Reaching the Poor or the ‘Well-connected’? School Targeting and Selection Dynamics under Ghana’s School Feeding Programme
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Introduction

- ‘States of dependency’ are inevitable in society whenever people are not in a position to earn life due to physical and psychological incapacity or due to man-made social and cultural factors (Richard Titmuss 1955: in Reisman, 2001);

- Sen (1999:40) also maintained that ‘no matter how well an economic system operates, some people can be typically on the verge of vulnerability and can actually succumb to great deprivation as a result of material changes that adversely affect their lives. Protective security is needed to provide a social safety net for preventing the affected population from being reduced to misery, and in some cases, even starvation and death’
Introduction

• Social opportunities, that is, arrangements that society makes for education and healthcare to enable people to live a better life; these are necessary for effective participation in economic and political activities (Sen 1999).

• Thus, the need for effective social policy interventions in any society, more so, for developing societies, is well recognised.

• However, the success of social policy interventions depends very much on the ability of policy-makers and implementers to assess levels of poverty correctly, to identify the deserving disadvantaged sections of the population and to design appropriate programmes to address identified needs (Schuck and Zeckhauser 2006).
Introduction

• Difficulties include institutional capacity deficits, high administrative costs leading to delays, a culture of poor documentation and severe budget constraints;

• Mkandawire (2005) has also questioned the appropriateness of targeting instead of universal provisioning in developing country situations.

• This situation is particularly problematic in view of the large sections of the population which operate in the informal sector, and remain largely invisible to the state.

• Many developing countries including Ghana have been forced to cut back on social spending since the past three decades through structural adjustment programmes and austerity measures, following the resurgence of the new right or neo-liberal economic ideology from the late 1970s through the 1980s and the 1990s (Stiglitz 2002).
Ghana School Feeding Programme

• Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) is aimed at providing one hot, nutritious meal per day to pupils in public primary schools and kindergartens.

• The meal is to be prepared with food items sourced from locally grown foodstuffs from the local community, the district and lastly, from the national level, in order of priority.

• Three key objectives of the programme include to reducing hunger and malnutrition, increasing school enrolment and boosting domestic food production (Abebrese 2011; ECASARD 2009; GoG 2006).
Ghana School Feeding Programme

- GSFP forms part of NEPAD’s Comprehensive African Agriculture Development programme. It was also geared towards helping to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals of reducing hunger and poverty, and to increase enrolment in primary education.

- The GSFP was piloted in 2005 with 10 schools drawn from all 10 regions of Ghana, and was formally started in 2007 with sponsorship from the Government of Ghana, the Dutch Government, the World Food Programme and other supporting organisations.

- By 2010, the programme had reached 697,416 pupils across all regions in Ghana, representing about 22% of primary school pupils. The programme targeted about 1,000,000 pupils but this was not met due to a number of constraints including funding (GSFP 2011), and by the fourth quarter of 2014, estimates from the National Secretariat of the GSFP showed that 1,728,681 pupils were being fed across the country, with the view to reach 2,500,000 pupils by end of 2015.
• Research Problem:

• Remarkable, but curious, increases in school participation and enrolment have been reported by the programme across the 10 regions of Ghana.

• From the GSFP report (2011), some of the least poor regions such as Greater Accra and Ashanti turned out to have the greatest number of participating schools whereas some of the most deprived regions, for example, Upper West, Upper East had the least number of schools participating (Ghana Statistical Service 2014a; 2014b; 2013)
Ghana School Feeding Programme

• Clearly, targeting under the GSFP has been problematic and this has been acknowledged by the programme managers themselves (GSFP 2011:14), stating that a retargeting may be required to ensure that the food actually gets to poor pupils.

• The targeting criteria since inception of the GSFP have included road access, availability of electricity, access to potable water and other woolly indicators which can be found in nearly every district in Ghana, and therefore unable to discriminate between deserving and undeserving areas.

• The criteria seem to have paid little attention to available poverty profiles and food security maps, and ignored systematic use of relevant geographic information and other indicators that could have helped.
Ghana School Feeding Programme

• In the process, only about 21.3% of the poor are reached under the programme (World Bank 2012:3), indicating that the programme is benefiting more non-poor than the poor.

• Thus, this study sought to investigate why this has occurred.

