

# Encouraging Education in Kpanlori, Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

A review of literature revealed a gap in research on effective ways to promote education in the far eastern rural areas of Ghana where the village of Kpanlori is located. This case study used purposeful sampling of eight key informants in a food security program designed to increase enrollment in primary school in Kpanlori. Findings revealed the importance of addressing food insecurity issues and tradition in order to increase regular school attendance.

## PROBLEM

An estimated 69 million school-age children are not in school, and almost half of them (31 million) are in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2012). In addition, girls have lower enrolment rates, higher dropout rates and lower achievement than boys in the majority of developing countries (UNESCO, 2003). In Ghana, there are more than 1,129,000 primary school aged children not enrolled in school (UNESCO, 2012). In sub-Saharan Africa, investing in girls' education has the potential to increase agricultural output by 25% (UNIFEM, 2009). A farmer with just four years of education is 9% more productive than one with no education, and each additional year of preschool increases a person's future productivity by 10-30% (USAID, 2012).

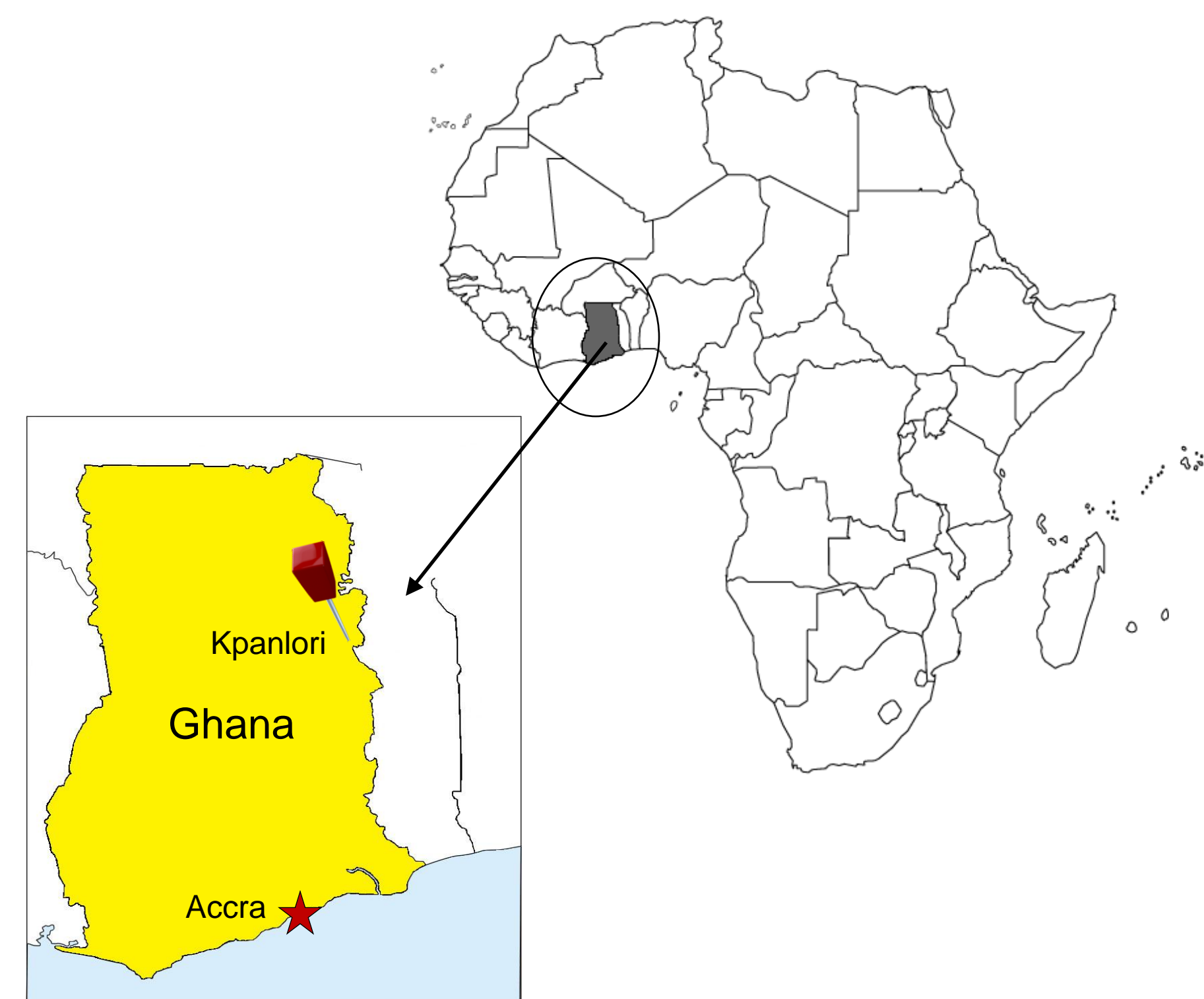
Kpanlori is a remote village in rural eastern Ghana with 1,600 residents who are mainly farmers. During the first half of every year, the community does not have enough food (Adam, 2010). Few adults in Kpanlori speak English or are literate (Adam, 2010). Village leaders in Kpanlori have partnered with Ghanaian government officials and international partners (USAID and Catholic Relief Services) to create a food assistance program to increase enrollment in primary school and increase literacy. Multiple factors play a role in families' ability to send children to school.



