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Full Length Research Paper

Global poverty reduction policy and implementation strategies at local level, integrated planning options and challenges in a developing country, Ghana

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Abstract

The poverty profile in Ghana has raised a lot of concern among the populace of the country. The Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS-4) in 2005/2006, revealed that about 28.5% of the populace are poor. The United Nations, in 2002, came out with a Millennium Declaration which aimed at addressing global poverty. It contained eight development goals that has come to be known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This research focused on the probability of attaining those goals in Ghana by 2015, after implementing various poverty reduction programmes. The research was an investigative one based on data throughout Ghana. As a methodology the country was stratified into three zones namely, the Coastal belt, Middle belt and Northern Ghana; ninety three, eighty five and forty seven citizens respectively were randomly selected and interviewed. Secondary data on addressing poverty in Ghana up to 2006 were also analyzed. The analysis showed that majority of the interviewees indicated that the country would not be able to achieve the MDGs targets by 2015. The public servants responsible for implementing the programme said the state's supportive environment is not adequate. The secondary data from government source confirmed this public doubt. The government identified the two goals that could be achieved and indicated that it would be impossible to achieve the remaining six goals by 2015. The cause of the situation is the operations of some challenges identified in the analysis. These challenges among others make the strategies designed in Ghana for achieving the MDGs targets by 2015 unsuitable. Effective strategies should strengthen the micro and macro economy to help the populace to create wealth to enhance their livelihood.

Keywords: Poverty, Strategy, Wealth, Indebtedness, Operationalising.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty among majority of the populace in developing countries has become a global concern (UNDG, 2004). Coincidentally, many poor countries are at the same time heavily indebted to Developed Countries. Having failed to address sufficiently the twin problems of poverty and indebtedness through the strategies of Economic

Table 1. Millennium Development Goals and Objectives (2002).

Goal	Objectives and Targets
1. To address poverty and hunger	• To halve the proportion of people in extreme poverty around the globe. • To halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger throughout the world.
2. To promote Universal primary education	• To raise Gross Primary School (GPS) participation rate to 100 per cent by the year 2015.
3. To promote gender equality and empower women	• To eliminate gender disparity in primary and junior secondary education by 2005 and at all levels by 2015.
4. To reduce under-five Mortality	• To reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds by 2015.
5. To reduce maternal mortality	• To reduce maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015.
6. To address HIV/AIDS and malaria problems	• To halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS around the globe by 2015 • To halt and reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases in the world.
7. To ensure environmental sustainability	• To integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse loss of environmental resources. • To halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015.
8. To promote global partnership for development	• Deal comprehensively with debt and make debt sustainable in the long term.

Source: UN Data Base 2002

Recovery and Structural Adjustment Programmes, the Government of Ghana under the advice of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund introduced the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative with the view to reducing poverty as many developing countries(World Bank, 2001) This initiative has as a condition, the development of a comprehensive programme of action for addressing poverty. With MDGs declaration Ghana has put together a framework known as Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I) and Growth Poverty Reduction Programme (GPRS II). The purpose of the research was to assess the probability of Ghana attaining the MDGs development targets by the year 2015 from domestic assessors' point of view. It went further to investigate some of the challenges that slow down the implementation of the programmes for reducing poverty within the context of MDGs. Poverty as a development concept is a multi faceted phenomenon which defies a single definition. It affects various dimensions of life such as life expectancy, health status, nutritional status, educational level, entitlement to assets, vulnerability, exposure to risk, assess to socio economic utilities and political participation just to mention a few. Consequent upon its negative impact on human welfare and development, poverty reduction has become a national and global agenda.

Poverty Reduction: A Global Concern

The UN introduced Millennium Development Goals as a Declaration in 2002 with global development goals and targets for reducing poverty, which have been classified under eight Development agenda. The goals and targets are presented in Table 1.

