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**Ghana: Budget Monitoring by SEND-Ghana and its Partners Helps Improve Nutrition for Children and Support Local Farmers**

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**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The International Budget Partnership (IBP) collaborates with a diverse network of civil society organizations around the world that analyze and monitor government budgets and advocate for better budget policies and more open and accountable budget processes in order to fight poverty and improve governance. In several instances over the past 10 years, members of the global network have succeeded in positively influencing the budget process, including both the formulation and implementation of government budgets. Between 2007 and 2010, the Social Enterprise Development (SEND-Ghana) Foundation, one of the IBP's partners, monitored the performance of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP, a government program that integrates several social protection interventions), engaging with 50 district assemblies, 50 focal civil society organizations (CSOs), and 50 District Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)/Citizens Monitoring Committees (DCMC) in seven regions across the country.<sup>2</sup> SEND-Ghana used the information gathered from this monitoring exercise to promote improvements in the program with district assemblies and officials from collaborating ministries, departments, and agencies directly at the national, regional, and district levels, but also indirectly through the media.

As a result of this campaign, the implementing agencies of the GSFP and key program actors within the communities were moved to improve service delivery, including the provision of:

- basic infrastructure, such as safe and hygienic water sources, toilet facilities, urinal and hand-washing facilities, and adequate kitchenware;
- agricultural services, such as the direct purchase of food from community/district farmers, extension services, farming inputs supply, and the formation of farmers into farmer-based organizations;

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<sup>2</sup> A focal CSO is one that takes on the responsibility of being the local point for mobilization and organisation of the District HIPC/Citizens Monitoring Committees (DCMC) and implementation of the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) activities at the local level.

- health services, including training cooks in hygiene and nutrition, health education for pupils, training to maintain water and sanitation facilities in the school, and student health services like measuring body mass index and de-worming; and
- education services, such as supports for parents to supervise their children's education, adequate teachers (average teacher: pupil ratio of 1:35), adequate stock of textbooks (average textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 ), availability of equipment for extracurricular activities, and the daily marking and closing of school registers.

In addition the public, especially at the local level, was better informed about the GSFP and more capable of participating in and monitoring the program — and demanding accountability from the institutions that implement it.

## **Background**

### *Poverty reduction and the birth of the Ghana School Feeding Program*

According to the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS), Ghana reduced overall poverty from the high rate of 51.7 percent in 1992 (GLSS 3) to 28.5 percent in 2005/2006 (GLSS 5) and cut extreme poverty by half, from 36.4 percent to 18.2 percent, within the same period.<sup>3</sup> Ghana is, therefore, one of the few African countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving rates of poverty and hunger by 2015.<sup>4</sup> Although overall poverty has declined, there is growing evidence of deepening poverty among some groups. The situation is much worse, for example, in parts of northern Ghana, where between 1992 and 2006 the total number of poor rose by 0.9 million compared to the rural south, where the number fell by 2.5 million.<sup>5</sup> The north remains locked in a vicious cycle of impoverishment. Livelihoods depend predominantly on food crop farming, yet the region has only a single and increasingly erratic rainy season.

Between 2000 and 2006, Ghana prepared three sets of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The first was the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP), which was required to qualify for the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and assistance from the soft-loan International Development Assistance (IDA) fund of the World Bank. The two Bretton Woods institutions approved the I-PRSP in August 2000. In 2001 Ghana opted for the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which required it to prepare a final PRSP, the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I).<sup>6</sup> By this time the IMF and the World Bank were using the PRSP as the framework for countries like Ghana to address poverty in a

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<sup>3</sup> Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) Round 3 (1992) and Round 5 (2008), Ghana Statistical Service.

<sup>4</sup> "Millennium Development Goals Report Card: Learning from Progress," 2010, ODI & End Poverty 2015 Millennium Campaign.

<sup>5</sup> "Tackling Poverty from Northern Ghana," 2010, World Bank.

<sup>6</sup> The Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative was a multilateral donor effort to convert debt relief into expenditure to alleviate poverty.

comprehensive and long-term manner. Once approved, the PRSP became the guide for coordinating multi-donor budget support (MDBS) strategies.<sup>7</sup>

In 2006 the government adopted the GPRS II, which, like its precursor, was driven by internationally agreed upon development objectives to address poverty reduction. The government included the MDGs and the targets set forth under the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in the new strategy. Even though economic growth remained the main focus of GPRS II, it sought to ensure that all Ghanaians (especially the most vulnerable and poorest segments of society) would benefit from it equally. The government, therefore, complemented the GPRS II with the introduction of a National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) in March 2007, which included such programs as exemptions under the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP), the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), the Capitation Grant, and agricultural supplements.

The GSFP was designed to provide children in public primary schools and kindergartens in the poorest areas of the country with one hot, nutritious meal per day, using locally grown foodstuffs. Ultimately, the GSFP is meant to realize MDGs one and two, which focus on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education. The GSFP also seeks to increase domestic food production, improve community food security, and provide a ready market for farm produce or output, thereby improving incomes for poor rural households. At the time of the program's inception, the three northern regions, which were among the poorest, fell into SEND-Ghana's operational area, so the GSFP, with its laudable objectives, was of particular interest. Many programs with equally laudable goals, such as the HIPC, did not come close to meeting their objectives, and thus had little or no impact on the beneficiaries. This was due, in part, to the lack of participation and ownership by local institutions and stakeholders, poor targeting of beneficiaries, and the lack of accountability and transparency on the part of those responsible for implementing and monitoring the programs.

### *Political developments*

Between 1972 and 1993, Ghana was under military dictatorship, except for three years of civilian rule between 1979 and 1982. During that long period of dictatorship, the state dominated every sphere of life; the private sector, civil society, and the media became dormant. Since the adoption of the 1992 Constitution and embrace of multi-party democracy in Ghana, the space for civil society participation in governance has been growing, largely through the efforts of a wide range of civil society actors and organizations (including the media) to engage with the government on formulating and implementing policy.

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<sup>7</sup> The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS): ISODEC's Position Paper.

In preparing and implementing the two Ghana Poverty and Reduction Strategies, the government also emphasized the participation of all stakeholders, including civil society, the media, the private sector, all arms of government, and development partners.

However, constitutionally mandated oversight institutions, such as the Audit Service, the judiciary, and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), which are meant to ensure good governance and accountability, are severely under resourced. Thus they are unable to effectively monitor the activities of government institutions, such as the Ghana School Feeding Programme National Secretariat, and hold them accountable. For this reason, civil society organizations like SEND-Ghana and its partners have to play this role.

Civil society organizations faced continuing frustrations in their efforts to bring about meaningful social transformation through their traditional service delivery approach. Therefore, recognizing that participation in policy and decision making is fundamental to ownership of development and sustainable progress, groups underwent a paradigm shift to focus on policy advocacy as a more effective way to realize long-lasting change in the lives of the poor and vulnerable.

As part of this paradigm shift and to take advantage of the emphasis of the GPRS on participation of all stakeholders in its implementation, SEND-Ghana initiated its HIPC Watch Initiative to mobilize civil society at the local level to monitor and demand accountability for the use of HIPC resources. Since launching the initiative, SEND-Ghana has extended it to other social programs, including the GSFP—the focus of this case study.

