A Role for Social Protection Investments to Support Food and Nutrition Security

Lessons from Ghana

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A Report of the
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Executive Summary

Social safety net programs have expanded rapidly in recent decades as an instrument to combat extreme poverty and food and nutrition insecurity. In 2008, Ghana launched its Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer program to provide basic support for households with orphaned children. Since that time, LEAP has grown to become the country’s flagship social protection program, reaching beneficiaries with varied vulnerability profiles nationwide. LEAP has also linked enrolled households to free healthcare through the National Health Insurance Scheme since 2012.

Ghana was a U.S. government Feed the Future focus country in the initiative’s first round (2010–2017) and has been selected as a recipient of continued support. Feed the Future aims to reduce the prevalence of extreme poverty and stunting, primarily by investing in the growth and diversification of the agricultural economy. In Ghana, Feed the Future’s strategy also prioritized building the resilience of the least well off, those who lack the asset base to immediately benefit from commercial agricultural linkages.

In 2014, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) committed $12 million to fund the pilot expansion of LEAP to include a new category of beneficiaries: pregnant women and children under one year old who live in extreme poverty. Reaching this group during a critical period of cognitive and physical development has the potential to drive reductions in stunting while priming the next generation for better health, social, and economic outcomes.

In October 2017, the author traveled to Accra and Tamale, Ghana to interview a wide variety of LEAP program experts and stakeholders. The trip was motivated in part by a recent publication of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) that provocatively classified LEAP cash transfers as a redistribution of resources with no return on investment,¹ in contrast with a growing evidence base that demonstrates robust positive impacts of safety net programs on food and nutrition security and productive asset accumulation. This report reflects the observations and insights of diverse informants, in addition to a review of related literature. It discusses LEAP’s successes to date as well as ongoing technical and administrative challenges. It reflects upon issues that emerged as priorities to address as LEAP continues to evolve. The analysis concludes with the following recommendations:

For USAID:

1. As the new round of Feed the Future target countries develop their country strategies, attention to the needs and opportunities facing the extreme poor should remain a central tenet of program design and investment strategy.

2. Recognizing that growth in the agricultural sector alone does not solve food and nutrition insecurity challenges, the agency should continue to invest in public-sector social protection interventions to achieve Feed the Future’s stated goals of poverty and stunting reduction.

3. More broadly, USAID should prioritize contributions to national data systems and other public goods to inform evidence-based programming, perhaps sometimes at the expense of project-specific monitoring and evaluation activities.

4. In Ghana and elsewhere, USAID should build upon its widely lauded successes with informal financial services such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). Linkages to formal financial services should also be explored when feasible and appropriate. Financial services have great potential to complement and leverage cash transfer and productive livelihoods interventions alike, within and beyond the agricultural sector.

For the government of Ghana:

1. To preserve and enhance LEAP program quality, the government of Ghana should address current implementation challenges before continuing its rapid scale-up of beneficiary intake. It should also continue to clarify roles and responsibilities around the incorporation of complementary “layered” services going forward, particularly as relate to nutrition.

2. The government should simultaneously reconsider resource allocation across a broad set of social protection programs and prioritize investments that are well targeted and pro-poor.

3. Finally, given public-sector resource constraints, the government should continue to prioritize domestic resource mobilization through improved enforcement of existing tax law.
Introduction: Ghana’s Economic Growth, LEAP, and USAID’s Role

Ghana is widely recognized for its significant economic growth in recent decades against the backdrop of free and fair elections and peaceful political transitions since the 1990s.² It officially entered the ranks of middle-income countries in 2011³ and annual GDP growth has hovered around 7 percent over the last 10 years.⁴ While it achieved its Millennium Development Goal of halving the incidence of poverty by 2012, the depth of poverty remains persistent⁵ as inequality has steadily ticked upward. Poverty is increasingly concentrated in rural areas of the country’s north—its incidence in the Northern Region, home to 1 in 10 Ghanaians, is two to three times the national average and nearly 10 times the poverty rate in Accra. The dominant contributions of extractive industries to Ghana’s growth have not led to robust job creation, and much of the economy remains informal and low skilled.

Experts contend that a refocus of attention on the agricultural and manufacturing sectors would stimulate income growth that is more broadly shared. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has hewed to this recommendation with substantial investments through the Feed the Future initiative to support the agricultural sector. Ghana was one of 19 countries initially targeted by the U.S. government global hunger and food security initiative and remains one of the 12 newly identified countries that will receive the next round of multiyear funding.

The ultimate objectives of Feed the Future in all of its target countries remain the reduction of both poverty and the prevalence of stunting. Between 1998 and 2014, Ghana’s stunting rate among children under five fell from 31 to 19 percent nationwide but stagnated in the Northern Region, where one in three kids remains stunted and Feed the Future’s investments are appropriately concentrated.⁶ While the initiative prioritizes investments in agricultural growth, many value chain-oriented investments fail to reach the most vulnerable households worldwide. This is due, in part, to the lack of productive assets, including land and labor, accessible to those households. Social protection programming that directly targets the least well off...is increasingly recognized as a complementary and indeed a critical tool to alleviate extreme poverty and hunger.

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³ According to the World Bank’s country classification standards, Ghana became a lower-middle-income country in 2011. By other metrics, it emerged as a middle-income country in 2007.
⁶ In more recent years, Feed the Future has reported significant stunting reductions in its target communities.
that directly targets the least well off, those who are ill-equipped to benefit from commercially oriented agricultural activities, is increasingly recognized as a complementary and indeed a critical tool to alleviate extreme poverty and hunger.

Ghana’s Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program provides eligible beneficiaries with a cash transfer every two months as well as access to free health insurance. LEAP began as a pilot in 2008 with 1,654 households and has now grown to reach over 213,000 in all of the country’s 216 districts. Its recent expansion has been particularly rapid while eligibility criteria have broadened and benefit levels have increased. Through the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), USAID has underwritten LEAP’s recent inclusion of a new category of beneficiaries that is well aligned with its stunting reduction goal: pregnant women and children under 12 months old. Feed the Future resilience and nutrition programs have targeted those same new LEAP beneficiaries with complementary services.

