

SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR THE POOREST IN AFRICA: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

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Building Support to have Targeted Social Protection Interventions for the Poorest – The Case of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

In the last few years, Ghana has launched a number of social protection programmes, such as the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), the school feeding programme, and now the Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) social grants programme. It has also developed a National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) meant to provide an overarching policy framework to ensure co-ordination and complementarity between all these programmes. This paper will examine the context in which these programmes were designed and launched, and how sufficient political support was generated to ensure financing of these programmes through the government budget. In particular, the paper will examine how support has been generated for LEAP, a social grant targeted at the extreme poor, despite initial resistance to poverty targeting, and broader resistance to what was seen as “free cash for the poor” by many. It will also examine how different players have influenced the policy debate on social protection – such as different Ministries of the Government of Ghana, civil society, the media and the Development Partners in the country, and how different alliances were formed to push for the implementation of the social protection strategy. Finally, the paper will look at different ways in which the key social protection players now need to lobby for wider social protection coverage of the poorest households, especially with the prospect of significant oil revenues removing financial constraints to the scaling of the interventions.

List of key words – Ghana, Sub-Saharan Africa, social protection, cash transfers, poverty, social policy, MDGs

INTRODUCTION

Ghana is a development success story for Africa – it has had steady economic growth over the past few years, good governance and it is on track to halve poverty by 2015. However, despite these impressive achievements, 28 per cent of the population is still poor and 18 per cent continues to live in extreme poverty, unable to even meet their basic nutritional requirements. Ghana is recognising that growth and mainstream development interventions may not be enough on their own to pull the extreme poor out of poverty and to protect vulnerable groups from shocks such as natural disasters, or global food and fuel price rises. Ghana has therefore developed a National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) that attempts to provide a more targeted set of interventions for the chronic poor, and suggests setting up new safety nets that can be used to cushion the most vulnerable groups from environmental and economic shocks. As outlined in the NSPS, social protection will not only contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals but at the same time can contribute to growth at the local level by providing new income generating opportunities for the extreme poor. As Ghana gets close to reaching Middle Income Status, especially with the discovery of oil, a social security and safety net system will not only be more affordable, it will ensure that the new wealth and prosperity of the nation is distributed equitably to ensure a minimum standard living for all.

This paper will explore how and why Ghana has launched a number of social protection programmes, such as the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), the school feeding programme, the National Youth Employment programme and now the Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) social grants programme. It has also developed a National Social Protection Strategy meant to provide an overarching policy framework to ensure co-ordination and complementarity between all these programmes. In particular, the paper will examine how support has been generated for LEAP, a social grant targeted at the extreme poor, despite initial resistance to poverty targeting, and broader resistance to what was seen as “free cash for the poor” by many. It will also examine how different players have influenced the policy debate on social protection – such as different Ministries of the Government of Ghana, civil society, the media and the Development Partners in the country, and how different alliances were formed to push for the implementation of the social protection strategy.

CHAPTER 1 - BACKGROUND

This chapter will describe the policy context in which the NSPS was developed, with a new focus on the most vulnerable and excluded groups in society. It will provide a brief overview of the various social policies and programmes initiated over the past few years, existing informal social protection systems and explain why a national social protection policy was needed in Ghana.

Since the year 2000 the Ghanaian economy has grown consistently with GDP increasing from 3.7% in 2000 to 6.4% in 2007. Thanks to steady growth in combination with a stable democracy since the mid 1990s, Ghana is making good progress in reducing poverty and should reach Middle Income Country (MIC) status in the not too distant future. Poverty levels in Ghana declined impressively from 51.7 per cent in 1990 to 28.5 per cent in 2005/6. However, this poverty reduction and development has not been spread evenly across the country – some areas – such as the Northern parts of the country, and rural regions, consistently remain poorer than the rest of

the country.

The Government of Ghana has been using the Poverty Reduction Strategies to set its policy priorities and use it as a basis for dialogue with Development Partners. There has been a clear change in focus over the last eight years. The first Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), from 2002-2005, had special programmes for the vulnerable and excluded as one of its priority areas. During this time, a Poverty and Social Impact Assessment (PSIA) drew attention to the fact that economic growth alone would not be enough to tackle extreme poverty and exclusion. It called for more targeted interventions for the poorest, and for a new National Social Protection Framework that would guide the formulation and implementation of such programmes. With the second PRSP, the Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (2006-2009) the focus shifted to growth and achieving middle income status by 2015. It then became more difficult to advocate for programmes targeted towards the poor, or to ask for resources to be allocated to programmes that were not seen as contributing to economic growth. There was also a consensus that growth should be driven by the private sector, and the role of the state should be cut back.

