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IMPACT ASSESSMENT BRIEF

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF THE GHANA STRATEGY SUPPORT PROGRAM (2005–2008)

The Ghana Strategy Support Program (GSSP) aims to build the capacity of agricultural stakeholders in Ghana to develop and implement agricultural and rural development policy reforms. This summary outlines findings from an IFPRI-commissioned assessment of the GSSP's performance from 2005 to 2008, which examined such factors as awareness of and comprehension of the program and its goals among intended beneficiaries, policy changes and other outcomes resulting from the program, and lessons learned.

BACKGROUND

With core funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), IFPRI launched the Ghana Strategy Support Program in partnership with the Ghanaian government and several development partners in 2005. The program aims to build the capacity of researchers, administrators, policymakers, and members of civil society in developing and implementing agricultural and rural development policy reforms. To support the emphasis placed on agriculture in Ghana's current Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy, the program also supports the development and implementation of a system to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving Ghana's growth and poverty reduction targets as well as the poverty-related Millennium Development Goals.

The creation of GSSP grew out of the Initiative to End Hunger in Africa, which funds the program within USAID. The Initiative, launched in October 2002 in response to issues identified at the World Food Summits in 1996 and 2002, aims to rapidly and sustainably increase agricultural growth and rural incomes in Sub-Saharan Africa.

IMPLEMENTATION

When GSSP started in 2005, implementation was compromised because the first program coordinator did not stay long and the project's financial foundation was uncertain. After a new program coordinator was hired in mid-2006, the program became more organized, structured, and effective. The confidence of stakehold-

ers increased after they had seen the quality work produced by GSSP and the leadership of the new program coordinator. In August 2006, in order to sustain its investment and accelerate project implementation, USAID decided to fully fund the project. These additional funds enabled the pace of the project to pick up. Prior analytical work, which had not been undertaken in the first year, was activated.

RESULTS

Recognizing that agriculture is critical toward Ghana achieving its vision of becoming a middle-income country by 2015, the government formulated a policy in 2002 on food and agricultural development, the Food and Agricultural Sector Development Policy (FASDEP). Two years later, an assessment of the policy concluded that the poverty interventions in the FASDEP did not adequately address the needs of small farmers, so a revision of the policy began in 2004. In developing the new FASDEP-II, GSSP staff contributed to the formulation of the policy by providing evidence-based policy analysis and lessons learned from past experiences.

To further build awareness of policymakers on the role of agriculture in poverty reduction, GSSP hosted a forum entitled "The Role of Agriculture in Achieving Middle-Income Status," held in Accra in November 2007. This strategy forum addressed some of the key issues facing policymakers and other stakeholders in Ghana, especially how to manage rapid growth to achieve middle-income status by 2015 and ensure that this growth is inclusive while also developing small-holder agriculture. This forum was a watershed event in that it helped the over 60 attendees, which included government officials, donors, and academics, better understand and appreciate the key role agriculture can play in improving the Ghanaian economy. They also came to appreciate the added value of GSSP as a convener and provider of knowledge.

Staff from GSSP are now assisting the Ghanaian government in addressing the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP), which was endorsed in June 2005 by African Heads of State

and Government under the auspices of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and helping the government formulate policies related to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. To support evidence-based policymaking, GSSP staff developed policymaking models that were rolled out through a series of technical and training workshops to policymakers. One of the models has been used for growth and poverty reduction analysis to prepare CAADP roundtable discussions. Analytical work in the program has helped policymakers see gaps in their statistical data, raised their awareness of limitations brought about from poor quality information, and improved their confidence in using, adapting, or creating models. After the models were introduced, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development established a small, in-country modeling group composed of staff from various government ministries, universities, and private and public research institutions.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Government and donor stakeholders have emphasized the unique, unprecedented value-added dimension that GSSP has brought to Ghana. The program has been able to create a niche in research and has been recognized as providing knowledge-based services that donors, the Government of Ghana, and other stakeholders can identify with. The program has helped provide an avenue for improving analytical capacity among numerous stakeholders, namely the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Ghana Statistical Service, National Development Commission, the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, and University of Cape Coast.

Since the government's vision for Ghana has shifted from stabilizing the economy to growing the

economy within a defined period of time, the creation of GSSP has come at a time when Ghanaian policymakers want and need the policy tools and support the program offers. The program has been able to provide responses and solutions to stakeholders' critical questions supported by quality, in-country, participatory analysis.

The program has faced several challenges in its implementation, and important lessons have been learned:

- (1) In implementing a policy-related program such as GSSP, it is critical to understand that it may take some time before the government and other donors will have confidence in what the program can do. In order for such program to become more demand-driven, raising awareness of the program's benefits and expected outcomes is needed early in the program's tenure.
- (2) The lack of a full-time coordinator to liaise with stakeholders in the first year of the program played a major role in the inability of GSSP to gain stronger buy-in from both donors and Ghanaian stakeholders. A prerequisite for any successful program is a constant, committed, in-country coordinator or leader with good program implementation skills.
- (3) At the beginning of the program's implementation, there was some confusion as to whether the goal of GSSP was capacity building, policymaking, or both. Additionally, the program lacked defined indicators. The goals of any policy-related program must be clearly articulated, agreed to, and understood as early as possible by all concerned. IFPRI's new performance criteria that define the expected outputs and impact of IFPRI's policy-related programs and projects are helpful in accurately defining what GSSP is meant to achieve.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: This brief is based on the impact assessment report done by Fenton Sands. If you wish to receive a full copy of the report, please contact IFPRI's Coordinator for Partnerships and Impact Assessment, Teunis van Rheenen (t.vanrheenen@cgiar.org).

IFPRI is one of 15 agricultural research centers that receive principal funding from governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations, most of which are members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). IFPRI's research, capacity strengthening, and communications work is made possible by its financial contributors and partners. IFPRI gratefully acknowledges the generous unrestricted funding from Australia, Canada, China, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and World Bank.

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