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**INTRODUCTION**

The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) approach championed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund lies at the center of development assistance, debt relief, and development planning in many developing countries, including Ghana. International endorsement of the approach as critical for more effective poverty reduction and better development aid is reflected in the Monetary Consensus and the Rome Declaration (Driscoll, 2004). Ghana has implemented a PRS (Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy I, 2003-2005) and a second generation of PRS (Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II, 2006-2009) had just passed its implementation phase in 2009. While there is clearly an element of continuity in the PRSs, the second differs from the first in a number of ways. For instance, while the first phase of the government’s strategy emphasized programmes and projects to reduce poverty, the second phase focuses on the implementation of activities that induce growth and have the potential to support the creation of wealth.

**Proposition, Research Objective and Research Questions:**

The main proposition of the study is that the GPRS II has been able to assist farmers to effectively develop essential stock of capital assets (human, physical, financial, natural, and social) necessary for poor smallholder farming households to obtain adequate sustainable livelihoods. I accept the proposition if the analysis proves this, or reject the proposition if the analysis proves otherwise. This is against the backdrop of an empirically proven positive relationship between an individual’s stock of these capital assets and ability to meet his or her resilient livelihood needs.

**Empirical Presentation of Study Area:**

The proposed study site is the Ejisu-Juaben Municipality of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The municipality is made of twenty-five (25) towns and villages, out of which 10 could be classified as mainly farming communities. These communities will be the focus sites of this study. Socio-economic and demographic data of the municipality is sourced mainly from Ghanadistricts.com – the official page for information on local government structures in Ghana.

**Location and Size:**

The Ejisu-Juabeng municipality is located in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, known for its rich cultural heritage and tourist attractions notably the “kente” (traditional woven cloth) weaving 6 industries. The municipality stretches over an area of 637.2 km2 constituting 10% of the entire Ashanti Region, with Ejisu as its capital. It lies within Latitude 1°15’N and 1°45’N and Longitude 6°15’W and 7°00’W.

**Climate and Vegetation:**

Climate and vegetation as are the case for most of the middle belt in Ghana, the municipality experiences tropical rainfall – that is bi-modal rainfall pattern and wet semi-equatorial climate. It is characterized by double maxima rainfall lasting from March to July and again from September and normally ends in the latter part of November. The mean annual rainfall is 1200mm. Temperatures range between 20°C in August and 32°C in March. The fair distribution of temperature and rainfall patterns enhances the cultivation of many food and cash crops throughout the municipality.

**Economy:**

Although other sectors such as manufacturing, services, and commerce contribute substantially to the economy of the municipality, agriculture stands to be the mainstay of the municipality by virtue of its percentage employment, which is 55.6% of the total employed labour force. Agriculture in the district is divided into two main major types – crop farming and animal husbandry. Some also practice mixed farming.

**Smallholder agricultural Production in Ghana and in the Ejisu-Juaben Municipality:**

Agriculture in Ghana is characterized by a large smallholder sector, and a very small large commercial sector. Predominantly, agriculture is practiced on smallholder, family-operated farms using rudimentary technology to produce about 80% of Ghana’s total agricultural output (MoFA, 2007). It is also estimated that about 2.74 million households operate a farm or keep livestock, and about 90% of farm holdings are less than 2 hectares in size (MoFA, 2007). Larger scale farms and plantations produce mainly oil palm, rubber and coconut and to a lesser extent, maize, rice and pineapples. Agricultural production is generally dependent on rainfall, although it is reported that an estimated 6,000 farm enterprises nation-wide were using some means of irrigation in 1999.

**The Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS II 2006-2009):**

Ghana’s medium term development policy has been outlined in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy I (GPRS I 2003 – 2005) and the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II 2006 – 2009). The GPRS I was formulated to enable Ghana to benefit from a significant measure of debt relief under the Highly indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC) and to position the country in an improved macroeconomic environment to address critical issues of poverty on an emergency basis (Adutwum, 2006). Thus the focus of GPRS I was to realign the badly distorted macroeconomic environment and improve the conditions for implementation of sectoral policies designed to promote sustainable economic growth and reduce the high incidence of poverty prevalent in the country.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Role of Agriculture in Sustainable Development:**

At its most basic, development can be taken to mean the production of social change that allows people to achieve their human potential (Adams, 2009). Yet, development remains an ambiguous and elusive concept. Sustainable development was first publicized in the World Conservation Strategy in 1981. It was subsequently adopted in the Brundtland Report (1987)to integrate environment and development issues and was given further impetus in the ‘Caring for the Earth' document produced jointly by the International Union for Conservation, the World-wide Fund for Nature and the United Nations' Environment Programme (succeeding the earlier World Conservation Strategy).