Despite its name, LEAP’s ability and intention to empower livelihoods has never been clear. The condition of extreme poverty alone is insufficient for LEAP enrollment; a beneficiary household must also include members belonging to an identified vulnerable status. A plurality of beneficiaries are elderly or severely disabled; their ability to undertake economically productive activities is limited at best. A conversation is ongoing about whether LEAP in fact endeavors to stimulate productivity, and ultimately program graduation, or instead to provide long-term income support.

It is uncommon in general for national social protection schemes to fall within the purview of Feed the Future programming and USAID’s investment in Ghana’s LEAP program should be commended. This report seeks to highlight lessons from its investment to date while also candidly illuminating challenges and limitations of LEAP to support improved food and nutrition security and to reduce extreme poverty in Ghana. With a new national government at the helm of ongoing social protection expansion, through both LEAP and other modalities, an evidence-based discussion of progressive, pro-poor targeting across initiatives and the opportunity costs of specific allocations is timely, if not overdue.

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A Global Perspective on Social Protection to Improve Food and Nutrition Security

Social protection initiatives have seen swift expansion around the world in the past decade as the growing evidence of their sustained impacts has persuaded both national governments and the international donor community to invest. When the World Bank launched its Africa Social Protection Strategy 2012–2022, it highlighted lessons that cash transfers and other social protection schemes are not only effective in directly combating poverty among the most vulnerable, they also have a robust track record of stimulating productive economic inclusion that supports both growth and social stability, reducing inequality, insulating against shocks, and increasing access to basic services.

While the sheer scope of social protection programming to target individuals and households on a national scale may have been considered unaffordable for low-income countries in the past, this perception is eroding as donors unite to drive welfare improvements for society’s most vulnerable. In middle-income countries, partner governments are often able to improve domestic resource mobilization to fund social protection. At the same time, a critical reassessment of existing revenue allocations that are often less progressively targeted may be warranted at all stages of development.

The expansion of safety net programming has brought with it a growing body of rigorous evaluations. Two recent reviews aggregate country-specific findings of food and nutrition security impacts. One meta-analysis of 75 high-quality studies found that the value of food consumed by program beneficiaries increased by 13 percent on average, with an associated 8 percent increase in caloric acquisition (in sub-Saharan African countries, these impacts average 12 and 6 percent, respectively). The difference between levels of change in food values and in calories consumed is driven by shifts to a more diversified and higher-quality diet, with particularly large increases in the consumption of animal-sourced foods (19 percent). In sub-Saharan Africa, beneficiary households consumed a staggering 32 percent more animal-sourced foods. Given that baseline consumption levels of this nutrient-dense food group are very low, the increase has the potential to drive significant nutritional gains over time. When transfer recipients were female, program effect sizes on the value of overall food consumption were particularly large.

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Another meta-analysis of 27 programs\textsuperscript{10} across Africa finds that every dollar transferred through a safety net program yields $0.74 in increased consumption, including $0.36 for food consumption alone. Impacts are greatest in programs that are well targeted to reach the poorest households. In Zambia’s Child Grant Program (CGP), for example, 76 percent of benefits are allocated to food. The CGP’s total consumption impacts actually exceed the total value of transfers received, suggesting evidence of safety net programs’ potential for multiplier effects through other channels (the analysis finds a 50 percent increase in earnings, on average, across all programs).

Programs can also drive aggregate impacts over longer periods of time to significantly and sustainably reduce food insecurity by potentially addressing the root causes of poverty. Both meta-analyses find strong positive social protection program impacts on productive asset accumulation. In Ethiopia, the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) was associated with a fall in the mean food gap (the number of months in which households report food shortages) of 1.87 months between 2006 and 2014. But pairing PSNP payments with complementary programs to improve agricultural productivity went a step further, leading to greater investments in fertilizer and other farm inputs that enhance future incomes.\textsuperscript{11}


The Evolution of Ghana’s Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Program

Ghana’s Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer program, managed by the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, began as a trial in 2008 to reach orphans and vulnerable children. Elderly and disabled populations were later added as coverage expanded throughout 2009 and 2010. LEAP’s funding has historically been split between the government of Ghana (50 percent), contributions from the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), and a loan from the World Bank. The government plans to cover 60 percent of program costs in the near future while simultaneously expanding its overall funding levels to reach more beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries are selected by a multistage process. First, poor communities are selected within a given district. Communities are sensitized to the program and households are identified based on the inclusion of members that fall within the (initially three) eligible categories: orphans or vulnerable children (OVC), elderly poor, or people with severe disabilities. A fourth category, pregnant women and children under one year old, was added in 2015 through the LEAP 1000 pilot, discussed below. Identified households are then surveyed with a centralized proxy means test that determines whether they also fall at or below the requisite poverty cutoff (a uniform national threshold). This proxy means test is based on data recorded in the nationally representative 6th Ghana Living Standards Survey of 2013. Tabulated results are then presented back to the community with designations of included and excluded households.

A unique feature of Ghana’s social protection program added in 2012 is simultaneous enrollment of beneficiaries in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), discussed further below. LEAP households are exempted from premium fees, enabling them to access free healthcare. For LEAP households with children, the program imposes soft conditionalities on both basic healthcare (vaccinations and growth monitoring) and school attendance.

A 2013 impact evaluation illuminated a number of program effects with implications for design improvement. It documented inconsistent implementation, with a long gap in payment disbursements in 2011 followed by a triple payment in early 2012 to settle arrears. Likely associated with this lack of predictability was a finding that LEAP did not impact overall household consumption behavior. Despite this observation, LEAP beneficiaries saw a 25-percentage-point drop in food insecurity, on average, with even greater impacts for women-

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12 A recently conducted seventh survey will be used to update these data.
13 The impact evaluation employs a difference-in-difference design using a nonexperimental comparison group identified with propensity score matching.
headed households. It also led to increased household savings while improving debt repayment and reducing loan holdings.

The LEAP transfers stimulated productive economic activity to some extent: households invested more in quality seeds (but, notably, not in fertilizer) while also supplying more of their own farm labor. Greater increases in labor supply were observed in small households (those with four or fewer members): both men and women in these households worked about 13 additional days over the course of the agricultural season, relative to the non-LEAP comparison group.