• In a broader sense, what accounts for poor targeting results under social intervention programmes in developing countries, such as the Ghana School Feeding Programme?
Welfare Provisioning Approaches: A Review

• Broadly, two main welfare provisioning approaches are employed in social policy programmes:
  - universality, which is premised on basic rights principle and;
  - selectivity or means-testing, which is based on targeting the truly deserving beneficiaries of social policy programmes (Barusch 2009; Mkandawire 2005; Esping-Anderson, 1993).

• The four key components of social justice, namely, desert, need, rights and equality take centre-stage in determining the allocation of social policy benefits, as to whether it should be governed by the universalistic, the means-testing or as is most often the case, a combination of the two approaches (Miller 2003; Mullard and Spicker 1998).
Welfare Provisioning Approaches: A Review

- Miller (2003) used a story of three children hired to clean a window to demonstrate this. Each child was hired with a promise that they will receive one dollar after the work.

- First child worked very hard throughout the day in cleaning the window. Indeed, she did more than her fair share of the work.

- The other two children did not work very hard, but just tagged along.

- One of these two children looked ill, and it emerged that she had not eaten properly for two days because her family had no money for food.

- The third child had no explanation for not working hard enough on the window cleaning assignment, but still looked forward to receiving the one dollar promised.
Welfare Provisioning Approaches: A Review

• The first child who worked hard represents *desert*, because she fulfilled her part of the agreement; if not more.

• The second child represents *need*; she probably needs the money more than all the others.

• The third child represents *rights* because, contractually, a right is an outcome to which one is entitled based on prior agreement, charter or contract. In addition, there is also the challenge to ensure *equality and fair treatment* for all the children involved in the work.

• This short story gives a glimpse of the difficult processes and contentions involved in social policy decisions, and the choice of an appropriate regime to govern social provisioning in a society.
Welfare Provisioning Approaches: A Review

• Korpi and Palme (1998 in: Mkandawire 2005) have also argued that excessive targeting may end up missing the most deserving people.

• Furthermore, the process of targeting is highly susceptible to type I and Type II errors. Type I errors occur where deserving people are denied social policy benefits through underpayment or when they are missed altogether. Type II errors refer to undeserving people receiving benefits through overpayments or leakages.

• The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) is examined with these conceptual issues as backdrop.
Methodology

• The study adopted a largely qualitative approach to engage the issues under consideration.

• In order to attain a fairly representative sample, the 10 regions of Ghana were grouped into clusters based on poverty rankings from the Ghana Living Standards Survey (Round 6) and Ghana Poverty Profile reports (2005-2013).

• This produced:
  • richest cluster regions, namely, Greater Accra, Ashanti and Eastern;
  • poorest cluster regions, namely, Upper East, Upper West and Northern;
  • mid-range cluster regions, namely, Central, Western, Brong Ahafo and Volta (GLSS 6, 2014)
Methodology

• The second stage of the selection process involved randomly picking any one region from each cluster, and this resulted in the selection of Greater Accra from the richest cluster, Upper West from the poorest cluster and Central region from the mid-range cluster.

• From this stage, a strategic sampling approach was used to select districts with public schools that were benefiting or were excluded from the Ghana School Feeding Programme.

• A total of six (6) districts were selected through this process but they have not been named for anonymity reasons in research ethics. In each district, two beneficiary schools and two non-beneficiary schools were selected to participate in the study.
Methodology

• Study participants included: headteachers, teachers, elected local representatives of the community such as the Assembly member, other key community leaders, parents, school children, local government officials, GSFP coordinators, officials of the Ghana Education Service (GES) at the district level, and representatives of key partners such as the World Food Programme and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation.

• The participants were selected based on their closeness to the key issues of the study such as management, implementation and coordination of the programme. The primary data was collected through 36 semi-structured interviews between October and December 2015.

• Questions asked during the study included objectives of the GSFP, relationships between the programme and poverty reduction, education, agriculture, nutrition and health of pupils, factors considered in the selection of participating schools, assessment of the success of the programme, problems and suggestions for improvement.
In one sense, the GSFP has helped to reduce poverty by relieving poor parents of some financial commitments that would have gone into feeding their children every day they attend school, and this saved income can be put to some other use.

According to the respondents, it is very common in poor communities for children to be absent from school because parents could not provide food for them in order to attend school.