Although these global goals and targets are laudable they point to the fact that the UN's aim is to address poverty mainly through the social angle apart from the eighth goal. Perhaps this is due to the fact that some development analysts hold the view that a country's human capital is the basis of development. However, it been argued that (Hirschman,1975) development of Social Overhead Capital (SOC) without the investment attracting Directly Productive Activity (DPA) poses a danger for enhancing livelihood in an economy. This makes investment in SOC a necessary but not sufficient condition for a sustainable poverty reduction and development. According to the Hirschman's theory, development is a balancing act between SOC and DPA, therefore an effective development policy has to ensure that, there exists within any policy framework these two parts of the development coin. Notwithstanding the fact that, that generates huge national budgets which many LDCs. find difficult to finance.

Table 2. Spatial and Sectoral Poverty Distribution in Ghana.

Space	Spatial		Uraban		Rural	
Sector of economy	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Self Employed**	**Employees**	**Self Employed**	**Employees**
Farming		X		X		X
Manufacturing		X	X		X	
Construction		X		X		X
Trading		X	X			X
Transport		X	X		X	
General Services		X	X		X	

Source: Adapted from Ravallion and Bidani(1994) Legend. ‘X’ Relatively High Poverty

The purpose of the research was to assess the probability of Ghana achieving the MDGs targets by 2015 within the context of her general Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs).

Objectives

The specific objectives of the paper are:

i. To discuss the dimensions of the MDGs and poverty reduction in Ghana
ii. To review the main challenges confronting the country in her efforts at poverty reduction
iii. To examine the perceptions of the Government and citizenry on the national strategy for achieving the MDGs targets by 2015.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis was based on both secondary and primary data. Both historical and current national secondary data were collected and analyzed. Primary data were collected from purposive sample surveys through the country. The country was stratified into three areas namely, the Coastal, Middle and Northern zones; comprising Greater Accra, Central, Western and Volta regions: Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, and Eastern regions: Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions respectively. From the Coastal, Middle and Northern zones, ninety three, eighty five and forty seven public officials were randomly selected from District Assemblies and interviewed through questionnaire respectively. Secondary data on addressing poverty in Ghana up to 2006 were also analyzed. The indicators for reduced poverty against each goal and people’s personal impressions on them were measured on a defined ordinal Likert scale. The impressions from a stratified sample of 245 were generalized. The position of government was also outlined. The major hindrances to implementing MDGs were discussed and the way forward for effective poverty reduction was also highlighted.

Poverty and poverty reduction in Ghana

Poverty in Ghana could be differentiated spatially, economically and socially including gender. Spatially, in 1998/99 five out of the ten regions had 40% or more of the people living in poverty; these were Eastern, Central, Upper West and East and Northern, regions with profiles of 44%, 48%, 84%, 88% and 69% respectively. Since the introduction of MDGs programes it has been recorded in 2005/2006 that, only the three Northern regions still have poverty profiles of 52%, 88% and 70% in Northern, Upper West and Upper East respectively. This is against the national average of 29% 2005/2006. (ISSER, 2006).

Ghana Statistical Service data base in 2000 indicated that about 56% of Ghanaians live in rural areas. And about 80 per cent of the people living in rural areas are among the poor in Ghana. These poor people are basically peasant farmers who are vulnerable in terms of access to land which is the main input for wealth creation in rural areas. There is low accessibility to food all year round, health facilities, good nutrition, political power-traditional wise and education. Poverty is severe among food crop farmers who produce highly perishable crops with high price elasticity. This explains the low income levels among rural non export crop farmers in Ghana.

In terms of gender, rural women are more vulnerable and poorer than men as the former have low access to basic inputs for wealth creation such as land, credit, better education, good health, political power especially in the traditional context. The research came across a piece of information that women in some parts of the Northern regions of Ghana, for example, have no right to own land, which is the main input for agriculture.

Spatial and Sectoral Matrix of Poverty in Africa

Adapting the Ravallion and Bidani(1994) framework, one could conclude that spatially, rural populace in Ghana are poorer than people in urban areas as indicated in Table 2.