In addition to irregular payment schedules, the 2013 evaluation elevated two other key issues for policy attention: a) the low values of cash transfers, which were likely insufficient to drive meaningful change consistent with program goals, and b) the puzzling finding that while LEAP beneficiaries did enroll in NHIS coverage, there was no commensurate increase in health service utilization or decrease in out-of-pocket health expenditures.

The household benefit level during the impact evaluation period, from April 2010 through April 2012, fell in the range of 8 to 15 Ghanaian cedis per month (between US$1.76 and US$3.29). In May 2012, benefits were tripled, with the average transfer increasing from 12 to 36 cedis per household. In 2015, they were increased again. Still, when interviewed in October 2017, district-level social welfare officers reported that the benefit levels remain insufficient to spur sustainable poverty alleviation.

Table 3.1: Leap Program Monthly Benefit Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Eligible Household Members</th>
<th>Benefit Level Until Early 2012 (Ghanaian Cedis)b</th>
<th>Benefit Level 2015–present (Ghanaian Cedis)c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Payments are disbursed bimonthly, resulting in actual transfers at twice the level indicated here. The level of payment is determined not by total household size, but rather by the number of household members that meet qualifying criteria.


c. Derived from IMANI key informant interview; the level for 1 eligible member is consistent with the World Bank sector review.

In 2015, USAID funded a new UNICEF-led government partnership to extend LEAP to a newly eligible group: pregnant and lactating women and children under one year old. This three-year pilot was called LEAP 1000 given its intended alignment with the 1,000 days approach to support the nutrition of children from conception through their second birthday. The upper age limit cutoff was set at one rather than two years of age. The poverty-targeting eligibility requirement (the proxy means test) and benefit levels are uniform across LEAP and LEAP 1000.

15 Note that all US$ conversions from Ghanaian cedis are based on January 2018 rates.

participants. LEAP 1000 has been active in 10 districts, reaching 6,224 beneficiary households. Its targeting to reach the poorest households has also been significantly more effective than targeting in earlier LEAP enrollment waves: 89 percent of LEAP 1000 beneficiaries fell below the poverty line and 64 percent were below the extreme poverty line.

LEAP 1000 households are also extremely food insecure. On average, these households spent 78 percent of their budgets on food at the time of the baseline survey. Median individual consumption fell at approximately 62 U.S. cents per day and nearly 90 percent of households worried about food over a four-week reference period. Three-quarters of LEAP 1000 households reported that a child under five was not always given enough food to eat before the program’s inception. Following LEAP 1000 enrollment, a household with two eligible members (for example, one mother and one child) receives 38 cedis per month, about US$8.34, representing a substantial increase in resources available for basic consumption needs.

USAID covered the full $12 million cost of LEAP 1000 with funds channeled through UNICEF. One interview subject observed that USAID has made great strides to improve public-sector engagement in Ghana more broadly in recent years. He explained that U.S. assistance was primarily focused on stimulating private-sector growth in the mid-2000s, with little attention given to public institution building. Today, USAID works directly with a number of ministries.

One observer noted that LEAP 1000 beneficiary mothers were particularly notable for their livelihoods endeavors. Many had undertaken the production and sale of yams. The subject noted that both women and young children clearly appeared healthier and less malnourished after program enrollment. Another expert working at the regional level reported that LEAP 1000 women sought out antenatal care with greater frequency and also increased rates of breastfeeding. This NHIS linkage may be particularly impactful for LEAP 1000 beneficiaries to address malnutrition and other maladies that impact development in the first year of life. Its impacts are somewhat attenuated by the fact that NHIS provides limited preventative care.

Since 2016, LEAP’s advance into new communities has incorporated the enrollment of pregnant women and children under one alongside its previously established eligibility categories. LEAP 1000 pilot beneficiaries will be absorbed by the national program when the pilot ends in 2018.

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By the end of 2017, the LEAP program covered over 213,000 beneficiary households spread across all of Ghana’s 10 regions and in each of its 216 districts.\(^{20}\) Informants explained that regular payments have been made at predictable intervals for at least the past two years. The LEAP Secretariat reports that a further 93,000 eligible households have been identified in recent targeting efforts and are in the process of being enrolled; it has set the ambitious target of 350,000 total beneficiary households in 2018.\(^{21}\) Most LEAP households are found in Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions, corresponding with the highest rates of poverty. These three regions encompass 55 percent of LEAP’s total beneficiaries nationwide despite contributing just 17 percent of the overall population.\(^{22}\) Table 3.2 provides additional details on region-level welfare and LEAP coverage.

### Table 3.2: Poverty Indicators and Leap Program Coverage in Ghana’s 10 Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population Share(^a)</th>
<th>2013 Poverty Rate (upper poverty line = 1,314 cedis)(^b)</th>
<th>LEAP Households(^c)</th>
<th>LEAP 1000 Pilot Households (now fully integrated into LEAP)(^d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashanti</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>14,723</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brong Ahafo</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>14,710</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>10,543</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>15,193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Accra</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>7,777</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>43,261</td>
<td>3,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper East</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>33,091</td>
<td>2,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper West</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>38,134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volta</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>18,995</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>12,024</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^b\) Ibid.


\(^d\) These figures are provided by UNICEF Ghana. Note that there is a small discrepancy in the total LEAP 1000 household count between UNICEF and government of Ghana reporting sources.

Several interview subjects observed that LEAP’s Management Information System has evolved to be quite sophisticated, with modules for payments and monitoring and evaluation, with a case management module to better address complaints and appeals forthcoming. This has the

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\(^{20}\) Many deserving communities have not yet been enrolled due to management and resource limitations. For example, Mion district officially encompasses 151 communities, of which 51 include LEAP beneficiaries. Tolon district has 13 LEAP communities among its total of 109, but 30 more are now in the enrollment process. LEAP, "LEAP Programme Dashboard," http://leap.gov.gh/dashboard/.


potential to make the program more responsive to concerns that arise at the community level, although several informants noted that accountability and feedback mechanisms still need strengthening in practice.
LEAP’s Place in Ghana’s Social Protection and Public Transfer Architecture

LEAP is one of several high-profile social protection investments in Ghana. This section provides a brief overview of other public-sector investments designed to improve the lives of the most vulnerable in order to put LEAP investments in context. LEAP is among the most progressively targeted of the set. A technically sound case has been made to shift resources toward it and away from less targeted or less effective programs, but the political resistance to cleaving back established welfare transfers is formidable in any context.