## **PLANS TO TRACK THE GSFP**

### **SEND-Ghana and its activities**

SEND-Ghana, the Ghanaian arm of the regional organization SEND West Africa, is a CSO founded in 1998, initially as a service organization in northern Ghana. However, in 2002 it started engaging in budget monitoring, and in 2008 it adopted a new mission focusing on research and advocacy to promote good governance and the equality of women and men in Ghana. Over time SEND-Ghana has evolved into an advocacy and governance CSO and now has broad national presence and recognition. This is largely attributable to its main program, the Grassroots Economic Literacy and Advocacy Programme (GELAP), which seeks to foster and sustain good governance practices, accountability, and equity in the implementation of pro-poor policies and programs. The GELAP monitors policy and program impact on the livelihood security (e.g., food security and income) and welfare needs (education, health, and water) of the poor in Ghana. SEND-Ghana uses the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) Framework it developed in 2002, and modified over the years, as the GELAP's main operational instrument.

## **TOOL BOX ON THE TACTICS USED**

- Signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ghana School Feeding Programme National Secretariat.
- Mobilized civil society actors at the district, regional, and national levels.
- Signed a MoU with focal CSOs and key partners of the PM&E.
- Implemented a tried-and-tested model (the PM&E Framework) which consisted of the following four phases:
  - sensitizing people to create awareness and interest in the program;
  - conducting participatory research — gathering evidence qualitatively and quantitatively;
  - undertaking policy advocacy using evidence gathered to engage with authorities or duty bearers at the district, regional, and national levels of government; and
  - following up on commitments made by duty bearers at the different levels of government to ensure that they were fulfilled.
- Implemented a deliberate and sustained multimedia strategy that included quarterly newsletter, community radio, launch of PM&E report followed by prolonged media campaign, and policy briefs for MPs, and so on.

The PM&E Framework consists of four main phases organized in such a way that each phase neatly dovetails into the succeeding one. The phases of the PM&E framework will be explained below when we consider how SEND-Ghana used it to track the GSFP. SEND-Ghana incorporated this framework into a manual for the Ghana HIPC Watch Initiative, which would be used to track the allocation and use of debt relief resources for the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I). The HIPC Watch Initiative manual was later revised to include guidance for monitoring other pro-poor projects outside the scope of the HIPC Watch Initiative.<sup>8</sup>

The GELAP builds the capacities of ordinary citizens, who are organized into the District Citizens Monitoring Committees (DCMCs) at the grassroots level, to implement the PM&E Framework. Currently, SEND-Ghana uses the GELAP PM&E Framework to monitor the implementation of a range of core pro-poor policies in 50 of Ghana's 170 districts.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Grassroots Economic Literacy and Advocacy Programme (GELAP): A Manual for the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) of Pro-Poor Policies, Programmes and Projects. Introductory page.

<sup>9</sup> These policies include the following: Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP); Capitation Grant; National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS); Savannah Accelerated Development Authority; Contract Award and Execution; Trade: Policy Literacy and Advocacy (Participation of women and small scale producers in trade policy and impact on their wellbeing); and the Millennium Development Goals.



As a result of its experience with the HIPC Watch Initiative, SEND-Ghana believes that advocacy does not need to be adversarial; it can be a collaborative effort between civil society and government actors, particularly at the district level. Often local-level officials lack the power to influence national-level policy formulation, and they often experience interference in implementation, even at the local level. They also are often not adequately informed, educated, and equipped to implement new policies or programs. For this reason, local governments need civil society, as a critical but supportive ally, to implement these policies and programs. Thus both civil society actors and local-level government officials must work together in monitoring and gathering evidence on the implementation of government policies or programs. The evidence gathered can then be used to address problems and failures, thereby improving implementation at the local level. This evidence can also be used to influence regional- and national-level actors to effect changes in policy or program implementation. The way SEND-Ghana tracked the GSFP illustrates this collaborative approach.

### **The impact SEND-Ghana and its partners hoped to achieve**

The overall objective of SEND-Ghana and its partners in monitoring the GSFP at the district level, and bringing the findings to the attention of the project implementers at both the local and the national levels, was to ensure effective implementation in order to maximize the program's impact on the people it was meant to benefit: school children and local farmers. Specifically, SEND-Ghana hoped to achieve the following based on the GSFP's own objectives:

- effective utilization of funds budgeted for the program by those responsible;
- food of sufficient quality and quantity to meet the nutritional needs of the children;
- informed citizenry capable of participating in and monitoring the program, and demanding accountability from the institutions tasked with implementing the program;
- local production of the food provided to the school children;
- an increase in the enrollment of school children; and
- proactive stakeholder collaboration in program delivery .

## WHAT HAPPENED IN THE GSFP CAMPAIGN?

### Signing of a memorandum of understanding

To achieve the campaign's objectives, SEND-Ghana and its partners first secured an MoU from the Ghana School Feeding Programme National Secretariat. (This approach was used under the HIPC Watch Initiative as well.) The MoU assigned SEND-Ghana and the DCMCs the task of independent monitoring of the impact of the GSFP in the target communities and schools from July 2007 to July 2009. Since SEND-Ghana was one of the CSOs mentioned in the GSFP 2007-2010 document as "strategic and technical partners" in implementing, or supporting the implementation of, school feeding, the GSFP National Secretariat did not see a need for the MoU.

However, SEND-Ghana insisted and for two years until they managed to secure the MoU. The MoU boosted the confidence of the GSFP district structures — district liaison officers, district implementation committees (DICs), and school implementation committees (SICs) — to work closely with SEND-Ghana and its DCMC network. This ensured that SEND-Ghana and its partners were not perceived as being opposed to the program or seeking to foment trouble for the government, but instead as being cooperative and having approval of those at the top of the GSFP. By using this approach, SEND-Ghana and its partners were also able to overcome the difficulty of access to information in the absence of right-to-information legislation, especially at the local level. Seeing the civil society actors as partners, the government officials were more cooperative and forthcoming with information. In this regard, the MoU was critical to the success of the campaign because it spelled out the responsibilities and commitments of the parties involved.

The MoU outlines activities aimed at maximizing the impact of the GSFP on target communities, particularly the 1.2 million primary and kindergarten pupils expected to be reached by the program. In the MoU, an independent civil society monitoring group led by SEND-Ghana was to:

- monitor the GSFP in 50 operational districts of the Grassroots Economic Literacy Advocacy Programme;
- use existing focal CSO and District HIPC/Citizens Monitoring Committees (DCMCs) in each district;
- ensure that each DCMC shares its monitoring findings and recommendations with the respective district assembly;
- discuss the monitoring findings and recommendations with the GSFP National Secretariat; and
- participate in key stakeholder meetings organized by the secretariat.

The role of the GSFP National Secretariat, on the other hand, was to:

- provide SEND-Ghana with the list of beneficiary schools in each district;
- furnish SEND-Ghana with the amounts disbursed to districts and beneficiary schools;

- officially inform the districts of SEND-Ghana’s role as a strategic partner and request cooperation;
- provide any other information relevant for effective monitoring; and
- give feedback on monitoring findings and follow-up measures to SEND-Ghana.

### **Mobilization of civil society actors**

Based on the PM&E Framework, SEND-Ghana and its partners mobilized civil society actors to work together to collaborate with government officials at the local (i.e., community and district) level and at the regional and national levels.

