

A STUDY OF THE GHANA SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME:  
A TOOL FOR POVERTY REDUCTION OR FOR WIDENING SOCIAL INEQUALITY?

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## **PART ONE**

### **1. Introduction, background and context of the GSFP**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

1.1.1. In recent times, the Ghana school feeding programme (GSFP) has attracted a lot of attention from both politicians, members of civil society organizations and heads of institutions such as the Auditor General. On June 4 2008, parliament also demonstrated its interest in the programme by inviting Hon Kwadwo Adjei-Darko, the Minister of Local Governance, Rural Development and Environment (MoLGRDR), to appear before the august house to explain issues relating to the selection and distributions of GSFP schools between and among the regions, particularly, the perceived inequality in the selection of schools to the disadvantage of the three northern regions, the poorest and most deprived areas in the country, relative to the southern sectors. In addition, the Hon Parliamentarians wanted to know the basis for selection of schools.

1.1.2. The Hon. Minister was reported by the Daily Graphic of Thursday, June 5 2008, to have explained that “the basis for the selection of schools was through application and that a number of NGOs such as CRS, WVI and WFP, rendered the same services in the northern sector”.

In the informed opinion of this researcher, the explanation the Hon. Minister presented to parliament were uninformed and have the potential to mislead stakeholders in GSFP and the general public about the true picture of the GSFP. Yet, as the GSFP implementation and management arrangement is built on multi-actors approach, stakeholders need informed information package that provides opportunity for their participation in the programme, to help sustain and maximize the intended impact of the programme. It is in the spirit of this understanding that this study was done.

1.1.3. The purpose of the study is not fault finding but to present issues in such way that it will enable managers of the programme to pause and reflect on their actions and inactions and learn from the implementation mistakes to improve on their performance, in the programme delivery.

#### **1.2. Background of the GSFP:**

The school feeding programme, an initiative of the UN Hunger task force installed, by Kofi Anan, and the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Pillar 3 of NEPAD, seeks to enhance food security, reduce hunger and improve enrolment and retention among school children. Being one of the ten countries in Sub-Saharan Africa selected to implement the programme under **CAADP**, the Government of Ghana decided to implement the school feeding programme in public primary schools in the country, starting with a pilot phase in September, 2005. The Ghana school feeding programme (GSFP) is part of Ghana's efforts to attain the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1,2,3,4 on eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality. The relationship between the GSFP and the MDGs is explicit in the concept, goal and objectives of the programme.

### 1.3. The context of the GSFP:

1.3.1. “The **basic concept** of the programme is 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”. The long term **goal** of the school feeding programme is *to contribute to poverty reduction and food security in Ghana*. The immediate **objectives** are to *reduce hunger and malnutrition; increase school enrolment, attendance and retention; and to boost domestic food production* (page 1, GSPF Annual Operating Plan, Government of Ghana, July 2007).

1.3.2. In line with these objectives, **the implementation strategies and principles** of the programme, in spreading the benefits of the programme, is to concentrate school selections in the most deprived and poorest areas of country, where the incidence of poverty is high and access to, and enrolment in, primary education, retention and completion is very low, as indicated above. In the programme document, the **criteria** for school selection from communities, at districts level, are enumerated on page 19 thus:

1. Poverty status based on GLSS data and NDPC poverty mapping.
2. Low school enrolment and/or attendance rate and gender parity index
3. High school drop-out rate
4. Low literacy levels
5. Presence or planned provision/expansion of health and nutrition interventions
6. Poor access to portable water
7. High communal spirits and/or community management capability
8. Willingness of the community to put up basic infrastructure (e.g. kitchen, store room, latrine) and to contribute in cash or kind
9. Commitment of the District Assembly towards the programme and the level of readiness and interest towards sustaining the programme
10. Communities/schools not already covered by other feeding programmes