Despite such a restrictive social policy environment, the government has passed significant new legislation to protect the rights of vulnerable groups, such as the Domestic Violence Act (2006), the Persons with Disability Act, the Human Trafficking Act (2005), the Juvenile Justice Act (2003) and the National Health Insurance Act. It also initiated significant new social protection programmes in the education and health sectors. The capitation grants were rolled out across the country in 2005. Primary schools receive these capitation grants from government for each student enrolled, instead of school fees from parents. This intervention has led to an increase in enrolment of almost 20 per cent in two years. The government, with support from NEPAD and donors, is also scaling up a school feeding programme, though this has only reached a small percentage of schools. This has run into some problems currently since an independent audit done in 2008 revealed misuse of funds. There has also been criticism of the fact that the school feeding programme has not been targeted to the poorest or most food insecure areas.

In 2004, the government also introduced the National Health Insurance Scheme. Currently 42 per cent of the population is registered under the NHIS. Due to concerns that NHIS premiums were still preventing some of the most vulnerable groups from accessing healthcare, the President announced in May 2008 that National Health Insurance would be made free for all children under 18, irrespective of whether their parents were on the scheme or not, and all pregnant women would also be on the scheme for free during their pregnancy.

As shown above, Ghana has tended to have social protection programmes that are universally targeted e.g. capitation grants or National Health Insurance. While these programmes have had significant positive impacts, both have still left some of the poorest citizens in Ghana excluded from basic services. Universal access does not guarantee that poor people are being reached – often they cannot even afford the very low \$8 premium that is required for the NHIS, or the transport that is required to go and get registered. Poor children cannot afford free schools because they have no money for books, or school uniforms, or shoes to walk to school.

The poorest people have often had to rely on informal and traditional forms of social protection based on the extended family system, religious groupings or community norms and obligations

to help vulnerable families; and individual remittances. These systems continue to play significant roles in social protection in Ghana.

It will become progressively more difficult to reach the remaining poor in Ghana, especially the bottom 18 per cent of the population. Countries such as South Africa, Brazil, India and China have shown that even with impressive growth, pockets of extreme deprivation often remain. Not tackling such deprivation and the inequality it brings is dangerous - it can lead to social tension, violence and sometimes even flare up to full-blown conflict. That is why, even if Ghana becomes a middle income country it will still be necessary to have special social protection programs in place that ensure growth benefits all segments of the society. It will also ensure the country can cope with sudden shocks such as the severe droughts, floods or rising food prices it has seen in the last year, so that such events leave fewer people falling back below the extreme poverty line.

CHAPTER 2. THE NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION STRATEGY – GETTING THE RIGHT POLICY FRAMEWORK IN PLACE.

While Ghana has recognised the importance of various social protection programs, what has been lacking until recently is a social policy framework that links the various initiatives and policies into a coherent whole and shows how a family living in extreme poverty can not only survive, but even escape such poverty. This chapter will discuss the National Social Protection Strategy in more detail and explain how it has helped to move forward policy debates about tackling poverty in Ghana, and the challenges the government faces in implementing it.

The National Social Protection Strategy represents a shift from a piecemeal approach to designing and managing SP programmes to an integrated, sustainable and forward-looking national framework. It emphasizes the need to have systems in place that address the needs of vulnerable groups – whether it be the chronic poor who have not benefited from the growth and development the rest of the country is experiencing, or whether it is the families that are temporarily pushed back into poverty when confronted by shocks like droughts and floods, or fluctuations in global prices. Creating such awareness and the need for basic social security was a big step in a country where it is often assumed that growth on its own will eradicate poverty.