- **At the community and district level:** Activities are led by a focal CSO. This CSO, together with SEND-Ghana, puts together the DCMC. The committees are made up of 11 individuals drawn from different stakeholders or interest groups – local government authority, traditional authority, local legislators, women’s groups, faith-based organizations, people living with disabilities, farmer-based organizations, and youth groups – though the specific composition varies from district to district.
- **At the regional level:** SEND-Ghana sets up the Regional PM&E Network. This network comprises: one representative from the focal CSO from each of the various districts in the region, one member of the DCMCs from each of the districts in the region, one representative from the regional association of Persons With Disabilities (PWD), one representative from the Women in Trade Network in the region, SEND-Ghana’s representation in the region, a representative from the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC), a representative from the Regional Economic Planning Unit, and SEND-Ghana’s regional office as the secretariat of the network.<sup>10</sup>
- **At the national level:** The following came together to form the National PM&E Network with SEND-Ghana as the secretariat: chairpersons of the Regional PM&E Networks, the country director of SEND-Ghana, three co-opted members who represent other national-level networks facilitated by or in partnership with SEND-Ghana, one representative from the participating Regional Coordinating Councils, a representative from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and representatives from other CSOs with strategic relationships with SEND-Ghana (e.g., the Institute for Democratic Governance [IDEG], the Alliance for Reproductive Health Alliance [ARHR]).

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<sup>10</sup> Ghana is divided into 10 administrative regions, which are further divided into 170 distinctive metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies. The regions have political heads who represent the president in the region, and who are responsible for coordinating and directing the administrative machinery in the region. The district assemblies develop, plan, and mobilize resources for programmes and strategies for the development of the district. These divisions have their own administrative capitals and political heads, who are the chief executives.

To ensure commitment to the campaign by the various stakeholders, SEND-Ghana also signed a MoU with the focal CSOs, district assemblies, and DCMCs, outlining their roles and responsibilities.

### ***Implementation of the PM&E Framework***

The third step in the campaign was to implement the four phases of the PM&E framework.

#### *First phase: Policy education and sensitization*

In this phase of the PM&E Framework, SEND-Ghana and its partners mobilized citizens to learn about, monitor, and provide regular feedback on pro-poor policies. They also encouraged citizens to participate in and contribute to pro-poor policy planning and implementation. With regard to the GSFP, SEND-Ghana educated their internal staff and the DCMC members on the school feeding policy. They extended this training to the staff members of the government institutions responsible for implementing the GSFP at the local level, who often have limited or no information about the policy and the role expected of them. SEND-Ghana also organized separate targeted sensitization for people with disabilities and for women.

#### *Second phase: Participatory research*

The second phase of the PM&E Framework focuses on participatory research. This entails gathering and analyzing information on the implementation of pro-poor policies, and using the findings as the basis for engaging state actors on improving policy implementation. To ensure the quality of the information/evidence gathered on the GSFP, SEND-Ghana educated and trained the DCMCs on using the PM&E Framework and tools for data collection.

SEND-Ghana built the relevant research capacity of the DCMCs by providing the assessment tools and manuals needed for the participatory research of the GSFP. They then trained the members of the DCMCs to collect relevant data based on the set of indicators from the program document, and to analyze the data collected in order to prepare policy-relevant findings and conclusions. They also provided the DCMC members with the necessary funds for transportation to carry out these tasks.

Once the DCMC members in each district were equipped to visit the beneficiary schools, they began collecting data. Working in teams of two or three, the DCMC members embarked on a journey to assess how the program was being run in the schools. The first phase of this exercise included monitoring:

- whether the structures of the GSFP — the school implementation committee (SIC) and the district implementation committee (DIC) — had been implemented effectively;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> School Implementation Committee (SIC) is the school-level implementing unit that plans and executes the actual feeding. It receives funds from the District Implementation Committee (DIC), procures needed inputs, supervises the food preparation and feeding activities, and reports back to the DIC. The SIC is a direct manifestation of programme ownership by local communities, which are its ultimate beneficiaries. The SIC also mobilizes the community to support and sustain the feeding programme. The DIC is the district-level coordinating unit for the GSFP that exercises direct oversight of all the schools in the programme. It disburses funds directly to SICs and holds them accountable for the use

- whether the stakeholders were participating in the decision-making process regarding, for example, the management of the program at the district and school level, the purchasing/sourcing of food items, planning, and the actual feeding;
- the quality and quantity of the meals served, as well as the conditions under which the children had their meals;
- information dissemination and community awareness of the program;
- the use of established procurement processes in sourcing items for the program;
- timeliness regarding the release of funds and the flow of information among stakeholders (the operation of separate bank accounts for the program, the release of funds to caterers on time, record keeping of funds received, and so on);
- the effect of the program on school enrollment; and
- the effect of the program on domestic food production.

The second phase of the monitoring exercise focused on the provision of infrastructure and services.

- **The availability of basic infrastructure:** Each school should have a complete kitchen structure or one purposely built for school feeding, a functioning water tank, adequate classrooms (kindergarten and primary), access to a safe and hygienic water source, toilet facilities, urinal and hand washing facilities, adequate furniture, and adequate kitchen ware.
- **The provision of agriculture sector services:** There should be direct purchase of food from community/district farmers, credit facilities for farmers linked to the GSFP, extension services for farmers linked to the GSFP, farming inputs supplied to farmers linked to the GSFP, formation of farmers linked to the GSFP into farmer-based organizations, and monitoring inspection to ensure provision of agricultural services in schools.
- **The provision of health sector services:** These include training in hygiene and nutrition for cooks, health education for pupils, training to maintain water and sanitation facilities in the school, checking children's body mass index, de-worming, and monitoring inspection to ensure the provision of health services in schools.
- **The provision of education sector services:** These include the involvement of community leaders in publicizing the GSFP in the beneficiary community, sensitizing parents to supervise their children's education, adequate teacher population in school (average teacher: pupil ratio of 1:35), adequate stock of textbooks (average textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1), availability of equipment for extracurricular activities, and the daily marking and closing of school registers.

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of the funds to feed the children and related activities. The DIC also implements district-level procurement that can produce savings from economies of scale if a sufficient number of SICs come together to support the bulk purchase. The district assembly appoint or second a dedicated District GSFP Liaison (DGL) to link the DIC to the assembly, the SICs, the GSFP regional co-ordinating officer, as well as the national secretariat. The DGL is the focal person for the GSFP and also serves as the secretary to the DIC. He/she is responsible for properly documenting and reporting on the committee's activities, as well as collating feedback from the SICs. In addition, the DIC will be formalized as a subcommittee of the district assembly to coordinate all school feeding programs at the district level.

As part of the data collection process, the DCMC members also visited and interviewed relevant local institutions, government departments, and agencies (i.e., the district departments of agriculture, health, and education) expected to have a role in the GSFP to gather the needed data. To ensure the quality of the information gathered, SEND-Ghana trained the DCMC members to analyze the information, which they then validated with the executive committees of the various district assemblies.<sup>12</sup> The next step was to organize meetings between the DCMCs and the district institutions (the DIC and the district departments for agriculture, health, and education) responsible for implementing the GSFP to discuss the findings. The information gathered from the various districts was then collated and analyzed by SEND-Ghana so that it could be used by the regional networks to engage with the authorities at that level.

### *Third phase: policy advocacy*

The third phase of the PM& E Framework is policy advocacy. This involved presenting the monitoring findings and conclusions of the participatory research to the officials mandated to oversee the successful implementation of the GSFP.

The DCMCs met with community and district authorities to share their findings and strategize on how to address the emerging concerns. At the community level, the data gathered from the beneficiary schools within the communities using the PM&E Framework were first presented to the SICs of the schools and the traditional authority and other leadership institutions at the community level. This is because the SIC is meant to be a manifestation of the ownership of the program by local communities, which are its ultimate beneficiaries.