*Note: In referring to the CRS, WVI and WFP feeding programme in the North, the Minister might have misconstrued the tenth criterion listed above for the norm for distributing opportunities for GSFP schools selection among the regions and between the districts. It must be emphasized that the criteria listed above are to guide school selection within districts and not for distribution of opportunity for school selection between the regions.*

1.3.3. The direct primary beneficiaries of the programme, besides the pre school and primary school children in public schools, are rural farmers and women. Under the GSFP, each pupil is provided with one hot nutritionally balanced meal per each school attendance, at a feeding cost of GH¢0.30p (now increased to GH¢0.40p) per child per day. The GSFP is to provide ready markets for locally grown foodstuff, by expending 80% feeding expenditure on local foodstuff to feed the children. In addition, women from the communities where the GSFP schools are located are expected to be employed as cooks, matrons, caterers and suppliers; the sum total of this is expected to result into wealth creation at rural household and community level.

1.3.4. The overall intended impact of the programme, by the end of the Program in 2010, is to increase employment at community level by 8%, resulting in corresponding 8% real increase in incomes at national and community levels. Target for reducing hunger and malnutrition 1.04 children are to be fed daily. It is also expected that in GSFP schools, enrolment increased above the national baseline of 83.3%, attendance improved by 20% and, drop outs rates reduced, also by 20%. 80% of food stuffs used in feeding children sourced locally. Hence, in design and concept, the GSFP is a tool for poverty reduction.

***In summary, the GSFP, in concept, design and policy focus, is a strong tool for poverty reduction and attaining the MDGs 1,2,3 and 4 in Ghana, if well implemented and managed, in accordance with the policy direction and implementation strategies spelt out in the programme document. The programme is consistent with various development strategies of the country. These include the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003 – 5), the Education Sector Plan (2003 – 2015), Imagine Ghana Free from Malnutrition (a concept paper produced by the Ministry of Health), Food and Agriculture Sector***

*Development Policy (Ministry of Food and Agriculture), Ghana National Social Protection Strategy – GNSPS – (Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment), and decentralization policies.*

*Therefore, the relevant question here is, to what degree has the practical implementation and management of the programme conform to, or departs from, these policy direction and implementation strategies of the programme document? To what extent are school children, women and farmers, from deprived regions and districts, for whom the programme is originally intended, benefiting from it?*

## **2. Implementation and management of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP)**

2.1. The government of Ghana started implementing the school feeding program, **based on locally produced food**, on a pilot basis in September 2005, applying an equal distribution formula of one school per each of the ten regions. *This was extended to two schools per district in June 2006* and, after counterpart funding from the Dutch government, further expanded the programme to 598 schools with 234,800 children at the end of 2006. By the end of **December 2007**, there were **975 schools** participating in the programme and, 408, 989 pupils fed (Annual Operational Manual, GSFP, 2007).

It is the distribution of these 975 schools between the regions and among the 138 districts that is of concern to stakeholders in GSFP, donors, funding agencies and civil society groups. Honourable members of Parliament also expressed similar concern when the Ministry of Local Governance and Rural Development and Environment (MLGRDE), Hon. Mr. Adjei-Darko, appeared before the august house. The key areas of concern for the MPs are the perceived inequality in the selection, and distribution, of schools and opportunities under the GSFP, *to the detriment of schools in poorer districts in the northern sector*, and the basis for such selection of schools.

2.2. Contrary to the Local Government Minister's statement that school selection is based on application, from the onset of the programme, the basis for allocating opportunities for participation in schools feeding programme between and among the regions has always been supply driven, based on simple equal distribution norm, while the criteria for school selection is level of poverty and deprivation of the area. This can be seen from 2.1 above. The GSFP National Secretariat decides on the number of schools that should be selected in a district and informs the districts accordingly, to select do the internal selection, based on a poverty and deprivation criteria, listed under 1.2.3 above.