Labor-Intensive Public Works

The Labor Intensive Public Works (LIPW) program, which began in 2011 and is implemented by the Ministry of Local Government, has a narrower geographical scope than LEAP but is also concentrated in northern regions. The program provides seasonal employment to able-bodied individuals during an eight-month extended lean season from November through June. With about 30,000 beneficiaries in 60 districts, it is targeted based on community poverty status alone. Participants in these communities can then self-select to participate, and communities may get involved in targeting in instances of excess demand. Over 60 percent of participants are women. Participation entails six-hour work days for a wage of 7 cedis per day (US$1.54), just below the national minimum wage so as not to compete with or disincentivize private-sector productivity. Community projects include feeder road and damn construction, soil and land conservation, and tree planting. A 2012 impact assessment found that participation led to significant increases in food expenditures, reduced debt, and improved school attendance for coresident children.

There is no restriction against able-bodied people in LEAP beneficiary households from LIPW participation, and some households do benefit from both programs. Like LEAP enrollees, LIPW beneficiaries receive electronic payments (discussed below). Both the LIPW and LEAP are funded by the World Bank’s Ghana Social Opportunities Project, which is poised to begin a new phase in 2018. Unlike LEAP, the government of Ghana makes no contribution to this program.

National Health Insurance Scheme Exemptions

The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was established in 2003 to provide universal health coverage to the population. It is primarily financed with earmarked revenues from both the value-added tax (VAT) and formal payroll contributions. The law requires that all citizens

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enroll in the scheme, but just 39 percent had done so by 2014. The cost of premiums has been identified as one significant deterrent, along with the quality of care and the cost of medicines.

NHIS provides premium exemptions for several vulnerable categories, including children, the elderly, the indigent, and LEAP beneficiaries. In 2014, it provided a total of 6.9 million exemptions, making it the largest social protection program by population coverage.\(^{24}\) It has been estimated that 31 percent of the people in Ghana’s poorest quintile are registered with a valid NHIS card.

One critical service that supports food and nutrition security but is not included in the suite of NHIS free healthcare offerings is family planning. Fertility rates in parts of northern Ghana remain quite high despite national-level declines in recent decades.\(^{25}\) Births that are too closely spaced are associated with poor nutrition outcomes for young children and more constrained resources for all children in the household. In light of a high documented unmet need for contraception, the NHIS foregoes an opportunity to support the cognitive, physical, health, and economic potential of its next generation with this omission.

**School Feeding**

School feeding in Ghana aims to increase enrollment, attendance, and retention with the provision of one hot meal per day, in addition to stimulating local food production. It reached 1.7 million children in about 17 percent of public pre-primary and primary schools in 2014\(^{26}\) and enjoys popular support despite ongoing management challenges. School feeding represents a substantial public investment, constituting 54 percent of all social assistance spending in the 2014 budget while LEAP and LIPW each accounted for 13 percent.\(^{27}\)

Formerly implemented by the Ministry of Local Government, it has now been consolidated under the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection. Several experts observed that school feeding was well conceptualized but that, in practice, the implementation model has lent itself to corruption and a lack of transparency. The program makes direct payments to about 5,000 caterers for meal provisioning, which means both that contracts may be allocated to firms that are not local to the schools they serve and that sourced food may also be procured

\(^{24}\) Ibid.


\(^{26}\) For example, one official in a very poor district with 67 primary schools reported that just 14 received school feeding programs.

\(^{27}\) Marques et al., *Ghana: Social Protection Assessment and Public Expenditure Review*. 
from nonlocal sources, contravening the policy. A district-level representative commented that caterers should be more transparently selected to reduce corruption and undue favoritism.

Caterers are paid based on the number of meals provided and some caterers have reported more school feeding days in a year than there are total school days. Elected officials have also used school feeding as a means to capture benefits for their own communities, regardless of demonstrated need. For example, a wealthier school in Accra was recently found to receive school feeding support while much poorer schools elsewhere did not (its spot was reallocated after an advocacy campaign drew public scrutiny). Experts still observed that the program has had positive impacts on the poor, in some cases leading to significant increases in enrollment. School feeding in Ghana is financed entirely by the government of Ghana without donor support.

**Education Capitation Grants**

The capitation grant, financed entirely by the government of Ghana, provides free pre-primary, primary, and junior high school registration via an enrollment-based transfer to schools. Registration fees were abolished in 2005 and by 2014, 5.6 million children were covered by the program. According to several informants, capitation grants may be the least progressively targeted of the existing social protection programs considered here (not including the Planting for Food and Jobs program, discussed below, which is not considered to constitute social protection). A 2010 review also found significant leakage as funds were transferred from the Ministry of Finance/Ghana Education Service to district education departments, and again in the transfer from districts to schools.

**Free Secondary Education**

Free secondary education represents a recent policy shift enacted by Ghana’s new government in September 2017 to fulfill a campaign promise. At scale, it competes with education capitation grants and other scholarships in its degree of regressive targeting of nonpoor households. The World Bank estimates that secondary school costs averaged about 1,055 cedis per year in 2013 (about US$232), including fees, uniforms, books, transportation, and other expenses. Foregone revenues associated with the policy change are thus substantial, while other nonfee expenses, including the opportunity cost of students’ time, remain a disproportionate hurdle for the poorest students to enroll. Criticism over the government’s management of the initiative mounted throughout fall 2017, with the former vice president commenting that the process has been disorganized and haphazard.

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28 Ibid.  
29 Ibid.  
30 Ibid.  
Planting for Food and Jobs

In March 2017, the government of Ghana announced that its annual budget theme would be “Sowing the Seeds for Growth and Jobs.” The Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ) program is a new initiative and key tenet of that overall budgetary vision. Launched by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in April 2017, it aimed to reach 200,000 farmers in all 216 districts last year and had exceeded that target by October. The 2018 target has been set at 500,000 farmers with further plans to reach 1.6 million beneficiaries in subsequent years. Many interview respondents raised concerns over the lack of revenues to support such an ambitious scope. The PFJ program represents a consolidation of previously distinct agricultural programs and is structured within five pillars: improved seed, fertilizers, extension services, marketing, and the use of information and communications technologies, or “e-Agriculture.” The government has claimed that, in concert, these investments will lead to production increases of 30 percent for maize, 49 percent for rice, 25 percent for soybean, and 28 percent for sorghum, creating 750,000 new jobs along the way.