Some children indeed come to school on empty stomachs, find it very difficult to participate in academic activities, and eventually abandon school altogether.

In some participating communities, parents ask children not to consume all the food given them at school but to bring some home to their brothers and sisters.
GSFP and Poverty Reduction

- In some instances, poor children have taken note of the days and times that food is provided in school, and on days where feeding is not done, they abandon school and go home. Thus, the GSFP appears to be a critical need for children from extremely poor homes.

- However, there is also evidence that some parents who could provide food for their children are off-loading that responsibility to the state by failing to feed their children; such parents send their children to school without food, telling them that food will be provided in school.

- This exemplifies the difficulty to distinguish between the truly needy from those taking advantage of the GSFP, which constitutes one of the classic social policy challenges (Korpi and Palme, 1998).

- Some respondents also indicated that there has been no direct reduction in poverty in the communities where GSFP is implemented except for the caterers and children who benefit.
The key link between GSFP and education is in the area of school enrolment. Increased enrolment has occurred in almost every school where the GSFP has been implemented. In the view of most respondents, this high enrolment and improved attendance helps to improve educational participation.

However, a closer look reveals some interesting nuances. Increases in enrolment appear to be a transfer of enrolment from schools that are not participating in the GSFP to schools that are benefiting from the programme in the area or district. For example, there are instances where within a cluster of schools operating in view of each other or on the same compound, some schools are selected to participate in the GSFP and others are excluded. The effect of the situation is that children are removed from non-participating schools and registered in the participating schools by parents.

This automatically leads to an increase in enrolment of the school participating in the feeding programme, and a loss of enrolment in the schools that are excluded from the programme. This especially occurs at the community level where some schools are selected and others are left out.
## Kindergarten Enrolment of Schools in Same Towns or Locations: GSFP schools and Non-GSFP Schools


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>KG1</th>
<th>KG2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agona Nkum</td>
<td>Nkum AMA ‘A’ Basic School (GSFP)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nkum AMA ‘B’ Basic School (Non GSFP)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agona Nyakrom</td>
<td>Nyakrom Holy Quran ‘A’ Basic (GSFP)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nyakrom Holy Quran ‘B’ Basic (GSFP)</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nyakrom Presby Basic (GSFP)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Nyakrom AMA ‘A’ Basic (Non GSFP)</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nyakrom AMA ‘C’ Basic (Non GSFP)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nyakrom Salvation Army Basic (Non GSFP)</td>
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<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41</td>
<td>111</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bobikuma Presby Basic (Non GSFP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agona Asafo</td>
<td>Asafo AME Zion Basic (GSFP)</td>
<td>82</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Asafo Catholic Basic (Non GSFP)</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Duakwa Methodist Basic (GSFP)</td>
<td>113</td>
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<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duakwa Islamic Basic (Non GSFP)</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Duakwa AEDA Basic (Non GSFP)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GSFP and Education

• In other situations, parents move their children from communities where school feeding is not done in the schools to distant towns where the children will be fed in school, even if this means children have to walk over 5kms to school and back every day.

• Thus, the increases in enrolment that accompanies the implementation of GSFP in schools may not present an accurate picture of a net increase in school enrolments; much of it may be explained by transfer enrolment from non-beneficiary schools to beneficiary schools. However, further investigation of this phenomenon may be required.

• In terms of quality of education, respondents indicated that the GSFP has had no direct impact. This is understandable because the programme was not set out to pursue this in the first place. Indeed, in some districts in Greater Accra, schools without the GSFP perform better academically than schools benefiting from the programme, thereby delinking improvement in academic performance from school feeding.
The GSFP is expected to help reduce hunger and malnutrition, and is geared towards consuming food that is necessary for growth, improved metabolism and repair of worn-out tissues in the body. The evidence on this has been mixed at best.

Some local government officials indicated that the GSFP implementation committee at the local level provides a menu that the caterers are expected to follow in the preparation of food for pupils in the schools; but other respondents indicated that, while some caterers prepare nutritious food, others provide food which do not meet the required nutritional standards.