In 2005 the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment (MMYE) took the lead in developing the National Social Protection Strategy, which was finalised and submitted to Cabinet in 2007. The NSPS represents the Government of Ghana's vision of creating an inclusive society through the provision of sustainable mechanisms for the protection of persons living in situations of extreme poverty, vulnerability and exclusion. It is the only Government policy that looks explicitly and exclusively at what Ghana needs to do to help the extreme poor improve their livelihoods. It sets out three main strategies to address extreme poverty more effectively. Firstly, more targeted assistance in the form of a new social grant scheme to ensure a basic and regular income for the most vulnerable households. Secondly, it recommends better poverty targeting of existing social protection programmes. Finally, it recognises that a package of complementary inputs may have more impact in reducing poverty than single interventions. One agency also needs to co-ordinate and monitor the various services being provided by different MDAs to a household.

Linking the various social protection programs is still difficult and MMYE will face many challenges trying to work across other sectors such as health and education. One such challenge is for MMYE to demonstrate its ability to lead and co-ordinate the activities of other sector ministries. One entry point for MMYE to start work with other Ministries is the implementation of the new cash transfer programme (LEAP) and its conditionalities around health and education. In the last six months, there has been a request from the Ministry of Health and the National Health Insurance Council to link their activities with the LEAP beneficiaries. NHIS is aware that it is having problems getting the poorest Ghanaians registered on health insurance. They realise that targeting the LEAP beneficiaries can help solve their problem, and the condition that people cannot stay on LEAP unless they register on NHIS will provide an incentive for people to register.

The National Social Protection Strategy has been very important for Ghana for a number of reasons – it was and is the only strategy focusing on the extreme poor. The Ministry of Manpower, and particularly its political leadership, has managed to use the strategy to convince the rest of Government, and gradually the public as well, that while growth is necessary and good for the country, Ghana also needs to give special attention to improving the livelihoods of the extreme poor. The strategy was able to make a case that it is the government's responsibility to ensure that the most vulnerable have access to basic services and a basic level of income. The real challenge in rolling out the strategy will be to have one Ministry in a position to effectively co-ordinate different interventions so they have a cumulative effect on the targeted households.

CHAPTER 3 – LEAP – HOW TO GET INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES FUNDED AND STARTED.

The idea of LEAP social grants originated from the National Social Protection Strategy, which recognised that there was a gap in existing GoG programming. There was nothing in Ghana that provided basic livelihood security to some of the most vulnerable groups in Ghana – children, the elderly and the disabled. These vulnerable groups did not necessarily benefit from existing development interventions and needed extra support to meet even their basic needs, such as food, education and healthcare. LEAP is also unique because instead of providing in kind benefits, it is one of the first government-financed cash transfer programmes in West Africa that is based on the right to basic social security.

Ghana's Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment (MMYE) launched the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty programme, or LEAP, in March 2008. Sixteen hundred households each received a little over \$8. By June 2008, the number has gone up to 3,200 households. The Government would like to scale up this programme in the next five years to reach just over 160,000 households (or 20% of those living in extreme poverty in Ghana).

LEAP is providing selected households with monthly cash transfers between \$8 and 15 per month, depending on the number of qualifying individuals in the household. The main target groups for this programme will initially be Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), older persons over 65 years and People living with severe Disabilities. The grant is provided through the Ghana post office and payments are made every two months. The cash grants are conditional on households (1) sending children to school, (2) not allowing child labour, (3) enrolment of family members on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and (4) birth registration of all children.

Currently, the cash transfers are fully funded from Government of Ghana budget (\$ 4.2 million from HIPIC funds). Like in other countries, the affordability of cash transfers for the poor in Ghana has been hotly debated. Social Protection experts are clear that Ghana, with its current budget, and expected revenue (as oil revenues come on stream in the next 4 to 5 years) can afford social cash transfers for the bottom 20% of the extreme poor.¹ The total cost of LEAP over the next 5 years (2008-2012) lies between 0.1% and 0.2% of total government expenditure.² The government currently provides in-kind transfers in the form of subsidies in many other sectors (health, electricity, fuel, education). So the issue in Ghana is not whether LEAP is affordable, but whether Government of Ghana wants to spend its money on this particular programme. Whether to start a social protection programme or not, and the type of programme that is selected, are political decisions.