2.3. Towards up-scaling the programme in the 2005/6 and 2006/7 academic year, after piloting ten schools, the GSFP National Secretariat (NS) decided on a planned distribution formula (PDF) of five (5) schools per each of the 138 districts in Ghana. This was consistent with simple equal distribution norm it has being applying since the pilot stage. The Secretariat wrote to all district assemblies, asking them to select and prepare five schools each, based on the ten points' **criteria** for school selection listed above, for participation in the feeding programme. The letter the writer sighted was dated 18 October 2005. This demand was reinforced by another letter in the 2006/7 academic year.

2.4. The substantive question is, to what extent has the GSFP National Secretariat (NS) adhered to the simple equal distribution norm in the selection of the 975 schools, or the planned distribution formula (PDF) of five (5) schools per each district? Is the concern for equality and fairness in the selection of the 975 schools among and between the regions, as at 31 December 2007, justified?

For one to confidently answer this question, one needs to go beyond the absolute numbers of selected schools per region, to examine relative figures. This should be based on informed distribution plan and criteria. For instance, if the initial planned distribution formula (PDF) of five schools per district were to be adhered to, the total number of school selection due the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions would have being 105 and 95 respectively, as against 40 schools each for Upper East and Upper regions. Glancing at these absolute figures, without relating them to the number of districts in each region, one will be tempted to conclude that there is the two Upper regions have been unfairly treated. Unfair treatment can only be deduced if the total number of schools selected in each of the two Upper regions is less than forty schools, relative to Ashanti and Brong

Ahafo regions. Therefore, the researcher applies the principles of equal distribution norm, as per letter sent to the districts, in analyzing the selection and distribution of the 975 GSFP schools among the 138 districts.

2.5. Dividing the 975 schools by the 138 districts as at 31 December 2007, the national average per district is 7.06. This implied that, where the equal distribution norm is applied in schools selection, the minimum number of GSFP schools selected per district should be seven (7). By extension, the minimum school selection per region should also be seven (7) schools multiplied by the total number of districts in the region. To what extent, then, has the selection of the 975 schools between districts and regions closer or far away from the minimum national average of 7 schools per district?

### **3. Presentation and Analysis of Actual selection of schools among and between the Regions and districts- 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007**

#### *3.1. Presentation of data*

3.1.1. The standard for measuring the degree of equality and fairness, or otherwise, of the selection and distribution of schools between regions will be the minimum national average of 7 schools per district (NAD). The regional average per district (RAD) will also be used in analyzing equality of the distribution within the regions. The threshold for minimum fairness in the selection of school is the national average of 7 schools per district (NAD). A region with regional average far below the NAD of 7 schools is said to be unfairly treated, compared to regions with regional average above the NAD.

In the same vein, districts with less than 7 selected schools are deemed to suffer fair treatment, relative to districts that have seven or more selected school. References will also be made to the initial planned distribution formula (PDF) of 5 schools per district, to emphasize the degree of inequality or otherwise of the selection. In comparison with districts that have seven and selected schools, districts have less than 5 schools selected, suffer extreme unfairness, in school selection, from the National Secretariat.

3.1.2. The context within which the analysis will be made is the level of poverty and deprivation of the region or district, as per the basic concept and the implementation principles and strategy of the programme, which focuses on concentrating school selection in poorer, more deprived and low primary school enrolment areas, so as to improve on enrolments, attendance and retention rates (refer to page 1, Government of Ghana, GSFP Annual Operating Plan 2007).

3.1.3. The reference point for analysis is the table below. The regions are arranged and grouped according to percentile school selection. The region with the highest percentage of selected school comes first; follow by the next, etc. The first three regions with the highest percentage of schools are grouped together for analysis, followed by the next three. The last four regions are analyzed together, because two of them have the same number of districts and number of selected schools.