This is by virtue of the fact that majority of the rural dwellers are peasant and/or settler farmers who have small portions of land. The self employed in urban areas are also worse off than employees (Table 2) Majority of the self employed operate as micro, small and medium business entrepreneurs (MSME) in the areas of general services, transport services, trading and manufacturing, The employees in farming and construction sub sectors in urban areas are also poor. According to GLSS 4,(2000) about 59% of food crop farmers were poor. Although all rural populace are spatially poor, the relatively poorer households are those employed as farm labourers, construction workers, and traders. Self employed MSME households in manufacturing, transport services and general services are also poor. These MSMEs have low capital base, low output, low income, low savings and low investment which place them in a low capital cycle of growth.

Reducing Poverty in Ghana

In the year 2003, the Government of Ghana identified itself with the MDGs and designed a specific Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (GPRS I) with the view to ensuring a sustainable and equitable growth, accelerated poverty reduction and the protection of the vulnerable and excluded in a decentralized democratic environment by 2005.

The goals and targets of the GPRS I, as a local response to the MDGs are;

- To maintain a stable macro economic conditions for promoting effective economic planning for the public and private sectors.
- To increase the social facilities in the country and access to those facilities by majority of the people.
- To enhance levels of employment, production and marketing through appropriate technology.
- To promote private sector participation in provision of social and economic goods.
- To increase citizen participation in governance at all levels of public decision-making.
- To promote the interest of the girl-child and women in society (Source: GPRS 2003-2005).

Targets of the GPRS (2003-2005) Programme

For the medium term (2003-2005), the targets that were set by the government included:

- Reduction of poverty level from 39% to 32%
- Reduction of extreme poverty from 27% to 20%
- Increase Gross Primary School (GPS) enrolment from about 77.6% to 82% and that of the girl child from 71% to 80%.
- Reduction of infant mortality from 110 to 95 for every 1000 infants.
- Reduction of maternal mortality in child birth from 200 to 160 out of every 100,000.
- Improvement of access to safe water from 70% to 78% in urban areas and from 40% to 54% in rural areas.
- Reduction of new infections of HIV/AIDS from 3.9% to 2.2 % in 15-49 ages (Source: GPRS 1).

Undoubtedly, these are important targets for poverty reduction however to achieve them in three years was an uphill task for Ghana. Some of the current National achievements include increase in Gross Primary School (GPS) enrolment from 77.6% to 86 % (2004).The GPS girl-child enrolment from 71% to 83%. These national and girl- child enrolments have exceeded their targets by 4 and 3 percentage points respectively. Urban population access to safe water is about 55 per cent. Rural access to safe drinking water is 50 per cent. HIV/AID from 3.9% to 2.2% between 15-49 age group. Infant mortality rate is 64 per1000. (Source: GPRS 1, Annual Progress Report, 2003) These attainments are not too impressive as a result of the implementation challenges discussed below. The point is that unless these challenges are addressed seriously their combined effects would continue to slow down the rate of poverty reduction in Ghana. With respect to Ghana and the MDGs targets some recent statistics from the Population Development Bureau (2007) indicate of:

- Infant Mortality rate 59 per 1000
- Life expectancy at birth of 59years(58 and 59years for male and females respectively)
- Urban Population is 44per cent
- Proportion of children underage 5 underweight is 18%
- Proportion of natural habitat remaining is 66%
- Population with ages 15-49 with HIV/AIDS 2.3 % (2005/2006)

These selected poverty indicators from the MDG (Table 1) framework and the GPRS 1(2003-2005) indicate that the country is performing well but it has a along way to go if it is to achieve the MDGs targets by 2015. This makes a critical examination of the main implementation bottlenecks of the plan important.

Operational challenges of GPRS

The main challenging bottlenecks in implementing the programmes are economic, fiscal, institutional, public policy and civil society participation. An enormous responsibility faces a nation such as Ghana that is aiming at reducing poverty where the macroeconomic indicators show that the country itself is poor. That goal becomes more difficult to achieve if it has to be attained through wealth creation equity and redistribution of income. According to the entitlement theories, poverty implies a break down of a person's entitlement set over some basic needs such as food, clothing, housing and good health. Therefore for a nation to be in a position to restore the broken down sets for about 29 per cent of the population

Table 3. Sectoral Growth Rates of the Economy of Ghana.