The public debates on the radio, TV and in the press when LEAP was launched highlighted that cash transfers or social security for the poor is always a contentious issue. The concern the public expressed were not about the cost of the programme (GoG spending \$4.2 million), but about giving cash directly to poor people. LEAP grants were seen as “free hand-outs” which would be “wasted” by poor people. Some newspapers and the radio call-in programmes suggested that instead the government should use the money to create new employment and new industries, because what was needed was more jobs for poor people.

This debate about social welfare provision is common the world over – the concern that poor people cannot be trusted with money because they will waste it. The Ministry of Manpower had to launch a strong advocacy campaign to explain to the public that LEAP was not about “free handouts” and it was not money to buy votes, but social security for the chronic poor, especially those who could not work i.e. children below 18 and the elderly above 65. A good communication strategy to explain to the public what the Social Protection Strategy and LEAP was meant to do was crucial to win public support and ensure the programme could go ahead. Providing such information in a pro-active way, rather than reacting to negative press coverage is also important to get the public on board.

Winning public support for the programme was only one of the challenges of starting LEAP. Prior to that, the Ministry of Manpower had to convince the rest of Government and Development Partners to invest in piloting the grants. Having a strong Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Manpower who championed the issue, and could negotiate with her colleagues in Cabinet and in Finance was key. The leadership in the Ministry was able to secure small amount of funding from development partners before that to test and develop its ideas with regards to cash transfers. The Department of Social Welfare ran a small pilot scheme in 2006 where it paid the NHIS premium for 1200 beneficiaries, with UNICEF funding. This demonstrated what could be done. Then in 2007, the Ministry of Manpower used DFID funding to design LEAP with the help of experts who had worked on similar schemes in Brazil, Zambia and South Africa. Learning from other countries, and visiting countries where such programmes work, such as Brazil, has been important to generate new thinking on social protection, help design new programmes, but also to convince people in Ghana of the benefits of cash transfers. Being presented with a detailed design and budget for LEAP, Ministry of Finance was obliged to give the programme serious consideration. This led to

¹ Discussions with WB SP specialist and DFID Health Insurance Specialist, 2008. ILO Mission and LEAP Design Mission, 2007

² Taken from LEAP Design Document, October 2007

budget allocations for LEAP.

As the food and fuel prices keep increasing in 2008, the WB has decided to assist GoG in scaling up LEAP quickly to cover an additional 28,000 households with a six month emergency package. This is to cushion the poorest households from the negative effects of these price rises. Such a rapid expansion was thought possible because other donors, i.e. UNICEF, DFID, WFP, ILO and Govt of Brazil are investing in strengthening the capacity of MMYE.

A key challenge with LEAP as it scales up is to ensure that the poverty targeting is effective. There are often difficult choices to be made in this regard – should the programme expand across the nation, so that all citizens can enjoy its benefits, or should LEAP expansion focus on the poorest districts in Ghana, which may be concentrated in certain regions of the country? And whatever the regional distribution of the programme, what are the most efficient and cost effective ways to select the poorest households? Given that Ghana has historically opted for universal provision of benefits, it is now developing new tools to do household level targeting.

The experience with LEAP in Ghana has shown that the programme is affordable, and will become increasingly so as Ghana moves towards MIC status. This, however, does not guarantee political and public support for such programmes – Ministries trying to “sell” the idea of cash transfers have to convince the rest of government that it is “doable” and that there will be public support for it. Starting pilots and sharing experiences with other countries that have done it and have evidence of the positive benefits has been crucial in convincing sceptics within Government in Ghana. Keeping public support for LEAP, specially at it attempts to scale up, will be an on-going task. It will be crucial to demonstrate that LEAP is well targeted and its impact on poverty, children’s school enrolment, uptake of health services, or improved nutrition by putting in place strong monitoring and evaluation systems from the start. It is only positive results that will convince the public, and the Ministry of Finance to allocate more and more resources for its expansion.

CHAPTER 4 – GETTING IT ALL WORKING – THE ROLE OF STRONG INSTITUTIONS IN ADVOCATING FOR SP AND DELIVERING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES

Even with the political will and financial resources to start a new social protection programme such as LEAP, a key stumbling block has been the capacity constraints of the Ministries responsible for delivering these programmes. The Ministry of Manpower, and its implementing wing, the Department of Social Welfare both have serious capacity constraints: they have suffered from under-investment for decades, they have limited numbers of qualified staff, and all their systems – whether it be IT, management, budgeting or monitoring and evaluation need to be modernised. They are now being expected to deliver an ambitious new social protection agenda, and start new programmes like LEAP, while trying to re-organise their Ministry to make it fit for purpose.