**Table 1: selection & distribution of schools among the regions as at December 2007**

Total no. of schools under GSFP as 31/12/2007= 975		Total no. of districts as at 31 Dec. 2007= 138			National average per district (NAD), base equal distribution norm, as 31/12/2007 (975/138)= 7.07	
Region	Districts	Selected schools per region			Due selection per minimum NAD (7*no of districts)	Gap between what is due & actual selection
		Total GSFP schools <sup>2</sup>	%	Average per district		
1.Ashanti	21	267	27.40	12.71	147	+120
2. G. Accra	6	206	21.12	34.33	42	+164
3.Brong Ahafo	19	170	17.43	8.95	133	+37
4. Eastern	17	79	8.10	4.65	119	-40
5. Western	13	69	7.07	5.30	91	-22
6. Central	13	65	6.66	5.00	91	-26
7. Northern	18	44	4.51	2.44	126	-82
8. Volta	15	34	3.48	2.27	105	-71
9. Upper East	8	18	1.84	2.25	56	-36
10.Upper West	8	18	1.84	2.25	56	-36
<b>Untraceable<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>????</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>-----</b>		
<b>total</b>		<b>975</b>	<b>100</b>			

Note: i. School selection norm from pilot spanning 2005/6- equal distribution among regions and districts.

ii. Planned distribution formula (PDF) for 2005/6 and 2006/7 academic year: 5 schools per district

### 3.2. Analysis of data

From table 1, out of the total number of 975 GSFP schools, three regions, namely, the Ashanti, Greater Accra and Brong Ahafo regions, with a total number of **46 districts**, account for as much as 643 GSFP selected schools(66%), leaving 332 schools (34%) for the other seven regions, with **92 districts**.

3.2.1 Out of the 643 schools for the first three regions, **the Ashanti Region**, which is ranked eighth in poverty status<sup>4</sup>, with primary school enrolment rate of 78.9% and access rate of 92.7%<sup>5</sup> and with 21 districts (and ten sub-meros), has 267 (27.4%) selected schools. This is against the expected selection of 141 schools, going by the national average of 7 schools per district (NAD). The excess in school selection for the region is 126. Based on the 267, the regional average of GSFP schools per district (RAD) is 12.71, as against the national average of 7.065 and the initial planned distribution formula (PDF) of 5 schools per district.

3.2.2. The **Greater Accra Region**, with 6 districts (and 13 sub metros), is ranked tenth in poverty rating, with primary school enrolment rate of 80.9% and access rate of 90.2%. The region accounts for 206 (21.12%) GSFP schools as against the expected allocation of 42 schools, going by the NAD. The region gained by an excess selection of 164 schools. Based on the 206, the regional average per district (RAD) is 34, as against the minimum NAD of 7 schools and initial PDF of five schools.

3.2.3. The **Brong Ahafo region**, rated seventh in poverty ranking, with primary school enrolment rate 69.3.% and access rate of 83.7% and with 19 districts, accounts for 170 (17.43%) GSFP schools, as against the expected allocation of 133 schools, going by the NAD of 7. The gain for the region is an excess selection of 37

<sup>1</sup> Writer's construction, based on total schools under the GSFP and equal selection norm

<sup>2</sup> Source: the Ghana School Feeding Programme' official documents

<sup>3</sup> Untraceable means that the writer is yet to trace the domain of 5 schools, in terms of district location, but is very sure that they are hidden within the cluster system, where individual schools, with separate heads of schools, are put under a cluster and classified as one. This is more common in Ashanti, Greater Accra, Brong Ahafo regions and Western regions (SAEMA).

<sup>4</sup> Sources for all regional rates: GPRS 1, February 19, 2003, page 15

<sup>5</sup> Sources for all regional: Ghana Human Development Report 2007, page 29

schools. Based on the 170, the regional district average of GSFP schools per district is 08.95 against the national district average of 7.065 and the initial PDF of 5 schools.