Sometimes the food is poor to the extent that children refuse to eat, defeating the objective of meeting nutritional needs of the children. In some schools in the Greater Accra region, most pupils refuse to eat the food because what is in their lunch-packs from home is more nutritious.
• In some cases, the food is of good quality but the portions are so small that the children do not get satisfied after eating (Interview). This situation was linked to the long delays in the release of funds to caterers, which lead them to reduce the quality, and quantity of food prepared for pupils.

• In spite of these challenges, the GSFP is seen by some key respondents as a direct benefit for the pupils whose parents cannot give them nutritional meals at home.

• In their view, this helps to reduce morbidity and improves the health status of children, thereby reducing the rate of absenteeism from school due to illnesses from malnutrition.
Selection of Beneficiaries of the GSFP

• The official criteria for inclusion as a beneficiary school include low enrolment of pupils in a school, poverty and vulnerability conditions of the community in which the school is located, among others. In addition, the school has to be publicly-funded.

• Enrolment data on schools is supplied by the District Educational directorate to the District Assembly, and data on vulnerability and poverty levels are provided by the Planning and Social Welfare offices at the district level, which use similar data sets to manage the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme in the districts.

• However, the final determination of which schools to benefit and which ones to be excluded rests with the District Assembly, though other stakeholders may make recommendations.
Selection of Beneficiaries of the GSFP

• It is also instructive to note that allocation of beneficiaries under the GSFP is based on a quota system provided by the regional GSFP Coordinator.

• The Coordinator may inform the District Assembly that they have been allocated a quota of say 1,200 pupils for the year. It is then up to the Assembly to determine how to re-allocate the quota among schools with low enrolment in communities with relatively high poverty and vulnerability.
Political Influence in the Selection of Beneficiary Pupils and Schools

• Community level respondents were asked about the reasons for inclusion or exclusion of pupils in their locality from the GSFP, and a wide range of issues were raised. Some indicated that initially the district programme managers gave priority to schools in remote communities but now participation in the school feeding programme is political. This is because schools lobby for it and politicians also use it to score political points, irrespective of enrolment or deprived conditions of the school.

• For example, if the headteacher and Assembly member have strong linkages with the party in power, they are likely to get more schools in their area included in the GSFP. In addition, if key decision makers in the local government wish to gain greater political support in the form of votes for their party, then there is a high likelihood that schools in areas where such support is being sought will become beneficiaries of the GSFP, irrespective of the official criteria of low enrolment, poverty and vulnerability.
Political Influence in the Selection of Beneficiary Pupils and Schools

• In the Central region, respondents commented on the criteria for inclusion in the GSFP and the following are excerpts indicating a convergence on the political nature of school selection.

• One headmistress commented as follows: ‘political considerations are sometimes prioritised over economic and enrolment drives, and so selection of schools in the GSFP has turned out to be highly political’.

• Similar views were expressed by an officer of the Ghana Education Service directorate in the same region.
Political Influence in the Selection of Beneficiary Pupils and Schools

• Another teacher stated that the political affiliation of a particular headteacher may influence the decision on the selection of the school, especially if the headteacher has linkages with the party in power (Interview).

• A headteacher also concurred that: ‘political affiliation of the town, constituency and head of the school are crucial in determining the chances that a school will benefit from the GSFP’;

• Another headmistress supported this view saying: ‘selection of schools is politically inclined and sometimes based on political grounds’.

• Summing it up, one teacher also stated the following: ‘political influence and the ability to lobby at the District Assembly will determine whether a school in a community will be included or left out in the GSFP’.
Similar comments in relation to school selection were made in interviews in the Greater Accra region. One Assembly member stated that:’ the DCE promised to bring school feeding here in 2012, so they did (Interview ).

Another Assembly member concurred with this by indicating that it was a government promise to them which has been fulfilled (Interview ).

A headteacher in the same region indicated that schools that were currently benefiting from GSFP are those decided by the Assembly, and not necessarily the poorest or those with lowest enrolment (Interview ).
Political Influence in the Selection of Beneficiary Pupils and Schools

• In the Upper West region, similar views were expressed (Interview with Assembly member ); but in addition, more schools in urban areas were selected in preference to rural schools which were experiencing greater deprivation and lower enrolments .

• From the responses, it appears urban communities with greater political clout and lobbying power are getting more schools to benefit from the GSFP than rural schools in the Upper West region.