The PFJ program is not considered to be a social protection program but, funded at a level of 560.5 million cedis in 2017 (US$124 million) and a billion cedis in 2018 (US$220 million), it constitutes the largest-scale and costliest public transfer that the government of Ghana provides its citizens. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture’s 2017 budget allocates 450 million cedis for agriculture sector expenditures alone (about US$99 million), a staggering 94 percent of which is earmarked for fertilizer subsidies and mechanization service centers. Experts explain that extension service staff have declined on the order of 50 percent in recent years, although the program has reported that 1,200 new extension agents have been retained. A further 4,000 agents are in the recruitment pipeline.

Several interview subjects pointed out that the PFJ program implementation plan was still in development in October 2017 despite its April rollout. One explained that the newly designed program will be even less progressively targeted than previous agricultural input subsidies. The PFJ aims to reach productive farmers with commercial viability rather than catering to the most vulnerable smallholders. A ministry official told CSIS that all farmers were eligible to participate but the program’s website states that landholdings of “2 to 3” acres are a baseline requirement. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture has no programs that target the poorest farmers directly, or to engage and retain youth as the next farming generation.

While subsidies in recent years had declined to about 15 percent of input costs, the new government has raised them again, to 50 percent. Stakeholders reported that around 1,000

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33 Ibid.
34 These figures are drawn from IMANI analysis.
37 Ibid. Farmers are required to pay half of their share, 25 percent of total costs, into an agricultural development bank at the front end with the balance due after harvests are completed. Yet in the past, the government has not been able to make its payment commitments to fertilizer companies and faces an outstanding debt on the magnitude of 85 million cedis (about US$18.8 million).
farmers in each district will be selected to receive the subsidized inputs, and many noted that this targeting process is not transparent.

When asked how the ministry might better target poor households, one informant explained that the current approach of subsidizing input costs alone is ineffective, regardless of the farmer profile. Ghanaian farmers cannot match the productivity of their international competitors, a fact that fuels the perennial discussion of agricultural product import bans as mills for products like rice and sugar fail in an environment of constrained production supply. Specialists suggest that Ghana needs to focus more on technology for productivity gains rather than continuing to subsidize the costs of inefficient agricultural practices, a strategy that, in fairness, was echoed by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture itself.

Social Protection Program Streamlining

Many stakeholders pointed out that coordination across social protection initiatives, several of which are not discussed here, is very weak. Through its Ghana Social Opportunities Project, the World Bank seeks to bring together actors from the country’s five flagship social programs—LEAP, LIPW, NHIS, the capitation grant, and school feeding. Its intent is to support the government in creating a single window case management system for all beneficiaries across programs. While the PFJ does not fall within the scope of this ambition, many informants felt that meaningful engagement from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture was critical to improve the livelihoods of LEAP and other social protection program beneficiaries.

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39 These include smaller programs such as take-home rations for girls, free school uniforms and books, and several scholarship programs.
A LEAP toward Next-Level Safety Net Programming

This section takes a more detailed look at some of the salient issues that emerged in conversations with experts across Ghana. Each discussion topic sheds light on LEAP’s evolving design and implementation while also offering insights for donor engagement in other social protection contexts.

Benefit Levels and Program Coverage: Impact vs. Equity

While household benefits have increased substantially in recent years, they still fall short of both the technical best-practice standard to transfer 20 percent of baseline consumption and also the analogous benefits in other sub-Saharan African safety net programs, such as Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program. The LEAP 1000 baseline evaluation found that the median transfer size amounted to 12 percent of baseline consumption (the mean was 16 percent). The LEAP transfer amount is not linked to a local cost of living, but rather based on the government’s ability to allocate capital. Food prices, meanwhile, inflated by an average annual rate of 9.5 percent between 2005 and 2013.

This scarcity of resources to fund a technically justifiable benefit level underscores the trade-off between transfer level increases and program growth (via both new community enrollment and possible eligibility expansion). CSIS asked nearly all interview subjects for their opinion on a suitable approach to this trade-off: is it better to first increase benefit levels such that they might meaningfully reduce poverty and to expand the program more slowly, or is it better to reach as many people as possible with current benefit levels and increase them for everyone later if resources permit? Respondents offered a broad array of positions with no clear consensus. Many district-level actors recommended coverage expansion first, with increased benefits to follow. While they acknowledged that this strategy results in a program with sub-optimal impacts, they felt that equity considerations were more important for community acceptance.

Other experts felt that benefit levels should first be increased not only due to technical soundness but also in light of management and staffing constraints. Districts have just one social welfare officer to oversee LEAP implementation and that officer juggles many other responsibilities. A number of respondents echoed the sentiment that it is important to improve program quality first, to shore up the basics, before the current ambitious rate of scale-up continues. One observed, “It’s better to concentrate resources in one geographical space to work them out of their vulnerability faster. Then you can shift your resources to other areas.” But this assessment is predicated on the assumption that a graduation model is reasonable and appropriate for a majority of beneficiaries. Others suggested that benefit levels should be reassessed for appropriate regional adjustment given the geographical variance in costs of both basic subsistence and also productive investment opportunities.
A similar discussion pertains to the overlap of LEAP with other social protection programs at the district level. Some stakeholders felt that LEAP should always be paired with access to school feeding, for example, given that both programs aim to target the most vulnerable communities where the need is most acute. Others felt that it was both unfair and politically untenable to see some communities receive multiple transfer programs while neighboring areas received none at all.

The Electronic Payment System

From 2008 through early 2016, LEAP payments were disbursed in cash through the Ghana Post Agency. Today, beneficiaries instead collect their payments via an electronic system known as e-zwitch, introduced in March 2016. All beneficiaries are issued bank cards that include biometric verification (fingerprinting). While, in principle, individuals are now able to use these cards to withdraw funds from local banks, many LEAP communities lack a local bank branch or cash machine.