Sub Sector	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Agriculture	4.4	6.1	7.0	6.5	5.7
Industry	4.7	5.1	5.1	5.6	7.3
Service	4.7	4.7	4.7	5.4	6.5

(Source: ISSER, 2007)

Table 4. Trends in Interest Rate 2001, 2003 and 2006 (Percentage).

Bank	2001	2003*	2006
Central Bank			
Bank Rate/Prime Rate	27.00	21.50	12.50
Commercial Bank			
Demand Deposit	13.50	9.50	7.13
Savings Deposit	14.50	9.75	4.75
Lending Rates	43.75	32.75	24.25

Source: Data Base, Bank of Ghana, *MDGs introduced in Gnana

who are poor, requires a transformation of the economy which is the cradle of wealth creation.

The Economic Challenge

The average macro economic growth of 5.2 % of Ghana is seen as a positive way of addressing poverty in the country.(Source Budget Statement 2005). However, the ability of a nation to create more wealth depends on the way the macro economy responds to growth impulses injected into it. But, the Ghanaian economy is not responding too fast to several economic policies as portrayed in Table 3.

The growth rates of the three main sectors indicated slowness and inconsistency, especially in the agricultural sector, between 2002-2006, hence the country's high dependence on foreign resources for financing her development programs.

External debt service as ratio to Budget Revenue is about 15% (ISSER, 2004). The average economic growth rate of 5.2% per cent vis-à-vis population growth rate of 2.6 per cent per annum is a big challenge in creating adequate wealth for achieving the goals of the MDGs GPRS. 'More importantly, sustained progress towards the MDGs will depend to a large extent on boosting economic growth rates to at least 8% per annum, according to the World Bank.'(ISSER, April 2007). Also the massive in social investment such as Schools and Health facilities, security, governance, and ICT at the expense of Directly Productive Activities (DPA) including agriculture and industry is a disadvantage for economic growth. Again, Ghana's present economy leans towards foreign transfers and distribution of foreign imports as seen in the retail and wholesale trade whereas very little value is added to the country's exports. For example, about 60% raw cocoa beans from Ghana is exported. This means low export income.

According to the Circular Flow Theory one important area for wealth creation is the strength of the financial sector of the country. As a sector which intermediates among business units, households and government, its importance for wealth creation lies in the fact that, it provides financial assets(credit) to households as they save part of their fiscal assets with that sector. It is therefore a bad practice for households to expect loans from the financial sector without saving there. In fact it is the savings that are borrowed by business units for investment. The bottlenecks in the financial sector include low savings, high lending rate and high default rate. If every economy requires massive investment for growth then it needs high local saving mobilization to reduce its dependence on external resources. The fact is that financial resource mobilization in Ghana is low because the financial institutions do not have adequate attractive products. Again, the low interest rate in recent years as captured in Table 4 makes investment in the financial market less attractive. For example, the saving rate is 4.75% as compared to the lending rates of 24.25% (Table 4). Therefore the public prefers to invest in physical assets, trading, animal and houses. The low savings ratio has necessitated the promotion of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a major source of investible capital in the Ghanaian economy. That is not good enough, for one thing the government cannot exercise control over the flow of foreign capital into Ghana and for another the flow depends on several variables including productivity of capital in Ghana and absence of domestic conflict and other factors that are exogenous to government control. Furthermore, many foreign investors are not interested in pro-poor projects as returns on capital in such areas are low. These reasons among others have made it impossible for Ghana to attract adequate Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) that could accelerate growth and create wealth for poverty reduction.

Fiscal Resource Challenge

The fiscal resources are required to finance any development programme such as the MDGs and the accompanying GPRS (2003-2005). That is the reason for arguing that the fact that total tax and non-tax receipts in Ghana is only 67.7 of total budget (Source: The Budget Estimate, 2005). It implies that about 32.2 percent of the total budget is financed by inflows from external sources including grants from development partners and loans. This structure of the national budget shows that the financial position of the nation is weak. Notwithstanding this weak financial situation the 2006 budget estimated that Ghana requires about 9646.72 billion cedis representing 35% of total Government expenditure to implement poverty reduction programmmes and projects…' (Source: The Budget Estimate, 2005). This indicates that financing the GPRS constitutes a major challenge in reducing poverty in Ghana. Since there is no guarantee that the required money will be available in the volume and at the time it is needed as the GPRS programme is time–bound, inadequate and delayed-inflows will disorganize the entire implementation plan. Hence, the anticipation that the targets would not be achieved