***In summation, the Ashanti, Greater Accra and Brong Ahafo regions have received more than their fair share of the selection, with regional averages well above the minimum NAD of 7 per district. Despite that, there are inequalities in school selection within the three regions. In Ashanti, 16 districts are outside the regional average of 12.7 schools. Out of this 16, eleven districts are well outside the initial PDF of 5 schools per district, with 7 of them having 2 selected schools each and two districts above NAD of 7 with 11 schools apiece, in contrast to 100 schools for KMA and 26, 25, 24 and 15 for Afigya Sekyerie, Offinso, Atwima Nwabiagya and Adansi North respectively, etc. In Brong Ahafo, 12 districts are outside the district average of 8.95, out of which eleven (11) districts are below the PDF of 5, with a range of 2-3 selected schools, compared to 44, 30, 29 and 12 schools selected in Attebubu-Amantin, Nkoranza, Atiwa and Sunyani Municipality respectively, etc. Only Dangme East has 2 schools in Greater Accra, as against 78 GSFP schools for AMA, 28 for TMA, 17 schools for Ga East, 13 for Ga West and 9 schools for Dangme West (see the attached appendix A).***

3.2.4. The Eastern, Western and Central regions, with a total number of **43 districts**, account for 212 (21.7%) GSFP schools in the country. Of this, the **Eastern regions**, rated 5<sup>th</sup> in poverty ranking, with primary school enrolment and access rates of 75.6 and 88.4% respectively, and 17 districts, has 79 ((8.10%) GSFP schools as against the expected selection of 119 schools, going by the NAD of 7. The region loses out by a shortfall of 40 schools, in selection. Going by the 79, RAD is 4.65, as against the national district average (NAD) of minimum of 7 and the initial PDF of 5 per district.

3.2.5. The **Western region** is placed 9<sup>th</sup> in poverty ranking, with primary school enrolment and access rates of 74.9% and 85.3% respectively, and 13 districts, has 69 (7.07%) GSFP schools as against the expected allocation of 91 schools, going by the same the NAD, thereby losing out by 22 schools. Based on the 69 GSFP schools, the regional average per district is 5.25, as against the lower national district average of 7 and PDF of 5.

3.2.6. The **Central Region**, positioned 4<sup>th</sup> in poverty ranking, with primary school enrolment and access rates of 72.6% and 90.9% respectively and, with 13 districts, has 65 (6.66%) GSFP schools as against 91 schools expected to be selected, based on the NAD, thereby losing by 26 schools. The regional district average of GSFP schools per district is 5, compared to the national average of 7 and PDF of 5, an exact application of the initial planned distribution formula of five schools.

***In summation, based on NAD of 7, all the three regions have not received their fair share of the selection. A considerable number of districts are outside the NDA of 7 and the initial PDF of 5 per district, in these regions. With RAD of 4.65, the Eastern region has nine (9) districts having less than 5 selected schools and, 5 districts being below the NAD of 7 in school selection, compared to 12, 10 and 7 schools selected from New Juaben Municipality, Akwapim South and Akwapim North respectively.***

**The Western region, with a RAD of 5.25, has ten (10) districts that have less than 5 selected schools and one district having 5 schools, compared to 25 schools in SAEMA and 7 for Wassa Amenfi East. The Central region, with RAD of 5, has 9 districts being below the NAD of 7, out of which 8 are below the RAD of 5, compared to 12 for Mfansiman, 9 for KEEA, 8 for Awutu Effutu Senya and 7 for Gomoa.**

3.2.7. The last four regions, consisting of Northern, Volta, Upper East and Upper West regions, with a total number of 49 districts, account for as little as 114 (11.6%) schools under the GSFP. Out of the 114 schools, **the Northern region**, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in poverty rating, with primary school enrolment and access rates of 49.9% and 80.1% respectively and 18 districts, has 44(4.51%) GSFP schools, as against the expected selection of 126 schools, going by the NAD. There is therefore a shortfall of 82 schools. Based on the 44 GSFP schools, the RAD for region is 2.44, as against the national average of 7 per district and the initial PDF of 5 per district.