Perhaps an even greater hurdle to incorporating marginalized communities into the formal banking system is the fact that beneficiaries often lack the knowledge and comfort to effectively interact with it. In practice, local bank representatives travel to a community meeting point on predetermined dates and beneficiaries withdraw their benefits in full for the two-month transfer period. Some experts correctly called this a “semi-electronic” system given that beneficiaries still cash out their full benefits for each payment period. Recognized advantages of an electronic system, including the ability to save a portion of benefits in electronic accounts and to withdraw smaller amounts of cash at more frequent intervals, generally go unrealized.

Government representatives are adamant in explaining that beneficiaries can make additional account deposits and that some banks are even offering loans backed by LEAP payment streams, but many other stakeholders expressed concern that much of such service utilization is merely aspirational. Linking LEAP to financial education and other (formal and informal) financial services emerged as a popular recommendation, as discussed further below.

Still, numerous stakeholders commented that the transition to an electronic payment system has been effective in reducing payment leakages and the overall incidence of corruption, in addition to reducing travel times in some instances as cash points are established closer to remote communities.40 In other cases, however, experts report that beneficiaries are now forced to travel farther for payments.

Beneficiary Targeting: An Ongoing Conversation

Some experts expressed concern that targeting remains the most important issue for LEAP going forward. A variety of interview subjects, including government representatives, reported a consistent belief that LEAP’s future objective would be to reach all 2.2 million people in Ghana classified as living in extreme poverty regardless of whether they fit one of the four established beneficiary categories (that’s 8.4 percent of the population). This common understanding
stands at odds with the program’s current design and documentation, which are clearly organized around the four defined eligibility categories. It is unclear whether, like use of the formal banking system, this rhetoric is merely aspirational.

Several district social welfare officers explained that they have no flexibility to enroll beneficiaries who are recognized as extremely poor by their own communities if their proxy means-test results place them above the cutoff threshold. Interestingly, Northern Region’s social welfare director reported that he encourages districts to make a case for broader inclusion as locally appropriate, at least among a set of households that would meet the proxy means-test criteria (that is, verifiably poor households that fall outside of the four eligibility categories). He recounted with some pride that when he himself worked at the district level, he was successful in advocating for the inclusion of HIV+ beneficiaries as well as working children. Rather than feel restricted by national program norms, he framed the issue of inclusion as an ongoing negotiation in which districts should be more empowered. Other interview respondents shared the position that these two groups would be appropriate to include. Meanwhile, government officials talk of adding a different fifth eligibility category: communities of scorned women known as ‘witches’ camps,” many of whose inhabitants are banished widows.

Some district-level officials felt that the categories should be done away with entirely and that LEAP should rely on the proxy means test alone to identify the poorest of the poor without further qualification (this is consistent with many observers’ understanding of LEAP’s ultimate direction). The 2016 World Bank Social Protection assessment makes the same medium-term recommendation, finding that gradual expansion to cover all extreme poor families by 2019 would reduce the incidence of extreme poverty by 22 percent (from observed 2013 levels) at a cost of just 0.12 percent of GDP. Nutritionists suggested that this expansion might start with poor households that also have children under age five or adolescent girls, in order to reach potential mothers before childbearing begins.

To improve LEAP targeting and broader social protection program streamlining, a national household registry project is underway that entails a full census of vulnerable communities to rank both poor and nonpoor households. The registry is led by the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection and incorporates biometric data for surveyed populations. It is meant to serve as a central database for health, education, social protection, and other population services. To date, it has covered all of Upper West Region and is now collecting data in Upper East Region. Government officials report that it would take a further two years to cover the whole country if funding can be secured, but the lack of it has resulted in slow progress.

41 Note that this expansion is not verified by government or UN informants, but anecdotally reflects the advocacy position of regional leadership. The HIV prevalence rate was recently recorded at 1.3 percent, directly affecting 220,000 people as of 2013 (and indirectly resulting in 180,000 orphans). Nearly 30 percent of children ages 7 to 14 are employed, including 18 percent of 7- to 9-year-olds.

42 This suggestion was made by the LEAP Secretariat but other informants report that it is not part of the formal national discussion. K. Whitaker, “Ghana’s camps for ‘witches’ and widows,” BBC News, September 1, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-19437130.

43 Marques et al., Ghana: Social Protection Assessment and Public Expenditure Review.
Informants also commented that the use of the household registry for community and household targeting going forward will significantly improve targeting accuracy over historical levels, which many observed had corresponded to political allegiances.

Layering Complementary Interventions: Nutrition, Financial Services, Productive Livelihoods

International evidence suggests that cash transfers alone may be necessary but insufficient to lift households out of poverty given that they relax liquidity constraints but do not steer investment strategy. The return on investments in such programs can therefore be significantly enhanced by simultaneous exposure to other complementary interventions. This “layering” of services allows beneficiaries to better utilize the cash they receive for productive allocations. To drive food and nutrition security outcomes, three types of layered programming were frequently cited: nutrition, financial services, and productive livelihoods.

President Akufo-Addo has recently emphasized the importance of nutrition to harness Ghana’s demographic dividend but even political commitment for improved nutrition at the highest level is no substitute for resources, and those fall short.

Nutrition

Ghana’s National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) is organized around facility-based services and, to the extent that it provides nutrition programming at all, this tends to be “nutrition-specific”—for example, curative medical treatments—rather than “nutrition-sensitive”—for example, improved care and feeding practices. Several stakeholders explained that community-based, nutrition-sensitive activities are minimal, although a new national nutrition policy does include such interventions, specifically water, sanitation, and health activities.

President Akufo-Addo has recently emphasized the importance of nutrition to harness Ghana’s demographic dividend but even political commitment for improved nutrition at the highest level is no substitute for resources, and those fall short. Health sector spending was already limited in 2016 but the Ministry of Health saw a 13 percent budget reduction in 2017 while the Ministry of Education’s budget grew by 28 percent to accommodate free secondary school.

Several interlocutors noted that one possible approach to tackling fiscal constraints is improved district-level resource mobilization (most funds for health and other social services are transferred from the central government).

