CDD-GHANA **Blog Post**

Election 2024: Reimagining the fight against multidimensional poverty

By John Osae-Kwapong

The Ghana Statistical Services (GSS) reported last week on multidimensional poverty in Ghana which showed that overall, a little over seven million (7,317,555) or twenty-four percent (24%) Ghanaians are multidimensionally poor. Measuring poverty this way gives a comprehensive picture of the extent of deprivation faced by Ghanaians. Multidimensional poverty looks at three key areas – education, health, and standard of living, across twelve indicators.

To further understand the current state of multidimensional poverty in Ghana and its implications for the 2024 elections in terms of policy proposals from the various political campaigns, I took the opportunity to explore the data further. The Ghana Statistical Service's StatsBank, which is publicly accessible online, has data on multidimensional poverty (published as recently as November 22, 2023).

The Current State of Multidimensional Poverty

The GSS data provides insights into a) the incidence of poverty (who is poor), and b) the intensity of poverty (how poor are the poor). The intensity of poverty especially is important because as per GSS it measures "the average share of deprivation that poor people experience". Essentially it gives you a good idea of how many of the things that contribute to poverty is carried by the poorest among us.

Table 1 – Incidence and intensity of poverty

	Incidence of poverty (%)	Intensity of poverty (%)
Ghana	**24.3**	**43.8**
Western	25.7	43.4
Central	22.5	43.6
Greater Accra	11.7	43.3
Volta	27.3	44.4
Eastern	21.7	42.6

Ashanti	18.3	42.8
Western North	27.0	41.9
Ahafo	24.7	42.5
Bono	17.1	42.1
Bono East	24.2	41.7
Oti	40.8	41.7
Northern	38.4	44.3
Savannah	49.5	45.8
North East	48.1	45.8
Upper East	43.0	47.5

Three key observations from the table above – *a) the regional variation in the incidence of poverty with some regions experiencing high levels whiles others experience low levels; b) the higher incidences in the northern part of Ghana; and c) the similarity in the intensity across the regions.*

Table 2 – Incidence and intensity of poverty by demographic group

	Incidence of poverty (%)	Intensity of poverty (%)
Head of household - Male	23.0	43.3
Head of household - Female	27.0	44.7
Head of household – Agriculture	34.3	42.6
Head of household - Industry	8.9	41.8
Head of household - Service	6.2	41.9
Urban	14.6	43.4
Rural	36.7	44.0
No Education	40.9	44.7
Basic education	20.0	43.0
Secondary education	13.3	42.5
Post secondary education	10.7	41.9
Tertiary education	7.1	41.2

Three key observations from the table above – *a) the variation in the incidence of poverty across demographic groups especially with high levels where the head of the household is in the agriculture sector, those in rural Ghana or those with no education; b) the similarity in the intensity across demographic groups; and c) the drop in the incidence of poverty as the level of educational attainment improves.*

Implications for the 2024 elections

As the 2024 elections heats up and candidates propose various policy ideas for voters to consider, I am yet to hear specific policies aimed at fighting poverty. Perhaps the yet to be released manifestos will address poverty issues. Whatever policy proposals emerge from the various political campaigns, here are some important considerations.

First, the policy teams of the various campaigns must ask whether in the design of policies to fight poverty the focus should be on a) areas with both high incidence and high intensity or b) on reducing the intensity of poverty regardless of its incidence. Whatever the choice, policy makers need to remember that it has implications for the allocation of resources to fight poverty.

Second, the incidence of poverty where the head of the household works in the agriculture sector is quite alarming. We often hear about the potential of the agriculture sector. If the agriculture sector holds promise, then the policy teams of the various campaigns must figure out how to create the right incentives to attract individuals to engage in agriculture, at the same time reducing the incidence of poverty in the sector.

Third, the variation in the incidence of poverty noticed across the various levels of educational attainment suggests a link between the two. The policy teams of the various campaigns must wrestle with the idea of whether there should be more intentionality in tying education policies and programs to the fight against poverty.

Table 3 – Evaluating the fight against poverty

Source of data	Year	% who say "fairly well/very well"
Afrobarometer Survey	2008	52%
	2012	34%
	2014	21%
	2017	53%
	2019	39%
	2022	15%
CDD-Ghana Pre-election surveys	July 2016	33%
	October 2016	37%
	October 2020	28%

When asked to rate the fight against poverty (improving the living standards of the poor) only four out of ten (36%) Ghanaians on average, as per data from six rounds of the Afrobarometer survey (2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2022), say "fairly well or very well." Pre-election surveys conducted by CDD-Ghana in 2016 and 2020 reveal that Ghanaians rate the fight against poverty poorly.

For a country that implemented Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I) 2003–2005 and Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) 2006–2009, perhaps it is time to reimagine our policy efforts to fight poverty.

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