

Social Assistance and Rural Poverty Reduction in the Upper West Region, Ghana

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Fuseini is a Ph.D. candidate in Development Studies. His research interest covers poverty, social protection, and social policy.

Resumen

The study assessed the effects of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) social assistance programme on rural poverty reduction. A mixed methods research approach was used while the after only design constituted the study design. The sample size was 302 respondents selected using stratified random sampling. Data was collected using interview schedule, observation guide and interview guide. Analysis of data involved the application of descriptive statistics, chi-square test, hypothesis test for two independent proportions, Mann-Whitney U test and thematic analysis. The study found that beneficiaries largely used the LEAP cash grant in consumption of basic needs while few invested in farm and non-farm enterprises. In addition, LEAP led to the reduction in poverty as acceptable food consumption, income levels, savings, access to healthcare and school attendance improved; yet, there were insufficient and weak exit strategies. The major challenges confronting LEAP were: travelling to collect cash grant, inadequate means of transport, limited meeting of scheme implementers and inadequate complementary services. However, the study concludes that LEAP contributes to poverty reduction despite its challenges. It is therefore, recommended that the Department of Social Welfare should base the targeting of LEAP beneficiaries on the Ghana National Household Registry data to reduce the inclusion errors that lead to wastage of state resources and collaborate with partners like the National Health Insurance Authority in order to improve on the provision of complementary services. Furthermore, beneficiaries of LEAP should invest part of their grant in farm activities to earn extra income to enable them to meet their basic needs and develop self-sufficiency.