There have been efforts to provide nutrition sensitization to LEAP 1000 beneficiaries at the time of payment distribution, but there is no budget to integrate contributions from district nutrition

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officers. In one district near Tamale, the (relatively new) nutrition officer was not familiar with the LEAP program at all. At the regional level, a nutrition officer reported that while there were adequate district staff and ample time to better engage LEAP beneficiaries, other necessary resources, such as vehicles, fuel, and sensitization materials were lacking. The same informant lamented the recent end of the USAID-funded project, Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING), which provided some of these inputs.

Financial Services

Another USAID project, Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING), was widely lauded for its successful Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) activities in LEAP communities. These informal financial service schemes enable cash transfer recipients to better save scarce resources while creating opportunities to take out larger loans from pooled monies for productive investment. Many observers felt that VSLAs should be replicated in all LEAP communities, and particularly in areas with no penetration of the formal banking sector. RING has itself linked financial services with nutrition outcomes: production and consumption of orange-fleshed sweet potato in the communities it serves increased by 263 percent in 2016 alone.46

A representative from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture concurred that access to financial services always constitutes a limiting challenge in the agricultural sector, for small and larger holders alike. No financial inclusion education has been incorporated into the newly designed Planting for Food and Jobs program to date, and it does not fit well within the program’s defined pillars, but this may be an area where different ministries could collaborate and coinvest. Given that rural banks are now administering LEAP payments, those same banks would make good candidates to lead financial inclusion work with this new profile of clients.

Productive Livelihoods

If the intent of LEAP is in fact to stimulate productive livelihoods activities and not merely to provide income support for those unable to work (a debate discussed more explicitly below), the potential to link beneficiaries with viable income-generating work needs further exploration, which is in fact underway.

A World Bank pilot supported by a Japanese trust47 fund has begun to identify the effects of productive livelihoods linkages for both LEAP and LIPW households. As of October 2017, about 4,000 beneficiaries had been enrolled in the pilot in Upper East Region with a target of reaching 6,000 by 2018. Participants are taught a trade—usually one that they have worked with in the past. This retraining is combined with a cash grant allocated in two tranches to stimulate small business investment. Livelihoods activities include shea butter processing, rope making, spice processing, and small ruminants. While a vegetable-growing component was also included, the

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47 The Japanese Social Development Fund.
majority of participants chose instead to engage in off-farm activities. The next round of the Ghana Social Opportunities Project seeks to scale up lessons learned from the pilot program.

In terms of agricultural livelihoods support, one district social welfare officer noted that LEAP beneficiaries have contact with extension agents perhaps once per year and do not receive any inputs or training. She felt that better connecting LEAP households to Ministry of Food and Agriculture services, particularly through the PFJ, would be appropriate and helpful in some cases, but not in others.

Both World Bank and UN experts cautioned that livelihoods linkages orchestrated by LEAP itself are not appropriate. Rather, complementary services should be provisioned by other actors and LEAP should focus on getting the basics of its own implementation right. The discussion, experts explained, should focus on the district government’s ability to crowd in complementary resources and programming. Regardless of designated roles and responsibilities, one interview subject commented, “I think linking beneficiaries to productive ventures is rather late.” Another pointed out that northern Ghana is a shock-prone environment and thus complementary measures needed to focus at least as much on mitigating losses as on sustaining gains.

**Recertification and Graduation: To Leave or Not to Leave?**

A discussion of the appropriate interval to recertify beneficiary eligibility is also ongoing. Interview subjects noted that in fact recertification has not yet taken place in the program’s nine-year history. Nongovernment experts largely concur that an interval of four years is appropriate to recertify eligibility without creating an unmanageable implementation burden, and is consistent with industry standards. Some government decisionmakers remain adamant that the process should instead be undertaken every two years despite a lack of resources to do so. The reentry into established LEAP communities would also provide the first opportunity for newly eligible beneficiaries to be registered. To date, LEAP has conducted enrollment in beneficiary communities a single time before expanding to cover new areas, leaving the more recently disabled, orphaned, elderly, or pregnant poor without a pathway to program access.

One local expert noted that while LEAP’s reach has expanded dramatically in recent years, with a broadly favorable reception, it still lacks clear graduation planning. While recertification at four-year intervals was an unrealized original design component of LEAP, graduation via productive livelihoods has never been well theorized according to some informants. These experts said that LEAP was conceptualized as income support for those who could not work, although others disagreed. President Akufo-Addo recalls LEAP’s early days differently, remarking last year, “I remember when the LEAP program was envisaged and introduced . . . it was meant to be a hand-up, not a hand-out. . . . If someone has to go on the LEAP program, it should not be for the rest of that person’s life. There should be a definite time limit to being a LEAP beneficiary, and the beneficiary should be able to stand on his or her own after the stated period.”

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The tension between these two interpretations of LEAP’s fundamental mandate remains striking given the program’s rapid growth. Even for the subset of beneficiaries who have some productive capacity, the benefit levels are likely too low to leverage employment transitions in many cases.

Trade-offs across Social Protection Program Budgets

Particularly given the overall lack of fiscal space in Ghana’s national budget, a discussion of progressive targeting within the LEAP program is incomplete without consideration of other de facto population transfers. There is a great deal of pressure on the new government to provide free secondary school, a practice that foregoes approximately 1,500 to 2,200 cedis (up to US$483) per student per year according to district-level informants. An analysis of the 2017 budget reports that 400 million cedis (approximately US$88 million) had been allocated to offset foregone secondary school fees from September onwards. Meanwhile, the entire education sector budget swelled by a stark 51 percent from just the previous year. Independent budget analysts have suggested that the government needs to prioritize a sustainable source of funding for free secondary school, which it has not yet done. Substantial foregone public revenues might have funded expanded school feeding programs, broader LEAP coverage, or any number of other things. The fact that tuition does not constitute a hardship for at least some portion of students cannot be denied. It is worth considering such distributional impacts of policy reform in the context of such a tight national budget.

A further issue raised by the household registry process, given its rural focus, is the lack of strategy to confront extreme poverty and food insecurity in urban areas. Ghana is increasingly urbanized as young people relocate in search of economic opportunity. But to date, LEAP’s priority has been to reach the rural poor and its targeting methods reflect that. For example, the proxy means test that currently diagnoses poverty in rural areas would require substantial adjustment for urban environments, in which food insecurity is a growing concern.