Institutional Challenge

Some of the major institutional handicap in Ghana that retards poverty reduction include the system of land ownership, land management and administration as well as the structure of governance. Simply put, the present system of land ownership especially in the Akan areas of Ghana is not pro-poor. This is confirmed by the high 'token fees' for drink, one has to pay to the traditional land owners before access to land is granted for whatever purpose. Normally, the land is granted on lease- basis. However, in many cases it could take as long as one year before one could get a certificate of registration for a piece of land, as a lease holder. This is confirmed by the numerous land litigation cases pending before the law courts of Ghana. What is more, in some parts of northern Ghana females are not allowed to own land as an asset. This situation slows down poverty reduction in rural areas where the economy is agriculture-based and land is the main input. The problems outlined above prevent the rural poor from creating adequate wealth from agriculture. Again the settler farmers do not invest much in the land even if they acquire them finally. Therefore for more wealth to be created especially in rural areas, where about 70 per cent of the population reside (GLSS-4, 2000) and farm, a more pragmatic approach to land management is a necessity.

In terms of governance, the country adopted decentralization policy in 1988(PNDCL 207 and Act, 462, 1993), as a public administration instrument meant to devolve authority, responsibility and resources to lower level of government to promote participatory decision-making. That was in line with government strategy of poverty reduction and development as the GPRS (2003-2005) aimed at promoting growth and development in an environment of freedom and bring governance to the doorstep of the rural poor. In spite of the fact that this policy was introduced as far as 1988, the public institutional structure depicts that several central controls are in practice. For example, the major sectors of the economy still operate a top-down management system where many policies and major decisions come from the central government through Departments and Agencies to the localities. That gives the rural poor limited opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them. Again, the Area councils within the District Assembly system where many poor people could participate in public policy formulation are not functioning effectively. In effect, Ghana cannot achieve any meaningful reduction in poverty as the structures that are supposed to promote policy participation among the poor are ineffective.

Poverty Reduction and Public Debt

Public debts are created through borrowing and this is closely associated with the weak financial position of a nation. These debts are created by government and repaid by same. The 2005 national statistics indicated that the ratio of the country's total debt service to GDP ratio 6.5% and total debt service to annual Domestic revenue was 26.9 % (ISSER, P. 50). 'The Net Present Value of the external debt to exports ratio is expected to decline from over 200 per cent at the end of 2003 to approximately 113 percent about 2015' (Source: Budget Statement 2005). The government is obliged to make statutory provision in the budget for debt servicing which constitutes a big drain on a nation's fragile economy. That outflow occurred in spite of the gains from the HIPC initiative which produced some inflows. This outflow implies that the net flow of resources for poverty reduction was affected negatively. This slows down the national poverty reduction process thus dragging poverty reduction over a long period of time. The argument is that it does not auger well for a nation to finance poverty reduction programmes through massive borrowing.

GPRS and Policy Shortfalls

Some policy shortfalls might be associated with the content, structure and implementation framework of the MDG policy. Although there are many legal instruments covering many aspects of poverty reduction including decentralization, micro financing, social investment and so on, several of them have not been translated into meaningful policy guidelines for effective operations. Consequently, the interpretations of the policies mean different things to different people. Even in cases where these policies have been translated into clear guidelines their implementation as pro poor instrument at the grassroots leaves much to be desired. A case in point is the operationalisation of the Regional and District Planning and Coordinating Units (RPCU and DPCU) for planning, budgeting and coordination of sub national and local development programmes. In spite of the fact that decentralization started in 1988, it was not until 2003 that the National Development Planning Commission defined the composition and mode of operation of the RPCUs and DPCUs (Source: Guidelines for Operationalisation of District and Regional Planning Coordinating Units, 2004). The point is the rate of breaking down policies to meet the poor at the point of effective consumption leaves much to desire.