The MMYE and the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) both fully recognise their capacity constraints. They recognise that implementing and coordinating the NSPS and scaling up a programme such as LEAP will require putting in place completely new systems and ways of working. To scale up the programme from 2,000 households in 21 districts to at least 30,000 households in 61 districts within one year will pose serious challenges to a weak system. While some district offices will need to be strengthened to deliver LEAP, in other districts completely new systems will

have to be created. They are therefore using the opportunity that LEAP is providing, including the new funding coming to this sector, to restructure and revamp the Ministry and DSW to take up the challenge of implementing more modern and preventive social policy measures as outlined in the NSPS, rather than dealing with individual caseloads in a reactive way, as has been done since Ghana's independence.

In the past, the limited capacity of MMYE has made it difficult to negotiate effectively for budget allocations from Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MOFEP), since the latter in turn has been unwilling to invest heavily in a Ministry where they are unsure about the capacity to deliver. MMYE's approach to overcome this problem was to start the new LEAP programme on a small scale. In the first year, their target was only to reach 2,000 households. This was something that could be achieved with current capacity. It also allowed MOFEP to test the waters with small amounts of money. Once MOFEP saw that Manpower was able to achieve its target, they were willing to start allocating more funds towards its implementation.

Another implication of limited capacity has been that MMYE has not yet been able to take up the lead role in co-ordinating social protection programmes across various sectors. However, as LEAP expands and the investment in the Ministry continues, it should be in a stronger position to take up this role.

The Ministry and DSW, with their Development Partners, are currently developing a new Institutional Strengthening Plan to determine the key systems and capacities that have to be built up immediately to make possible the expansion of LEAP. This plan will be financed partly by government, and partly by a range of donors. Some agencies such as WFP and civil society organisations are also going to provide technical assistance with issues such as developing capacity of the Ministry to target households according to poverty and food insecurity. For the donors, investment in this Ministry and Department can have a multiplier effect – not only will it be better equipped to deliver LEAP, it can also improve the implementation of other legislation such as Child Protection or Domestic Violence that this Ministry is also partly responsible for.

What Ghana's experience shows is that Institutional strengthening of Ministries responsible for social protection has to be spread out over a number of years, and certain difficult choices have to be made. These Ministries will never have all the staff, equipment and IT they need – therefore the absolute minimum has to be put in place and systems need to be built and perfected over time. The key issue in Ghana now is not to expand programmes faster than there is capacity to do so, since mistakes and mismanagement may result in the loss of all the support and political commitment that have been carefully built for such programmes over the years. Being aware of the need to carefully balance both the LEAP roll-out and its own capacity building the MMYE has asked donors to invest in setting up new systems, while government funds are used for the cash transfers.

CHAPTER 5 – WORKING TOGETHER, UNDER STRONG GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

The Government is firmly in the lead in dialogue with donors in Ghana, and sets the policy priorities. This is because Ghana will soon not be dependent on donors anymore - it can borrow

from international financial markets, expect revenues from oil, and generally see the benefits of a strong economy. There would have been no National Social Protection Strategy, or National Health Insurance or LEAP if the Government did not decide to champion these issues and make these things happen. National ownership and leadership has been key in starting and developing these programmes. Other stakeholders such as Civil Society Organisations and Development Partners follow the Government lead, and can provide strategic support at certain points.

While Government leadership is vital, we need to recognise that it has to be built up over time. Government is made up of different parts, and the Ministry of Manpower, responsible for Social Protection, as demonstrated in the last chapter, has been in a weak position relative to strong and well-established ministries such as health and education, and the Ministry of Finance. MMYE therefore had to form alliances with other partners outside of Government to move forward their agenda. In this respect, civil society organisations have played a key role in generating public support for social protection policies in Ghana. And Development Partners have been able to provide technical assistance at key points to the Ministry of Manpower for it to develop a social protection strategy, and then to start programmes. This is where good structure and mechanisms to work with donors and civil society become important. It allows donors, government and civil society to work in a co-ordinated and harmonised way to support government goals.