Children receive lunch at school each day. When they attend at least 15 days of the month, they get a bag of maize to take home for the family.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this case study was to determine whether the food assistance program had an impact on regular attendance in primary school in Kpanlori.



## RELEVANT LITERATURE

Much has been written about the benefits of education and associating more years of formal schooling with better health (de Walque, Nakiyingi-Miir, Busingye, & Whitworth, 2005; Peters, Baker, Dieckmann, Leon, & Collins, 2010), increased general intelligence (Ceci, 1991; Cliffordson & Gustafson, 2008; Lleras-Muney, 2005; Nisbett, 2009), and an increase in a person's future productivity (Dollar & Gatti, 1999; World Bank, 1998). However, research on programs that effectively increase school attendance in the rural eastern portion of Ghana is lacking.

## LIMITATIONS

Limitations include time and open and honest responses from participants. The small sample may not be representative of all villages in rural Ghana. This study is specific only to the village of Kpanlori in the rural eastern area of the country.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How has the program affected school attendance?

How has the program affected food security?

How have participants changed their behaviors in response to the program?

What are participants' perceptions of the program?

## PROCEDURES

Purposeful sample of eight key informant interviewees (village chief, Parent Teacher Association member, parents, teachers).

Individual interviews were conducted with each of the eight participants regarding their views about the program and how they have been affected by participating.