• However, poverty levels in the rural areas of this region are far greater than in urban areas (See Ghana Statistical Service, 2015).
The findings of the study indicated lack of clarity among the respondents regarding the basis for allocation of quotas for the regions and districts. There is a broad understanding that levels of poverty, deprivation, vulnerability and low enrolment in schools are taken into consideration in making these allocations.

However, there is evidence to show that the poorest communities and districts with low school enrolment are not necessarily the ones that are given the highest quotas in the allocation process. This raises questions about relevance and application of the stated criteria of high poverty, deprivation, vulnerability and low enrolment.

There is the need to fully publish the allocation criteria for the general public to understand the logic underlying the calculations and how they are applied in the quota allocation process.
Allocation of Quotas

• At the district level, respondents repeatedly indicated that in spite of the official criteria of low enrolment, poverty, deprivation and vulnerability, the political affiliation of the headteacher and ability to lobby at the Assembly are crucial in determining whether a school will be selected to participate or not.

• If the criteria for inclusion was clearly set out and made public, why would it be necessary to lobby for inclusion?

• This implies that having a school with low enrolment, and being located in a deprived area with high levels of poverty are not enough; political clout to lobby the government for inclusion is a key requirement, which is a tall order for already impoverished communities at the local level.
Conclusion and Policy Implications

• In view of the fundamental principles of social justice such as need, desert, right and equality (Miller 2003), the GSFP seems to fall short.

• For example, evidence from the study reveals that schools that participate are not necessarily those that are located in poor and deprived areas, but those with headteachers and locally elected leaders who have the political clout to lobby the government in power, defeating the principle of need. A similar situation is observed with the principle of desert.

• There were instances where schools in richer regions and urban areas were chosen to benefit from the GSFP, whereas poor rural schools were left out. The case is made even more poignant where pupils in beneficiary schools located in richer urban areas refuse to eat the food because the ones they have brought in their lunch pack from home were more nutritious and better.
Conclusion and Policy Implications

• The quota system used for allocation of pupils to be fed under the GSFP without publication of the allocation criteria makes the GSFP fall short of the principle of equality and fair treatment. Meeting this standard would require publishing of the criteria and the selection process and replacing the existing system which appears to be fundamentally arbitrary and politically manipulated.

• Concerning rights, every child in Ghana is entitled to social provisioning available to children within the state, and therefore must not be excluded from enjoying those rights. The GSFP, as it stands, fails to fulfil this right and many poor children are denied because their schools are ignored for not having political connections, or because they are not publicly-funded.

• Upholding the principle of rights under social justice requires that every child is offered the opportunity to enjoy this right, and it should be up to them to opt out or to make use of it.
Conclusion and Policy Implications

• Type I and Type II errors do occur in social provisioning and these are usually inadvertent, or may be due to systemic weaknesses. The case of the GSFP seems different. The poor rural community schools that really need to be included in the programme have been replaced by richer urban community schools, not by accident, but by deliberate politicking and lobbying. In such a situation, they can hardly be seen as errors.

• Perhaps, it would be more accurate to argue that oftentimes, decision makers and power-holders deliberately capture programmes and resources, and distribute them in ways that seek to influence voting decisions in future elections or to reward party faithfuls.
Conclusion and Policy Implications

• In conclusion, the paper argues that valid beneficiaries of social policies programmes may be missed due to covert intentions of powerholders to service patronage networks, leading to a situation where the well-connected sections of the society benefit instead of the deserving poor.

• This is because evidence from the study indicates that reliable data on poverty that could be used for effective targeting exist. For example, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) was able to reach 57.5 percent of its target group, relying on such data, which is also available to the GSFP; but it could only reach 21%. In addition, there are non-state actors such as non-governmental organisations and civil society groups and institutions that could have been better involved in developing the selection criteria, coordination and monitoring.
Conclusion and Policy Implications

- In contrast, the major decisions and activities regarding the GSFP are controlled by political appointees and affiliates. This appears to be by design rather than a situation that has occurred by default.

- Thus, targeting of beneficiaries remains open to manipulation and reliable data that could improve the process may be ignored for political reasons. However, greater reliance on poverty profiles, transparency, publication of selection criteria, impartial selection process, and inclusion of non-state actors in coordination and monitoring would help reverse the situation.

*Endnotes/List of interviews (See full paper)*
*References (See full paper)*
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

• Discussion and comments most appreciated