Since 2004, Social Protection had been one of the sectors that has been included in the Ghana budget support dialogue. This has helped to raise the issue at a higher policy-making level, and gave an entry point to MMYE for discussions with Finance, other sector Ministries and DPs. It is a forum where MMYE is able to present and discuss its policies with regards to social protection and generate wider buy. It has also helped GoG and DPs to prioritise and focus on key social protection outcomes, and encouraged a faster pace of policy reform and programme development.

A key challenge moving forward will be to keep government commitment and momentum after the general elections scheduled for December 2008. There are different scenarios the Ministry and its civil servants need to prepare for – either the same party wins, but a new set of Ministers are appointed to the Cabinet and the Ministry, and their interest in Social Protection has to be built up gradually. More radical change may come if the current opposition party wins – they may decide to reconsider whether to continue with existing programmes and policies. While it will be difficult for them to go back on well established schemes such as the NHIS or the capitation grants, they may not be as willing to expand LEAP as rapidly as the previous government. The best method to ensure that the change of government (same party or different party) has minimum negative impact on progress with NSPS or LEAP is to establish it and institutionalise it as firmly as possible among the civil servants and the public before the general elections.

A major part of the success with the social protection strategy and LEAP is that it is genuinely government owned and run. It has taken time and effort to build this ownership among different parts of government. It is also true that without support from its development partners at key stages, it would have been difficult to find funds to test models, learn from other countries, and the LEAP would not be able to scale up as rapidly as it has. Civil Society also played its part in advocating for the pro-poor changes. For the development partners, this is a way for them to channel money almost directly to the poor, and have an almost guaranteed impact on poverty. As the programme continues to grow, both sides will have to ensure that this carefully balanced partnership contin-

ues, with government in the lead, both in terms of policies and financial inputs. DPs should continue to provide technical and financial support, specially for currently under funded areas such as M and E, so that MMYE has additional resources to innovate, test and scale up SP interventions.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION – WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT SOCIAL PROTECTION IN GHANA?

For a country focused so strongly on private sector-led growth, Ghana has managed to develop an impressive plethora of social protection policies and programmes in the last five years – capitation grants, NHIS, school feeding, Youth Employment, LEAP and NSPS. Some of these programmes have worked better than others, with improvements and refinements being made to all of them. The government has moved rapidly from policy and ideas to actually implementing programmes, and scaling them up, whether it is youth employment, health insurance or LEAP. This was possible due to strong government ownership and leadership of these agendas. This was demonstrated by the fact that in most cases government designed these programmes and provided the bulk of the funding for their implementation.

This has happened partly due to demand from citizens for better social services i.e. access to schools and healthcare. Similarly, the youth employment programme responded to concerns over rising unemployment and frustration among the youth. Governments in democratic contexts are usually more likely to respond to such demands, since they are trying to keep the electorate happy in preparation for the next elections. Besides such popular pressure and political interest, the Ghana government also recognised the economic benefits of investments in health and education and other social services.

The impact of these social protection programmes on the poorest has been limited because they have not been well targeted towards this group and because the various programmes were not linked to form a comprehensive package. The NSPS has explicitly acknowledged this - there is not one solution to tackling poverty and vulnerability, instead a number of complementary social protection measures are needed to help its poorest citizens meet basic needs and in some cases escape poverty. It is these linkages that MMYE is now trying to operationalise. The NSPS also recognises that however wealthy the nation becomes, some vulnerable groups will always need a safety net, such as elderly people without a formal pension, or families suddenly affected by floods or droughts.

While having an overarching policy such as NSPS is important, the implementation of LEAP provides an opportunity to actually put into practise its key objectives of targeting the extreme poor with a co-ordinated package of interventions. The challenge now will be to move from a pilot to a sustainable, long-term social protection programme with effective targeting tools. This will require political commitment, and we need to see what happens after the general election scheduled for December 2008, as well as long-term financing. The latter should not be an issue. For a strong performing economy like Ghana, LEAP is completely affordable. Once oil revenues start flowing into Ghana, it may even be possible to further expand the programme to cover greater numbers living in extreme poverty. The biggest challenge of all will be successfully implementing a nationwide LEAP programme and co-ordinating it with other SP programmes, given the limited capacity of MMYE.

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