**Is the Pursuit of Agricultural Productivity the Ultimate Panacea for Rural Development?**

As the preceding discussion has shown, it is one thing to say ‘‘go forth and do agricultural development’’ and quite another to suggest and ensure ways in which this should be done so as to inspire any realistic confidence that the advice will be followed. The diversity of policy narratives on rural development is almost as diverse as the rural space itself (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001). The crucial question this section attempts to review is whether agriculture can be the engine of rural growth.

**The GPRS II on Smallholder Agricultural Productivity:**

A number of studies and evaluations of the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS II) have been conducted, largely focusing on identifying good practices and bottlenecks in the project’s implementation but offering little on the direct impacts of the strategy specifically on poor rural small-holder farmers (see e.g. National Development Planning Commission 2009, IMF 2009, Ankomah 2005, World Bank 2007, Wolter 2008). It becomes worrisome that the specific impacts of a specific development programme on agriculture, the mainstay of many developing country economies, have been given less attention. The challenge of meeting the Millennium Development Goals, and particularly the halving of poverty and hunger by 2015, is immense; and particularly so in rural areas. Dixon et al (2004) reports that more than two-thirds of the poor in rural areas in developing countries are smallholder farmers, whose resources, livelihood patterns and income sources are quite heterogeneous. Smallholder farmers still dominate most farming systems of developing countries, as in Ghana, and account for a majority of rural employment and food production.

**Climate Change Adaptation in the Smallholder Agricultural Sector:**

Despite the publishing of data conforming to the incidence of anthropogenic global climatic change and counter-arguments put forward by climate sceptics, natural changes to accustomed climate patterns, especially rainfall, are observable. In its last report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirmed that during the 21st century, global warming will be more significant in Africa than elsewhere in the world in terms of biodiversity loss, food insecurity, water scarcity, and an increase in drought frequency (IPCC, 2007, Webersik and Wilson, 2009). Climate change is a real concern for the sustainable development of agriculture, especially in many African countries where agriculture is still directly dependent on climate, since rainfall, heat, and sunlight are the main drivers of crop growth.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research Strategy:**

To adequately approach the research questions, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches will be used. This is informed by the researcher’s motive for a “qualitative study to provide the context for understanding broad-brush quantitative findings” (Bryman, 2008:620). The focus of the study will be a case study of how the improved agricultural productivity sub-sector of the GPRS II has enhanced farmers’ livelihoods. Quantitative indicators and assessments for measurement of concepts such as agricultural productivity and livelihoods will need to be supported by interpretivist techniques of unstructured and semi-structured focus-group discussions, participant observations, among others, which may provide a better understanding of the phenomenon under study than if just one method is used.

**Research Design:**

The research will use a case study design, which will entail a “detailed and intensive analysis of a single case” (Bryman, 2008:52) – the Ejisu-Juaben municipality. As the socio-economic and physical environment of the municipality is basically homogenous, focussing on a case study allow for a rich depth of investigation of the problem under study, which could be generalized to the whole municipality.

**Data Collection:**

The data collection methods to be used will be determined by whether the investigation of a research question requires a qualitative or quantitative approach. Among the methods to be used will include structured interviews, focus group discussions, self-administered questionnaires, observation, and document analysis. These techniques will be used to collect both primary and secondary data relevant for investigation of the research questions. Primary data collection methods involving oral discussions will be voice-taped and carefully trans-scripted thereafter.

**Sampling:**

To collect relevant primary data, key informants and other stakeholders in the study area, such as local food crop farmers, officials of Ejisu-Juaben Municipal Assembly and other local concerned civil society groups working in the field of agricultural productivity will have to be 14 sampled and interviewed.

**Data Analysis:**

Data collected will have to be systematically structured, summarized, and analyzed. Statistical tools such as contingency and frequency tables, pie charts, histograms, among others, will be used along with other non-statistical techniques such as interpretivist data analysis and discussions. Recorded interviews also had to be carefully trans-scripted into analyses text. The objective of these were to identify and interpret patterns, with the aim to suggesting possible recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the future interventions for improving agricultural productivity and livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups.

**Quantitative Method**

**Preparation of a Livelihood Assets Status Tracking (LAST) Matrix:**

The purpose of this matrix is to provide a simple, quick, and easily-understood assessment of the status of access, endowment, and/or utilization of specified capital assets based on local understanding and perceptions of stakeholders in the system (Elasha, et al 2005). The framework is then used to assist in the interpretation of local criteria and indicators of success of the GPRS II in improving smallholder farmers’ livelihoods and compare between different 15 times (pre- and post-policy intervention).