At the district level, after the data gathering and analysis, each DCMC met with the district chief executive to discuss the findings. They targeted the district assemblies and the district chief executives because they make up the core implementing body of the GSFP; the chief executives were targeted specifically because they are the political heads at that level. The executives also chair the DICs and have considerable power in determining how resources are allocated. The district assemblies are responsible for:

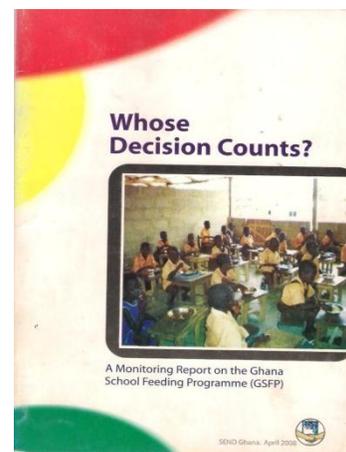
- setting up the DICs;
- ensuring that the SICs are properly set up;
- ensuring the provision of specified infrastructure;
- coordinating the activities of other district-level government departments and agencies; and
- mobilizing community support and inputs for the SICs and the schools.

The district assemblies receive the program funding for the district and are responsible for enforcing the Financial Management Act to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of the funds for designated purposes. The DCMC also works with and seeks to influence the directors of the

collaborating government departments and agencies, such as health, education, and agriculture, that are tasked with providing direct services in support of the GSFP. In addition to this work, the DCMCs create public awareness on the findings at the district level.

As part of the campaign, meetings were held at the regional level between the regional ministers, coordinating directors, and directors of the various collaborating ministries, departments, and agencies, on one side, and the regional PM&E network team on the other. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss the findings from the beneficiary schools in the regions, and to identify a way forward that would ensure that the program is implemented according to the dictates of the program document prepared by the government.

The various meetings and workshops at the district and regional levels provided a platform for those who implement the GSFP at these levels to state — without fear of reprisal — their frustrations and dissatisfaction with the lack of resources and information necessary for them to carry out their work. In this regard, the officials tacitly form an alliance with SEND-Ghana and its partners to influence the central government. This is because the district authorities, while they may be aware of some of the shortcomings of the program, cannot effect the necessary changes at their level without approval and resources from higher levels. Their comments also confirmed the findings, thereby strengthening the validity of the information SEND-Ghana was taking to the national level, making it difficult for national authorities to refute the findings. The fact that SEND-Ghana was eventually able to come out with a second report testifies to the cooperation and confidence it enjoyed at the district and regional levels.



At the national level, the members of the National PM&E Network hosted by SEND-Ghana sought to draw the central government’s attention to the evidence that had been gathered at the grassroots level by people on the ground and validated by district and regional government officials. In this regard, SEND-Ghana produced two national reports on the GSFP: “Whose Decision Counts?” and “Challenges of Institutional Collaboration.”<sup>13</sup> However, to ensure that the quality of the reports was of the highest standard — and would be able to withstand criticism from the government and the ruling party — independent academic experts and consultants reviewed and strengthened aspects of the analysis in the PM&E reports. SEND-Ghana and its partners sent draft copies of the national PM&E reports to the national authorities for their comments prior to the public release. The authorities, therefore, could not say that they were not aware of the reports when they became public.

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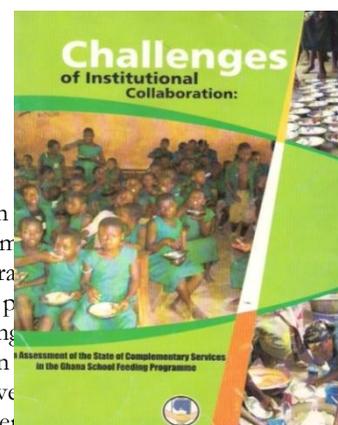
<sup>13</sup> “Whose Decision Counts? A Monitoring Report on the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP),” SEND-Ghana, April 2008; and “Challenges of Institutional Collaboration: An Assessment of the State of Complementary Services in the Ghana School Feeding Programme,” SEND-Ghana, May 2009.

SEND-Ghana invited government to its GSFP report launches in 2008 and 2009, respectively. There was also wide media coverage and engagement. (See SEND-Ghana and its partners' media strategy below.) The first report, "Whose Decision Counts?" was released jointly with the Netherland Development Organization's (SNV) inventory baseline report on the GSFP titled "One Meal Many Benefits."<sup>14</sup> One of the independent experts also acted as the principal speaker at the launch of the reports, presenting the findings and providing an independent view of the situational analysis SEND-Ghana and its partners had done using the information gathered in the districts through the monitoring and evaluation of the GSFP.

"Whose Decision Counts?" presented the findings from the assessment of the GSFP's implementation structures. The report noted the modest gains made by the program in relation to increases to school enrollment. However, it also reported that the capacity of the program to boost domestic food production was weak because the district departments of agriculture were not playing their roles. In many cases, the existing district governance structures, such as the DIC and SIC, set up by the district assemblies were not functioning at all (i.e., some of the beneficiary schools had no SIC in place), or were not functioning effectively. Not all of the established DICs and SICs functioned as expected because some district assemblies had not prepared the committee members adequately on their roles. Some were also not meeting regularly to deliberate on the issues affecting the program — about 10 percent of DICs had met only once since they were established.

Membership of some of the DICs was also not gender balanced, and the dissemination of information about the program to stakeholders and the communities was poor. Many stakeholders in the beneficiary communities were not aware of all the opportunities available for local farmers under the program.

The report also found that some of the stakeholders, such as the departments of agriculture, health, and education, were not conversant with their roles and responsibilities because neither the GSFP nor their parent ministries had given them sufficient



<sup>14</sup> The "One Meal, Many Benefits" report by SNV was based on the findings of an comprehensive overview of the GSFP at school level to be able to identify supplement more effective. A summary of the inventory results showed that the GSFP's coverage there was no transparency in the selection of schools or in the number of schools per Massive investments are needed to bring schools up to standards for school feeding always reach the schools. The GSFP has been successful in bringing more children pupil: teacher ratio and the number of pupils per classroom was considerably above selected regions. SICs were found to be generally weak, and community involvement production was hardly used in the school feeding. Links with local farmers to supply the schools are virtually nonexistent. The practice of procurement via contracted suppliers was not helping create strong links with local farmers, and SICs were not able to monitor suppliers. Head teachers and SICs were not involved in the contract with suppliers and were unaware of the content of the contracts. Support was required to improve the processes in the various levels of implementation of the program. A key area of improvement was in record keeping at all levels to keep track of developments in achieving the objectives of the program.

information. This communication breakdown resulted in key stakeholders being left out of the decision-making process and poor community engagement. Direction and guidance was not always adhered to, nor consistently applied, especially at the district levels by the implementing partners and institutions, creating several operational challenges. For example, decisions related to the selection of beneficiary schools, the purchase of foodstuffs, and the planning of actual feeding were not consistent with the guidelines of the GSFP.

Major stakeholders, such as the district directors of the food and agriculture and the health departments, were marginalized at the DIC level by the district authorities, whilst representatives of the parent-teacher associations, school management committees, and pupils were left out of the school-level decision-making processes regarding actual program implementation. These exclusions undermined the realization of the GSFP's objectives, as well as its sustainability. Accountability, transparency, and engagement were found to be weak. Inconsistent procurement procedures, including breaches in procurement guidance, alongside poor financial management hindered the program. In addition, the original funding design by government and its funding partners did not consider the need to boost resources as school enrollment increased, thereby undermining efforts to achieve one of the program's primary objectives.