The challenges that have been highlighted, have brought to the fore some of the main issues that have to be considered critically if poverty reduction programmes for achieving MDGs in Ghana are to succeed. The major challenge is how the macro economy responses to growth or investment inputs. In situation where growth is retarded in the economy local resources become scarce for development. Consequently the state is compelled to fall on foreign resources which are not easy to come by to finance her budget and poverty reduction programmes as well. In effect, the success of the GPRSPs is directly influenced by the country's macroeconomic performance. Again, it is not safe in the long run to borrow heavily to finance the GPRSPs as maturity for repayment constitutes an outflow of resources which affect the fiscal resource capacity in the economy negatively. The land management issue has been identified as a big challenge. If the GPRS programme is meant to create wealth to enhance the livelihood of the rural poor, who are mainly farmers, then the programme would slow down if access to land poses challenge to the poor. Again, it took the NDPC about sixteen years to provide operational guidelines on the decentralization structure in Ghana.. These challenges among others, have contributed in no small way in slowing down achievement of the MDGs.

Government and Public Officials Perceptions on Achieving MDGs Targets

The 2005 Budget Statement states the Governments' impressions on the probability of achieving the MDGs targets in Ghana. This conclusion by Government was based on data from the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS-4) and other macro economic data of Ghana from Government Statistical Services (GSS). At the end of GPRS I implementation in 2005, the report on poverty in Ghana in the context of the MDGs was far from positive. The government acknowledged the fact that only three goals (1,2and7) out of the eight MDGs are likely to be achieved by the year 2015.

This is summarized in the Table 5 below.

Publics Officials' Perceptions on Achievement of MDGs Targets by 2015

The analysis below came out of a focus group discussions from selected public officials who are directly involved in implementing the MDGs/GPRS programmes at local level. The responses were measured on the probability scale of achieving the goals along an ordinal scale of 'high', 'average' and 'low'. Again, the extent of government effectiveness at supporting the national system to achieve the goals was also assessed. It was measured on a Likert scale as 'strong', 'average', and 'weak', the results are presented in Table 6.

The respondents considered the probability of achieving the many of the targets in the long run as Average. They hold the view that the targets would not be achieved by the end of the plan period. They also hold the view that, the State is making only a 'fair' effort at creating a supportive environment for the achievement of the MDGs targets.

This situation could be the result of the combined effect of the challenges previously discussed.

MAIN FINDINGS

The analyses indicate that both the government and public officials hold the view that it is impossible to achieve the targets of the MDGs by 2015. That stance was based on both public data and personal experience from the grass root where the officials work. The public officials were also of the view that the government has not created a strong supportive environment that would help the country to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

The factors that have contributed to the slow process of poverty reduction include the current growth posture of the macro economy. In the opinion of the World Bank, to achieve the MDGs targets by 2015 the economic growth rate of the country should be about 8% per annum as compared to the current 5.2% average growth. Again, MDGs programmes are financed from public budget, which supported with 32% external resources implying that there is a budgetary gap that has to be filled if the MDGs programmes are to be implemented successfully.

Table 5. Government Perceptions on MDG Targets Achievement.

MDGs	Objective and Targets	Government Assessment on Target Achievement by 2015
1. To address poverty and hunger	To halve the proportion of people in extreme poverty around the globe. To halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger throughout the world.	It is likely that Ghana will halve poverty by 2015
2. To promote Universal primary education(UPG)	To raise Gross Primary School (GPS) participation rate to 100 per cent by the year 2015.	This is likely to be realized
3. To promote gender equality and empower women	To eliminate gender disparity in primary and junior secondary education by 2005 and at all levels by 2015.	Enrolment rates for both sexes are projected to be 88.5 % by 2015.
4. To reduce under-five Mortality	To reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds by 2015.	Given current trends in the under 5 mortality, it is unlike the goal will be realized.
5. To reduce maternal mortality	To reduce maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015.	Given present trends, more effort has to be put in if that target is to be met.
6. To address HIV/AIDS and malaria problems	To halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS around the globe by 2015 To halt and reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases in the world.	Since HIV prevalence has doubled from 1.5% in 1999 to 3.5% in 2004, efforts are required to reduce the rate of new in affections. It us unlikely Malaria could be halted as the leading cause of mortality and morbidity of under five children and pregnant women.
7. To ensure environmental sustainability	To integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse loss of environmental resources. To halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015.	There is the potential to achieve the target
8. To promote global partnership for development	Deal comprehensively with debt and make debt sustainable in the long term.	The trends suggest cautious optimism

Source: UN Data Base 2002 and Government Budget Statement, 2005

Table 6. Public Officials' Perceptions on Achievement of MDGs Targets.