**Estimation of a Transition Matrix**

The main objective of the estimation of a transition matrix is to identify to what extent the GPRS II has helped poor smallholder farmers fared within a threshold income generation frame. The transition matrix is calculated based on the direction of the movement (transition) between two income poverty conditions of a household from 2006 to 2009. Therefore, in the first stage of the estimation process, households are categorized using a relevant poverty line into four categories based on their income status for the initial year (2006) and for the year

2009.

**Qualitative Method:**

Using responses from carefully designed questionnaires inspired by the sustainable livelihood’s framework, a qualitative and quantitative livelihood assessment will be made. This assessment will look at how an individual, a household, or a community behaves under specific frame conditions. One of the ways to understand livelihood systems is to analyze the coping and adaptive strategies pursued by individuals and communities as a response to external shocks and stresses such as drought and policy failures.

**Limitations of the Study:**

Some challenges and limitations were encountered in the course of data collection and writing-up of the research. First, there are possible constraints in data collection and analysis. For instance, during trans-scripting of the interviews, there may be a challenge in picking up the right understanding of what have been said. Also, the challenge of high incidence of illiteracy made it difficult to administer self-completion questionnaires so the researcher had to translate each question into the local language and help farmers choose from a set of multiple-choice options which apply to them. However, conscious efforts in ethical social research were taken into consideration in this process.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter will present the empirical findings and analyse these in the light of the literature review and theoretical framework. The chapter is divided into four main parts, and each part is structured to answer each of the five research questions and achieve the research objectives. The first part deals with the strategy of the Ejisu-Juaben municipal directorate of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA hereafter) covering the GPRS II period.

**PART 1: Agricultural Development Policy –**

Monitoring MOFA’s Compliance to the Action Plan One of the major aims of the GPRS II has been to achieve the MDG’s, including the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger. In Ghana, the predominant economic activity is agriculture which is dominated by smallholder farmers, and who constitute majority of the poor in Ghana

**PART 2: Interaction through Participation –**

Beneficiaries’ Level of Policy Awareness The above section has demonstrated that on many levels the work plan of Ejisu-Juaben MOFA consciously or unconsciously correspond to many of the sustainable livelihoods and developmental needs of farmers in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality. However, the ability of Ejisu-Juaben MOFA through the GPRS II interventions to deliver beneficial outcomes of agricultural development and a sustainable livelihood of farmers in the municipality is in peril if the most important stakeholders - the farmers in the various farming communities - are either excluded from the decentralized process of intervention design and implementation or do not represent the true interest of farmers in the municipality.

**PART 3: LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC WORKING CONDITIONS FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS**

This part assesses conditions such as local climatic characteristics and working environments within which smallholder farmers in the municipality operate, answering research question number four – what are the environmental and working conditions of the farmers in the municipality? Have the farmers experienced any change(s) in these conditions, and if yes, how do they cope with these changes? It is impossible in this study to experimentally prove

the occurrence of climate change in the study area. However, inference of the occurrence of climate change using scientific means is made from climatic data on precipitation and temperature from a randomly selected year and climate scenarios for 2020, 2050, and 2080 developed by the Ghana Meteorological Services.

**PART 4: Monitoring Overall Impact:**

Productive Capital Assets of Smallholder Farmers Having explored the institutional and vulnerability context in the previous parts of this chapter, this section concentrates on an assessment of the status of livelihood capital assets endowment of farming households in the study area. This is done by employing an adapted methodology of the Livelihood Asset Status Tracking (LAST) framework which is intended to measure the changes in five capital asset groups – physical, financial, natural, human, and social capital – prior and after the inception of the GPRS II as a proxy for assessing impact on farmers’ livelihoods in the study area.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Reviews on the effects of Ghana’s Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS II) have concentrated on generalised issues and the identification of good lessons and practices for use in future implementation of similar programmes (see e.g. National Development Planning Commission 2009, IMF 2009, Ankomah 2005, World Bank 2007, Wolter 2008). More importantly, the specific nature of thematic areas of the GPRS II such as improving agricultural productivity and its effects on livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups such as food crop farmers have been little touched on.

This knowledge gap has been the focus of this research, and how it fits into the array of international and national literature and discourses on the effectiveness of poverty reduction strategies (PRS).

This study thus offers perhaps one of the most comprehensive documentations of the micro-level analysis of the GPRS II on agricultural productivity and enhancing smallholder farmers’ livelihoods to create more private sector employment and reduce poverty. A review of literature on the topic seem to reveal that the GPRS II has had mixed results with regards to its objectives. For instance, a general nationwide level analysis in some aspects of the programme, like food crop yields, may record encouraging results but micro level outcomes especially in rural areas present a different picture.

Clearly, there was a need for assessments in this area to suggest possible recommendations for measures that will enable similar future projects and interventions to have sustainable and far-reaching povertyreducing outcomes. That was the pre-occupation of this research in the context of the Ejisu-Juaben municipality of Ghana.

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