewed, and a sample group was followed up by visiting their families and former schools to validate the outcomes of the educational screening. A Focus Group Discussion was held for professionals from the juvenile justice administration to get first hand information from them about children in conflict with the law and the possibility of learning disabilities playing a role.

Gaining access to the various locations was a challenge, but it was successful in the end. Interviewing the children took much time, and follow up involved a lot of travel. The report on the study is available from SAP.

Evans Perry-Quao,
Advocacy Officer



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Organisational Developments

The growth of a pre-schooler into a school child does not involve the learning of many new skills but rather strengthening and further development of existing skills. SAP has grown this year in the same way. Internally, staff members were assigned new responsibilities. Bernard Boaheng became Deputy Project Coordinator and took charge of the organisation in the absence of the Project Coordinator. He also took control over the Education department, including the finances, and has strengthened the programme by providing training to the educational team and putting in place new strategies for classroom management.

Patience Bening now coordinates all internal affairs, next to her regular responsibilities in the education programme. She manages the budget for the kitchen and the store, and keeps stock.

The organisational schedule of SAP has finally been put on paper, and shows not only the hierarchical relationships between departments and officers, but also the relationships at content level. This shows the information that is shared and utilised between the various programmes.

We maintained our habit of meeting once a week with the whole team. Members in charge of programmes reported on progress, and other members had input in the form of questions or suggestions. During the second part of the meetings individual children were discussed and shared decisions made on interventions. Each meeting was preceded by a short presentation by a member on a topic related to our work. Through this, we learned for example more about research, child development, social issues, stress management, and a range of topics relating to difficult behaviour in children.

Capacity of staff has been built further this year. The education team went for a study day to reflect on their programmes and to gain new insights. Barbara Asante and Moses Obuobi attended a training on Jolly Phonics (by Mervan Books), and Evans Perry-Quao went for a course in Advocacy at Legon.

Personnel are the main asset of SAP. We could have a beautiful location, wonderful furniture and excellent procedures, but without a committed team nothing meaningful would be done for the children. Day in day out, staff members of SAP take care of the children; they respond to their needs, they listen to them, they cope with all the difficult behaviour, they are patiently sorting out the continuous quarrels and fights among the children, they sometimes even get insulted or assaulted! Every staff member at SAP is involved with the children; also those who are based in the office play their role in instructing and listening to the children. I want to use this place to express my admiration and appreciation for the hard and committed work the team of SAP puts in every single day!

Margaretha Ubels,
Project Coordinator



The **Board of SAP** met four times in 2011, and consisted of:

Bro. Jos van Dinther (Chairman), Mrs. Irene Engmann, Mr. Hamidu Sulemana, Mr. Emanuel Kobina Baidoo, Mrs. Bridget Owusu Mattoney, Mr. Bernard Boaheng, Maraaretha Ubels

We say a Big Thank You to our Donors and Supporters:

- Volunteer Distress Fund of Voluntary Services Overseas
- Pastor Kojo Allen, USA
- Kanea Foundation, Ghana
- All persons who made private donations
- Mr. Edmund Kofi Duffour, MD of Kaneshie Market