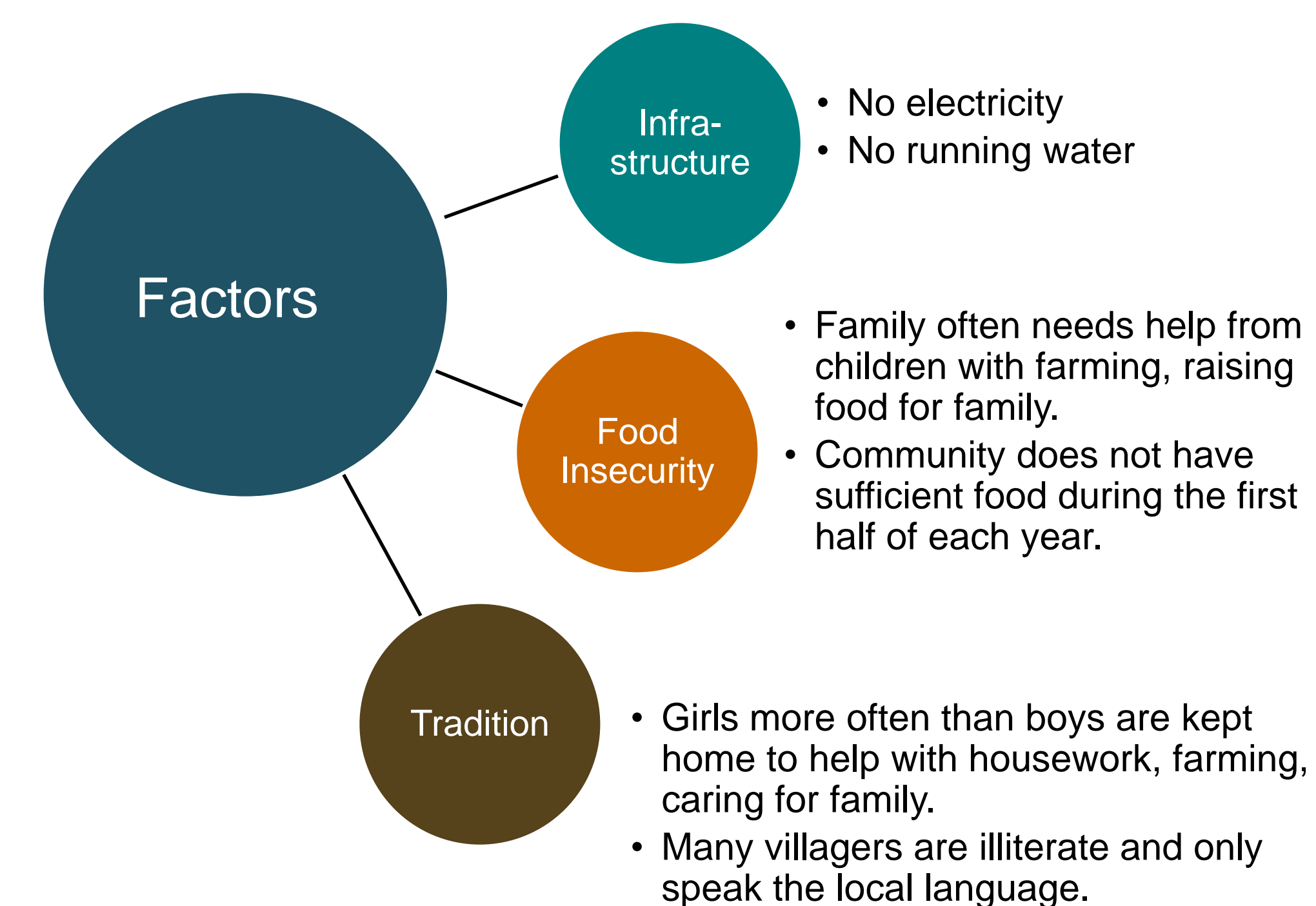
General interview guide with open ended questions allowed for follow-up questions and clarification.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with participants and observations were analyzed both inductively and through coded outlines to look for patterns regarding attitudes about the importance of education and the challenges faced in sending children to school.

Identification of themes

NVivo 9 was used for data organization and coding



## FINDINGS

- Several recurring themes emerged from interviews:
- Participants said they realized the importance of education and expressed concern that they were not always able to send all of their children to school regularly, especially the girls.
  - Participants said they were encouraged to send their children to school because they knew each child would have a meal every day.
  - Participants reported they did not have to worry as much about having enough food because of the benefits they received (bags of maize) from sending their children to school.
  - Enrollment of both girls and boys has increased.
  - An additional school room has been built in order to accommodate increased enrollment.

## CONCLUSIONS

Enrollment in school in Kpanlori increased as a result of the food security program. Participating in the program allowed parents to address both problems of food insecurity for the family and education for their children. They were able to worry less about food because they knew their children would receive a meal at school, and attending school regularly allows children to receive a better education.

## SOCIAL CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

This study provides insight into the participants' attitudes and perceptions about the importance of education and some of the difficulties they face in trying to manage the multiple challenges of food insecurity and wanting a better education for their children. Results of the study suggest recommendations that could be implemented in other rural villages in order to increase school attendance by addressing the problem of food insecurity.