A year after the release of the first report, SEND-Ghana wrote and released a second PM&E report, "Challenges of Institutional Collaboration: An Assessment of the State of Complementary Services in the GSFP." The report provided evidence on the state of essential complementary services — such as the availability of basic infrastructure and the provision of health, agriculture, and education sector services — set out by the GSFP policy document, as well as on the fulfillment of the roles and responsibilities given to collaborating government departments and agencies.

The report highlighted the low levels of awareness regarding the annual plans, objectives, and strategy of the GSFP of some local stakeholders, including district directors of health, education, and agriculture, and the beneficiary communities. The research also found that the complementary services (such as the regular de-worming of pupils, measurement of pupils' body mass index, and the provision of extension advice and credit to farmers in the GSFP) for the program were not delivered or coordinated effectively, mainly due to weak institutional collaboration. This lack of coordination occurred because some of the institutions, such as the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ghana Health Service at the local level, had limited knowledge of the GSFP policy. Their roles were not clearly explained to them, arrangements for coordination were weak, and it was not clear which institution at the local level had oversight responsibilities for the GSFP. Furthermore, the GSFP National Secretariat lacked autonomy from the government and suffered from political interference.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> GSFP National Secretariat (NS). The NS is a program implementation outfit under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development & Environment. It is staffed by senior experts and consultants under contract to act as a programme coordinating and management unit for all aspects of the GSFP. The NS is under the leadership of an executive director who is a member of the program steering committee.

Due to these factors, access to basic water and sanitation facilities in over 50 percent of the schools was inadequate, good health and hygiene practices were insufficient and not properly monitored, and access to educators and educational resources did not meet GES standards. The wider community was not effectively engaged in the program as intended. For example, the program did not support the local farming population. The district teams, on average, failed to procure locally sourced provisions and did not effectively implement the proposed farm credit and farm input schemes.

#### *Fourth phase: Follow up*

In the fourth and final phase of the PM&E Framework, follow ups are carried out with public duty bearers to track the resolutions agreed upon during policy dialogue at the district, regional, and national levels. At the district level, the DCMCs arrange quarterly meetings with duty bearers to explore ways to improve the implementation of the GSFP, secure their commitment to address the implementation challenges highlighted by the report, and follow up on these commitments until they are fulfilled. At the national level, SEND-Ghana, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), the GSFP National Secretariat, and the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), organized the National Policy Dialogue on the GSFP to find ways of addressing the challenges of institutional collaboration identified by SEND-Ghana's second PM&E report card on school feeding.<sup>16</sup> SEND-Ghana also facilitated the second multi-stakeholder meeting on the GSFP, which convened representatives from government, civil society, media, research institutions, and the private sector. As a result of this dialogue, the government promised to follow up on the provision of complementary services and ensure effective collaboration among implementing agencies.

### **SEND-Ghana and its partners' media strategy**

By creating awareness and soliciting public views on issues, media coverage of an event in Ghana serves as a major vehicle to put pressure on the appropriate bodies. Because the media in Ghana can be described as “sensationalist,” SEND-Ghana decided to use it strategically as appropriate during the campaign. After writing the report on the monitoring exercise, they gave a draft to the ministries, departments, agencies, and the GSFP National Secretariat so that those directly responsible for the program could address the assessment's key findings. As a follow-up measure, SEND-Ghana then requested meetings to discuss the issues raised in the report. In instances where the ministries, departments, and agencies agreed that the issues raised were genuine concerns but that they were already being addressed, SEND-Ghana updated its information to reflect that the government was taking measures to address the problem. SEND-Ghana regards validation of information as very important; therefore, to protect the organization's credibility, it does not rush to the media before rigorously checking its information.

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<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has the oversight responsibility for the GSFP.

*“So we needed a good referee to check whether the information that we put out there was not biased in favour of SEND. We strategically select who should review the draft, the criteria for selection is somebody who would find it easy to rubbish the paper because the person has credibility and reputation of their own so if anybody should say it is poorly researched their credibility would be at stake, not SEND’s. They are reviewers. The person would also study the paper. We do not have any knowledge of what the person is coming to say at the point of the book launch. Sometimes we go there and we are embarrassed before the press because they tell us, ‘you were not supposed to say this or that’. Immediately the pronouncement is made that ‘on the basis on A, B, or C this paper should be accepted or rejected,’ the media feel encouraged and take it up from there.”* –**Benjamin Addo of SEND-Ghana**

To continue to put pressure on the government to address the shortfalls covered in the report after the launch, SEND-Ghana provided the media with evidence-based stories that brought to light the challenges schools and districts faced in implementing the GSFP. By using a deliberate, multi-pronged, and sustained media and outreach strategy to shine a spotlight on the program’s problems, SEND-Ghana stimulated discussions on the GSFP among a cross-section of the public.

In addition to providing the media with leads on news stories, SEND-Ghana partnered with a media CSO, the Rural Media Network (RUMNET), to publish a free newsletter that both reported on the activities of the DCMCs and the regional and national PM&E committees and presented the findings of the GSFP reports. To encourage debate within the public sector, SEND-Ghana also developed policy briefs on the GSFP targeted at members of parliament. It further signed a MoU with the Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN) through which the community radio stations in the DCMC districts were called upon to raise awareness and encourage discussions about the GSFP, which they did through programming and broadcast of advocacy messages based on the findings in the DCMCs and the GSFP reports.

In addition to inviting the media to the launch events, SEND-Ghana and its partners intensively engaged the print, broadcast, and electronic media after each release by granting interviews (especially on national television and radio) on the findings and recommendations of the PM&E reports. The media coverage kept the issue in the public domain for a couple of weeks and also provided feedback to the public on the implementation of the GSFP. These efforts contributed to a groundswell of public support for calls at the national level for reform of the GSFP. Media reportage based on the SEND-Ghana campaign includes:

- William Beeko, “School Feeding Programme in Deep Crisis,” *The Ghanaian Journal*, 9 May 2009;
- Masahudu Ankiilu Kunateh, “Lack of Collaboration – Curse of the School Feeding Programme,” *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 8 May 2009;
- Masahudu Ankiilu Kunateh, “School Feeding Programme Boss fired for no reason – Ministry of Local Government,” GhanaDot.com, 22 September 2009; and
- Debrah Ameyaw, “Feeding Project invigorates Ghana Schools,” *Voices of Africa*, 28 May 2008; and Mahama Zakaria, “Ghana: Inadequate Water Hampers School Feeding Programme,” *Public Agenda*, 2 October 2009.

## ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE SEND-GHANA CAMPAIGN

*“The greatest impact was the awareness creation through documentation and media such as the Internet, radio, and television to better the situation of the GSFP. This made policy makers sit up. It also led to the creation of opportunities to local farmers to make strategic interventions to the GSFP by supplying caterers with food stuffs. The government felt they should have sensitized people on the GSFP. It is based on that the school feeding programme secretariat together with the MLG&RD started sensitizing various stakeholders on what the school feeding programme is all about and their role as individual, community, schools etc. in ensuring its success.”* –**Madam Adama Jehanfo (SNV staff member working on the GSFP) at Tamale in the Northern Region.**

The work SEND-Ghana did with its partners in monitoring the GSFP is widely acknowledged. Apart from statements, such as that of Madam Adama Jehanfo of SNV above, organizations like Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) and the Partnership for Child Development (PSD) describe SEND-Ghana’s efforts as being of “high importance” to GSFP program implementation compared to the “moderate” to “low importance” grade they gave to the impact of others in the nonprofit, nongovernmental sector.<sup>17</sup> However, it is still difficult to directly attribute the changes at the GSFP National Secretariat and in the implementation of the program to SEND-Ghana, especially between 2008 and 2011. Still, the statement below from the current National Coordinator of the GSFP, Hon. S. P. Adamu, attests to the success of the SEND-Ghana campaign and its contribution to the changes made to the GSFP.<sup>18</sup>

*“SEND was one of the CSOs interested in the SFP and were monitoring . . . exactly what was happening in the SFP and what could be done better. They wrote a lot of publications of SFP more or less like a critic of the programme, and they have contributed in straightening things by pointing out some of the shortfalls in the programme. . . . They were among the first group to talk about the way the schools were being selected and that has contributed very well to what we intend doing called the retargeting to make sure that schools that are in poverty endemic areas are targeted instead of the bourgeois schools. . . . No wonder they came together to form the CSO platform which led to the yearly meeting that was dubbed the October Fair; they were very instrumental in that.”* **GSFP Secretariat, National Coordinator, Hon. S. P. Adamu**

Some of those interviewed for this study believed that the SEND-Ghana campaign on the GSFP succeeded in creating broad public awareness of the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the program and built the capacity of the DCMC members in each district to advocate for better implementation, thus maximizing the benefits of the program. Others felt that SEND-Ghana failed to engage in thorough discussions with national government officials and others responsible for the program before the launch of the first report, which diluted the impact of their work and led to unnecessary antagonism.

<sup>17</sup> “Home Grown School Feeding, Technical Assistance Plan,” February 2011, pg 38.

<sup>18</sup> Notes from an interview with the National Coordinator of the Ghana School Feeding Programme Secretariat during the data collection period.

The evidence from the GELAP reports between 2007 and 2010, along with feedback from the interviews conducted for this case study, provide evidence for the impact of SEND-Ghana's work on the GSFP; however, some government representatives who were interviewed saw the situation differently. In their view, the initial stages of implementing new government programs inevitably face challenges. Thus changes to improve the GSFP were primarily the result of government actions to address these initial setbacks and ensure a gradual roll out of the program, rather than a response to SEND-Ghana's campaign. The quote below demonstrates this viewpoint:

*“Yes, there have been changes. I don’t want to attribute these changes to the report (the SEND-Ghana) but more to other developments. At the time of the SEND-Ghana report, most of the School Implementing Committee were not in place, some are still not in place but more have been formed and they are doing better now. Improvement started to surface after the first coordinator was removed. His removal resulted in certain changes being brought to the GSFP. For instance I understand that the districts are involved in appointing caterers and distribution of books, etc. Such developments and so many other things were factors.”* –**Mr. Bawa, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning**

Despite these denials, government's reception of the SEND reports goes some way to demonstrating that SEND was one of the lead actors in the process that led to national reforms of the GSFP. We describe this process next before turning our attention to local and regional impacts.

### **Government response to the campaign**

After the release of the first PM&E report, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, which administers the GSFP, asserted that the report should have been presented to the ministry before being made public to give them an opportunity to address the program's implementation challenges. However, SEND-Ghana noted that a draft copy of the report had been submitted to the ministry for comments long before its release. Despite these efforts, other stakeholders who were interviewed said that SEND-Ghana should have followed up with the ministry to discuss the report's findings before its release, which could have made the government more receptive to the findings and recommendations.

After expressing these frustrations, the government nonetheless acted on the reports. In response to the attention to the program's problems raised by the SEND and SNV reports, the secretariat leadership was replaced and the MLGRD established a five-member GSFP Review Committee to assess program operations, and SEND-Ghana submitted copies of the two PM&E report cards on the GSFP to the committee. The committee, chaired by Professor Joshua Alabi, was then tasked with reviewing the GSFP's management structure and procurement procedures.<sup>19</sup> The committee

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<sup>19</sup> Professor Joshua Alabi is an Associate Professor in International Marketing and currently the Rector of the Institute of Professional Studies (IPS). He was appointed to the position of Rector of the Institute in January 2009. He was a politician and a minister during the Rawlings regime.

was also to identify ways to extend the program to cover more schools, especially in deprived regions of Ghana.

On 30 July 2009 in Accra, SEND-Ghana, in collaboration with the MLGRD, the GSFP National Secretariat, and the IDEG, organized a National Policy Dialogue on the GSFP to increase active participation among local stakeholders. The Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Joseph Yieleh Chireh, committed to ensuring that local-level institutions like SICs and DICs are established and equipped to carry out their roles and responsibilities, allowing local communities and district assemblies to take ownership of the program.<sup>20</sup> The government also committed to prioritizing schools in deprived communities for future expansions of the GSFP and improving institutional collaboration between the various participating ministries, including the Ministries of Education, Health, Food and Agriculture, and Local Government and Rural Development. Many of these issues were raised in SEND's PM&E reports. The NEPAD Secretariat of the African Union (AU) also participated in the policy dialogue and openly acknowledged the value of the SEND-Ghana reports on the GSFP.<sup>21</sup>

Following up on the issues raised at the National Policy Dialogue, the GSFP held a Partners' Conference on 16-17 December 2009 at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Accra. The conference, held under the auspices of Minister Chireh, brought together relevant Ghanaian ministries with development partners, such as the World Food Program (WFP), the World Bank, the Dutch Embassy, and SNV, to support the government in developing strategies for an effective and sustainable GSFP. The government again promised to ensure effective collaboration among the program's implementing agencies and to follow up on the provision of essential complementary services, noted in the second PM&E report. A number of other notable changes were made regarding GSFP implementation, including:

- The government reviewed and simplified the GSFP implementation manual, the "District Operations Manual," to enable the participation of key stakeholders and ensure the provision of complementary services in the GSFP.
- The World Food Program started purchasing locally produced rice for distribution to schools in Ghana's three northern regions to benefit local farmers.<sup>22</sup>
- The Single Mothers Association, composed of women rice producers in Bolgatanga, was tasked by the GSFP National Secretariat to supply the GSFP with local rice following a multi-stakeholder meeting organized by the School Feeding Initiative Ghana Netherlands (SIGN).
- The GSFP National Secretariat with assistance from the Ministry of Health developed menus (based primarily on locally produced foods) for schools covered by the GSFP.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Report on the National Policy Dialogue on the GSFP at the Institute of Local Government Studies, Madina, Accra, Ghana.

<sup>21</sup> 2009 GELAP Annual Progress Report.

<sup>22</sup> According to a member of staff at the WFP, this was more of a coincidence than a result of SEND-Ghana's campaign.

<sup>23</sup> 2009 GELAP Annual Progress Report .

At the National Policy Dialogue on the GSFP, civil society organizations (SEND-Ghana included) were tasked with working closely with other stakeholders, including the media and Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs), to raise public awareness about the GSFP as well as show the results and benefits of the program.<sup>24</sup> The MLGRD was responsible for overseeing the work done by CSOs.

### **Impacts at local and regional levels**

In addition to the contribution of SEND-Ghana and its partners to the national discourse and subsequent changes to the GSFP, their most significant contribution was at the local level.