MDGs Targets	Probability of achieving MGDs			Effectiveness of State Support *		
	High	Average	Low	Strong	Average	Weak
1. To halve the proportion of people in extreme poverty around the globe.	X			X		
2. To halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger throughout the world.			X		X	
3. To raise Gross Primary School (GPS) participation rate to 100 per cent by the year 2015.		X			X	

Table 6. Continue.

4. To eliminate gender disparity in primary and junior secondary education by 2015		No clear-cut position			X	
5. To achieve equal access for boys and girls to senior secondary school by 2015.		X			X	
6. To reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds by 2015.	X			X		
7. To reduce maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015			X		X	
8. To halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS around the globe by 2015		X			X	
9. To halt and reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases in the world.	-				X	
10. To integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse loss of environmental resources.		X				X
11. To halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015.		X		X		
12. To deal comprehensively with debt and make debt sustainable in the long term**.**		X		X		

Source: Public Officials Survey, 2004, * the competence of the bureaucracy and quality of public utility delivery.

This creates a debt burden whose net present value to export ratio will be 113% by 2015. The country therefore cannot rely comfortably on external debt to finance the MDGs programmes. Again many poor rural settler farmers do not invest heavily in the land they work on for the reason of insecurity from land owners. This challenge is a serious obstacle to those rural farmers in terms of wealth creation. Also Government is slow in making some pro poor policies operational. A case in point is the introduction of Decentralization in 1993 and the development of some of its operational guidelines in 2003.

Recommendations and the Way Forward

It would be necessary as part of the process for regions to organize short term regional and district stakeholders' forum on poverty reduction for a thorough discussion of the problem. Stakeholders' technical committees including technocrats, politicians (National and Local) traditional rulers, bankers, trade associations, foreign and local investors, academics, donors and peasants should meet to identify the poor and main causes of poverty in their environment. The poor should be targeted for tailor made programmes that will help them to be more productive. Presently, many Poverty Reduction Programmes are benefiting both poor and rich. The reason behind this suggestion is that it is difficult to identify and locate the poor in many communities.

It is important to stress the fact that MDGs/GPRS cannot succeed without an effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework that can capture, on regular basis, the changes that occur in some poverty related variables as the programmes are being implemented. Therefore this should be a component of the Secretariat for poverty reduction. This is a way to know whether the poor is coming out of poverty or not. Otherwise, much resources will be spent in the name of the poor but the benefit to them would be negligible. This means the MDGs/GPRS programmes cannot succeed without an effective Monitoring and Evaluation component.

To achieve the targets of MDGs, the linkages among the three main sectors of the economy namely agriculture, industry and survive, have to be strengthened. Both the informal and the formal sectors in the three sectors must be linked for higher productivity and income on the part of the informal sub-sector where many poor people operate. In this respect all FDIs should be made to show in their investment plan the linkage between their projects and the rest of the economy as well as the value they would add to their products before sales. Also, the procedures for land acquisition especially for economic activities have to be simplified and made less expensive.

CONCLUSION

In sum the analysis has brought to the fore the complex nature of reducing poverty in Ghana through the MDGs. There are economic, financial, institutional and social bottlenecks in Ghana that constitute forces that are retarding the efforts at reducing poverty, and for that matter they must be broken. Unfortunately many people are looking to government for the solution of poverty. Perhaps they have not well understood the nature of poverty and how to address it. Therefore the citizenry have to be well informed by District Assemblies, in order to work on the challenges retarding the achievements of the MDGs targets collectively and individually.

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