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49 Note that these reported figures are substantially higher than those reported by the World Bank for 2013.
50 PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2017 Budget Highlights.
Lessons and Recommendations

To Reduce Extreme Poverty, Work with Extremely Poor People, Particularly Youth

A UN official noted that USAID’s engagement in social protection policy and programming in Ghana is unusual and very positive. In other countries where the official had related technical experience, USAID was not at the donor table on these issues, which is often interpreted as a missed opportunity to support sustainable, government-led poverty alleviation at scale.

The U.S. government’s Feed the Future program has the highest-level objectives of reducing extreme poverty and stunting. The potential of commercial value chain-oriented agricultural growth programming to achieve those targets will always be enhanced by complementary initiatives that proactively reach the most vulnerable.

In addition to its support for the LEAP 1000 pilot, the U.S. government Global Food Security Strategy in Ghana is commendable for having considered the needs of its poorest community members from the outset. Its flagship RING project, cofunded with Feed the Future and Global Health resources, pays explicit attention to the needs of communities that are ill equipped to leverage the commercial agricultural approaches that generally characterize Feed the Future investments.

The modernization of agricultural practices could have the additional benefit of retaining a greater share of the country’s youth in the agricultural sector as farmers age and young people seek out more attractive opportunities. The last decade has been characterized by a substantial shift of younger workforce segments away from agriculture and into services and informal activities.

Governance, Governance, Governance

There is no development partner substitute for country ownership of food and nutrition security challenges, and their solutions. USAID has used the SPRING and RING projects to provide direct support to government nutrition and social protection staff at the district level. USAID/Ghana offers a compelling example of building public-sector systems capacity rather than operating outside of it. Still, progress can be encumbered by politics: one interview subject attributed the stark differentiation in regional-level outcomes to the regional ministers’ varying levels of commitment.

In some technical areas, notably nutrition, that type of leadership is sorely and indefensibly lacking. Donors expressed exasperation with performance standards set by the central

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51 It measures poverty reduction with the internationally standardized poverty line based on purchase power parity (PPP) of $1.25 per day. Since the initiative began, the international extreme poverty line has been revised upward to $1.90 PPP.
governments in Accra. Despite donors having funded a budget that covers the travel costs of government staff to check in with their districts, supporting progress while institutionalizing accountability, officials regularly fail to make these trips.

Recommendations for USAID

1. As the new round of Feed the Future target countries develop their country strategies, attention to the needs and opportunities facing the extreme poor should remain a central tenet of program design and investment strategy. Recent CSIS research in other countries\(^{52}\) has highlighted that the most vulnerable may be systematically excluded from core value chain activities, a fact that undermines the initiative’s stated objectives.

2. Recognizing that growth in the agricultural sector alone does not solve food and nutrition insecurity challenges, USAID should continue to invest in public-sector social protection interventions. Such investments are complementary to Feed the Future’s predominant focus on on- and off-farm livelihoods creation, particularly in regions of the world vulnerable to recurrent shocks, and should be expanded.

3. USAID can also provide indirect support for public programming with increased funding for national data systems, possibly substituting monitoring and evaluation budgets away from burdensome project-level data collection requirements that do not yield partner country public goods. In Washington, Feed the Future’s next-round monitoring and evaluation team has articulated the intention to do just that, for example to gauge progress toward Sustainable Development Goals.

In Ghana, one pathway that may merit consideration is to provide direct or indirect support for the Ghana National Household Registry, which has made slow coverage progress due to scarce funding.

4. USAID/Ghana’s work supporting Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) was widely praised by diverse stakeholders for its efficacy and sustainability. The agency should consider sustaining and expanding investments in such informal, as well as formal, financial services to complement and leverage both cash transfers and productive livelihoods, within and beyond the agricultural sector.

Recommendations for the Government of Ghana

1. To preserve and enhance LEAP program quality, the government of Ghana should address current implementation challenges before continuing its rapid scale-up of beneficiary intake. It should also continue to clarify roles and responsibilities around the incorporation of complementary “layered” services going forward, particularly as relate to nutrition.

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2. Given growing inequality and tight fiscal space, the government should reconsider resource allocation across a broad set of social protection programs and prioritize investments that are well targeted and pro-poor. The elimination of secondary school fees in 2017 corresponded with a 28 percent increase in the Ministry of Education Budget and a 13 percent decrease in the Ministry of Health budget. This new policy follows a pattern of poor resource targeting in both the education and agriculture sectors, which disproportionately benefits more advantaged segments of society. In contrast, 89 percent of beneficiaries in the LEAP 1000 pilot fell below the poverty line.

3. Finally, given public-sector resource constraints, the government should continue to prioritize domestic resource mobilization through improved enforcement of existing tax law at local and national levels.
Appendix: Key Informants

This report is based on key informant interviews with representatives of the following institutions. The author is grateful for their time, expertise, and insights.

Ghana Center for Democratic Development

Government of Ghana, District Social Welfare Officers of Mion, Tolon, and West Mamprusi

Government of Ghana, LEAP Secretariat

Government of Ghana, Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection

Government of Ghana, Ministry of Food and Agriculture

Government of Ghana, National Health Service

Government of Ghana, Northern Region Nutrition Officer

Government of Ghana, Northern Region Social Welfare Director

IMANI Center for Policy and Education

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

Resilience in Northern Ghana (RING), USAID-funded project

Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA)

SEND Ghana

Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING), USAID-funded project

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

United States Agency for International Development (USAID/Ghana)

University of Ghana

World Bank
Reid Hamel is a senior fellow with the CSIS Global Food Security Project. Her work investigates U.S. policy and strategy in food security investments worldwide, with an emphasis on agricultural intensification and sustainability; good governance; risk management, financial services, and social protection; smallholder livelihoods; and nutrition. In 2015, Dr. Hamel designed and taught a new course at Middlebury College, “Global Population Growth and Food Security.” She completed her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, where her dissertation quantified the public-sector cost savings to social safety net programs associated with the incorporation of voluntary family planning services. Dr. Hamel was previously associate director of the Department of Hunger and Livelihoods at Save the Children, where she led research design and evaluation strategy. She has also worked with the Economic Development Program at the Asia Foundation, with the Caucasus Research Resource Centers, and as a Peace Corps volunteer in Azerbaijan.
A Role for Social Protection Investments to Support Food and Nutrition Security
Lessons from Ghana

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