*“SEND needs to be commended. If it hadn’t been for them . . . we saw problems but we didn’t know how to tackle them. We didn’t even have the audacity to question authority on certain issues, but SEND educated us and made us aware of our rights. They are the driving force behind this operation. They provided us [with the] questionnaire and anything needed to carry out monitoring of the GSFP. With their help we were able to interact with the officials; the DCEs and other high officials on how to go about certain issues. They built our capacity. In one of the schools I had the audacity to go and even taste the food and query the authorities; I wouldn’t have done that normally. Because of the SEND programme the stakeholders are now on their toes, [we] made them to be aware of some things they were not aware of before.”* –**Focus group discussions with members of the DCMC at Dodowa district in the Greater Accra Region.**

To begin implementing the PM&E Framework, SEND-Ghana translated the GSFP policy documents into accessible language so that the average person could understand them. These documents were used by the DCMC members to inform their constituents and other relevant stakeholders about the GSFP. Once people at the grassroots level were well informed about the program, they could raise concerns, and were more comfortable doing so, about its implementation in their communities.

As described above, SEND-Ghana’s campaign also created platforms for citizens to engage with and demand accountability from public officials through joint government and civil society meetings on the GSFP, at both the district and regional levels.

At the district and community levels, some DICs and SICs that were formerly inactive began to meet regularly and have improved their oversight of the GSFP. Examples include the DICs in Gushegu, Bolga Municipal, Bawku West, Nanumba North, and Nadowli, and their renewed focus on the program has had a positive influence on the performance of the SICs in those districts.<sup>25</sup> Abiba Saaka of the District Girls Education Unit in Savelugu Nanton District attributes such

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<sup>24</sup>The Pillars of Ownership of the GSFP are Sensitization, Involvement in Decision Making (participation), Accountability and Shown Results and Benefits (input – output).

<sup>25</sup> 2009 GELAP Annual Progress Report

changes to the SEND-Ghana PM&E reports. For instance, she noted that despite a number of meetings with district authorities, some schools could not access the district's only water tanker. However, since the release of SEND-Ghana's report and the widespread attention it garnered, authorities have become more responsive and have provided access to the water tanker.

In addition to empowering and facilitating the participation of citizens, SEND's work led to other positive changes at the district level. Key stakeholders, including SEND-Ghana and the MLGRD, identified weak linkages between the GSFP and the local agrarian economy, contrary to one of the main goals of the program.<sup>26</sup> In response to this information and related advocacy interventions from SEND-Ghana and its local partners, some of the district assemblies in the Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana committed to purchasing 80 percent of foodstuffs for the GSFP from farmers in the beneficiary communities, which not only helped boost the local economy but also streamlined GSFP service delivery.<sup>27</sup>

Instead of district assemblies depending on the National Secretariat for almost all of the resources needed for program implementation, some have begun providing for the GSFP in their annual budgets. For example, nine district assemblies in the Upper East Region allocated funds in their respective budgets for their GSFP supervisory and monitoring and evaluation duties.<sup>28</sup>

At the regional level, the logistical capacity for monitoring and evaluating the GSFP improved. For example, the regional coordinator of the GSFP for the Northern Region had neither an office nor transport to perform his monitoring duties. In response to SEND-Ghana's lobbying, the Northern Regional Coordinating Council provided him with office space; and the Catholic Relief Services, which was involved in school nutrition before the GSFP, provided four vehicles. These enhancements strengthened the monitoring capabilities of the GSFP regional coordinators in the three northern regions.<sup>29</sup>

## **EXPLAINING THE IMPACT**

### **Internal factors that played a role**

The PM&E Framework is a tested methodology that SEND-Ghana developed and used for the HIPC Watch Initiative, and it has been refined for other pro-poor programs. It incorporates into one framework citizen mobilization, capacity building, education about pro-poor social interventions (in this case the GSFP), participatory research, advocacy, and follow up on commitments. It also effectively links the local and national levels because evidence gathered from program beneficiaries

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<sup>26</sup> Report on a National Policy Dialogue on the GSFP organised by the MLGRD in collaboration with the GSFP National Secretariat, SEND-Ghana 11 and IDEG on 30 July 2009.

<sup>27</sup> 2009 GELAP Annual Progress Report

<sup>28</sup> An account from the Upper East Regional Economic Planning Officer at the 2009 Ghana PM&E network meeting.

<sup>29</sup> 2009 GELAP Annual Progress Report.

and the duty bearers at the local level is first analyzed and validated before being used for advocacy at that level. This work provides a platform for local authorities to voice their frustrations and align themselves with SEND-Ghana and its partners to influence the central government. The evidence from all the districts is then further analyzed and subjected to independent scrutiny by an academic or consultant before it is used for advocacy at the national level.

Because SEND-Ghana was listed in the GSFP program document as a strategic partner, and because it had established an MoU with the government, the organization and its DCMC network had official backing for its work. This arrangement made it possible to get information from collaborating ministries, departments, and the implementing structures of the GSFP.

SEND-Ghana also had a multi-pronged media strategy that it deployed before and after the release of the PM&E reports, at both the local and national levels. This strategy included publishing a regular newsletter, forming a partnership with the Ghana Community Radio Network, and conducting a national release of the PM&E reports followed by a week of intensive media engagement. By using the findings to engage the media over a longer period of time, SEND-Ghana kept the issues in the public domain and used the opportunity to educate the public on the GSFP.

Finally, by putting its reports up to review by experienced researchers and academics to review the reports that it put together, SEND-Ghana established the credibility of its research, thus making it difficult to discredit or dismiss offhand.

The PM&E national report titled “Whose Decision Counts?” was jointly released to the media with SNV’s national inventory report, titled “One Meal Many Benefits.”<sup>30</sup> By joining forces, both SEND-Ghana and SNV used each other’s strengths and credentials — SEND-Ghana as a credible national CSO with an established record in tracking governments’ pro-poor policies, and SNV as an organization from the Netherlands — a major contributor to the GSFP and a member of the SIGN-Netherlands platform, collaborator on the GSFP Social Accountability Project. Joining forces gave each organization more credibility and allowed them to address together any backlash from government officials on sensitive issues, such as the mismanagement of resources meant to feed school children. Findings in the reports from SNV and SEND-Ghana also added a local dimension to the earlier GSFP audit findings by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which had been commissioned by the Dutch Embassy but focused mainly on the national level and on financial malfeasance.

Finally, the GSFP campaign would not have been possible without funding. Whenever possible, SEND-Ghana’s funding strategy is to get a number of funding partners to contribute toward the general work of the organization or to a particular program, allowing SEND-Ghana to retain its independence and take responsibility for the decisions it makes. This is evident in SEND-Ghana’s Grassroots Economic Literacy and Advocacy Programme, which is supported by Christian Aid of the United Kingdom, CORDAID of the Netherlands, IBIS–West Africa, Ghana Research and

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<sup>30</sup> The “One Meal, Many Benefits” national inventory report by SNV was an existing document.

Advocacy Project (G-RAP), SNV of the Netherlands, Diakonia of Sweden, Catholic Relief Services, and SIGN–Netherlands.

### **External factors that played a role**

The quote below from an interview at the Dutch Embassy shows that the changes made to the GSFP by government cannot be attributed solely to the campaign of SEND-Ghana and its partners.

*“Changes to the GSFP were a culmination of happenings and events. Things in the original proposal were being ignored; mismanagement and confusion arising on who was to provide contract services, etc.; we were getting information from school caterers and other beneficiaries that were being disadvantaged. It was becoming a highly political programme and issues were not based on facts but on partisan politics. There was also a strong suspicion of mismanagement. For instance just before the onset of the new school year all caterers were sacked and new ones hired without following proper procedures and this could be linked to the change in government.”* –**Alexander van Ommen, Dutch Embassy**

The following factors preceded the SEND-Ghana campaign by creating awareness about the GSFP and the malpractice taking place at the national level, and contributed to the change in the GSFP operations.

Prior to the release of the SEND-Ghana PM&E report on the GSFP, the Dutch government, the major sponsor of the program, commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to undertake a financial audit of the GSFP. The Dutch government did this as part of its routine audit but also because it suspected gaps between program documents and program implementation at the district and national levels. The audit report publicized that after two years of GSFP implementation there was “widespread corruption,” massive financial malfeasance, managerial impropriety, and bad procurement practices within the program secretariat. Among other things the report cites the award of contracts to nonexistent companies, the disappearance of funds allocated to program management, and the deliberate purchase of unwholesome but cheaper ingredients. The SEND-Ghana report corroborated the audit results and further asserted that 58 percent of involved districts “did not use laid-down procurement procedures” when awarding contracts for the program. Subsequently, the Dutch government suspended its support of the GSFP in 2007.

Prior to suspending funding, the Dutch government identified a number of issues that the government of Ghana to address regarding program implementation. The issues included a need for a Management Information System (a comprehensive computer system for implementing the program); the implementation of audit recommendations; the communication of audit findings to the implementation committees (SICs and DICs); the development of annual plans, operation manuals, and accounting process manuals; and the convening of regular meetings. The Dutch government would resume its support for the GSFP if these changes were made.

The SEND-Ghana report added to the evidence the Dutch government had gathered to pressure the government to ensure that the right procedures were followed in implementing the GSFP in order to ensure that the program served the intended beneficiaries.

*“It was a very good thing that the SEND-Ghana reports came out. We used the report to find out how we were managing the situation. They were more of an objective and independent third party body. We even have their third report archived. The reports were very good in quality.”* — **Interview with Alexander van Ommen, Dutch Embassy**

At the beginning of 2009, the Ghanaian government started implementing all the audit recommendations, thus putting the program back on track. The Dutch government verified, endorsed, and validated the effort on the part of government and restored its support in 2009.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers audit report on the GSFP generated intense public discussion and adverse reactions from various quarters. In April 2008 the Committee for Joint Action (CJA), a leading political pressure group, organized a press conference during which they used information from the report to accuse the GSFP authorities of serious breaches in procurement procedures, misadministration of funds, inappropriate awarding of contracts, and forgery of signatures among other crimes.<sup>31</sup> Four members of the CJA petitioned the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to investigate the GSFP. The CJA also launched a campaign to remove the executive chairman of the GSFP from office; he was removed about four weeks later.<sup>32</sup>

In response to the CJA press statement, the Auditor-General of Ghana described the PricewaterhouseCoopers audit as a violation of the supreme law of Ghana because “auditing of public accounts without authorization from the Auditor-General [is] a violation of the Constitution, the Financial Administration Act, and the Audit Service Act.” In May 2008 the Ghana Audit Service began its own nationwide audit of the program for FY 2006 and 2007, focusing on funding, cash management, procurement, and store management. The Auditor-General’s report on the GSFP uncovered what appeared to be massive financial malpractice at the secretariat. The report implicated certain individuals at the secretariat other than the executive chairman (who had already been fired), including the senior accountant.

The antecedents to the SEND-Ghana campaign — the PricewaterhouseCoopers financial audit report, the CJA’s campaign for the removal of the executive chairman of the secretariat, and the Auditor-General’s report — generated widespread coverage in the media, thus creating some public agitation. However, these audits and resultant advocacy focused more on financial management of the GSFP, while SEND-Ghana’s campaign focused on good governance in terms of participation of local stakeholders, collaboration amongst government institutions responsible for implementing the

<sup>31</sup> The Committee for Joint Action is a pressure group made up, mostly, of politicians from the Nkrumahist and National Democratic Congress ideology.

<sup>32</sup> Daily Guide, 28 April 2008

program, accountability in terms of decision making, and equity in terms of targeting poor communities. Though the earlier audit findings surely were complementary and helped open the door for further scrutiny of the program, these differences support the conclusion that the impact of SEND-Ghana's research and advocacy was additional.

The other key civil society factor in the campaign was the civil society platform, SIGN-Ghana. This coalition consisted of SNV, SEND-Ghana, Association of Church Development Projects (ACDEP), Catholic Relief Services, Action Aid International Ghana, IBIS-Ghana, Rural Action Alliance Programme (RAAP), Single Mothers Association (SMA), and the Northern Network for Education (NNED). Each of these organizations had different areas of interest. SNV, for instance, was interested in building the capacity of the GSFP National Secretariat to better monitor the program; SEND-Ghana was interested in the PM&E. It should be noted that not all members of this group directly participated in the SEND-Ghana campaign; their link was through SIGN-Netherlands. SIGN-Ghana became an important forum where SEND-Ghana could easily match social services that these CSOs were willing to offer to the meet schools' immediate needs.

SIGN-Netherlands was set up to support the GSFP. It is a multi-stakeholder platform made up of representatives from civil society, the business sector, the scientific community, and (semi) governmental bodies in the Netherlands. SIGN-Netherlands aims to inform the Dutch public about the GSFP and to make a concrete contribution — from sponsorship to the exchange of knowledge and cooperation in Ghana — through the SIGN-Ghana platform. SIGN-Netherlands facilitates the cooperation between organizations that work in Ghana and third parties in Netherlands that support or want to support the GSFP. In this way, it works directly toward the realization of the first and second Millennium Development Goals (halving poverty and hunger by 2015 and achieving universal primary education).

## **CONCLUSION**

The overall objective of SEND-Ghana and its partners was to monitor the implementation of the GSFP at the local level and bring the findings to the attention of those implementing the project at the national level. SEND-Ghana sought to contribute to effective program implementation in order to maximize the program's impact on its intended beneficiaries — school children and local farmers. Though the government of Ghana's changes to the GSFP cannot all be credited to the campaign of SEND-Ghana and its DCMC partners, there is ample evidence to show that it did have significant impact with regard to improvements in governance, accountability, and equity, particularly at the local level. In this regard, SEND-Ghana and its partners played an important role in the process of keeping the GSFP on course by complementing findings on the GSFP at the national level from the audits by PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Auditor-General with information on program performance from the grassroots level.

What this case study shows is that CSOs like SEND-Ghana have an important role in independently monitoring the implementation of government policies and programs, especially at the grassroots level. It also illustrates the importance and effectiveness of using monitoring, evaluation, and advocacy through a bottom-up approach to exert pressure on policy and budget cycles. Such an approach requires a collaborative effort with other CSOs and individuals as well as a sustained citizen-led campaign.

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<b>Government Officials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hon. Maxwell Kofi Jumah, former Deputy Minister of Local Government</li> <li>• Mr. Lambert Abusah, Ministry of Food and Agriculture</li> <li>• Mr.S. K. Adamu, Ghana School Feeding Programme Secretariat</li> <li>• Mr. Bawah, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning</li> <li>• Mrs. Kate Quarshie, Ghana Health Service, Nutrition Department</li> </ul>
<b>Journalists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. William Beeko, <i>The Ghanaian Chronicle</i></li> <li>• Mr. Debrah Ameyaw, <i>Voice of Africa</i></li> </ul>
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