3.2.8. **The Volta region**, rated 7<sup>th</sup> in poverty ranking, with primary school enrolment and access rates of 64.7% and 83.9% respectively and 15 districts, has 34 (3.48%) GSFP schools, as against the expected selection of 105 schools, going by the NAD. The deficit in school selection is of 71 schools. Based on the 34, the RAD per district is 2.27, as against the NAD of 7 and the PDF of 5.

3.2.9. **The Upper East region**, positioned 1<sup>st</sup> in poverty placing, with primary school enrolment and access rates of 56% and 67.1% respectively and 8 districts, has 18 (1.84%) GSFP schools, as against the expected the allocation of 56 schools, based NAD. The region hereby loses out by a shortfall of 56 schools, in selection. Based on the 18, the RAD for the region is 2.25, as against NAD of 7 and PDF of 5.

3.2.10. The same results apply for the **Upper West region**, placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in poverty positioning, with primary school enrolment and access rates of 51% and 61.9% respectively and, the same number of 8 districts and 18 GSFP schools selected, as in Upper East.

**In summation, all the four regions have not received their fair share of the selection, as they all have regional averages that are way far off the initial PDF of five (5) and the NAD of 7 schools per district. In the Northern region, RAD is 2.44. Fourteen (14) districts have two (2) selected schools each, compared 6 schools for the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (an average of 2 schools per sub-metro), 4 for East Gonja and, three (3) schools apiece for West Gonja and West Mamprusi.**

**For the Volta region, RAD is 2.27. Thirteen (13) districts have 2 schools each and, one district (Adaklu-Anyigbe) has 3, compared to 5 schools for Ho Municipal Assembly.**

**With the Upper East, Kasena-Nankana has 4 GSFP, while the rest of the 7 districts have 2 selected schools each. In Upper West, Sissaala East and Wa East have three selected schools apiece, while the other the six districts account for 2 schools each.**

### **3.3. Critical observations: inter and intra regional selection and distribution**

3.3.1. From the analysis above, there is gross inequality and unfairness in the selection of the GSFP schools. In terms of absolute figures, the three Northern regions and the Volta regions have had fewer schools selected in their areas and can be said to severe discrimination, comparatively.

In terms of relative figures, the unfairness at regional level is not limited to north but cut across the seven regions. By the NAD of 7 schools per district, with the exception of Ashanti, Greater Accra and Brong Ahafo regions, all the other seven regions have suffered unfairness by shortfalls in school selections. However, by the initial PDF of 5 schools per districts, it is the Eastern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta and Northern regions that have suffered unfair treatments by shortfalls of 6, 22, 22, 41 and 46 schools respectively.

3.3.2. Intra regional inequality in school selections permeates all regions, but is more pronounced in Ashanti, Greater Accra, Brong Ahafo, Eastern and Western regions.

3.3.3. School selections contradict the GSFP implementation strategy and selection criteria to concentrate feeding in the poorest areas of the country, to improve on access, enrolment and retention. The significant regional differences in poverty rating and access to, and enrolment in, primary school rates, as presented in table 2 below, have not been considered in school selections and distribution among regions.

**Table 2: Poverty and Deprivation by regions as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007**

1. Region	Levels of poverty and deprivation		
	2. Access to Primary Education-rate <sup>6</sup>	3. Enrolment in Primary Education-rate <sup>7</sup>	4. Poverty ranking & rate 1998/99 <sup>8</sup>
1. Ashanti Region	92.7	78.7	8 <sup>th</sup> (28%)
2. G. Accra Region	90.2	80.9	10 <sup>th</sup> (5%)
3. Brong Ahafo	83.7	69.3	7 <sup>th</sup> (36%)
4. Eastern Region	88.4	75.6	5 <sup>th</sup> (44%)
5. Western region	85.3	74.9	9 <sup>th</sup> (27%)
6. Central Region	90.9	72.6	4 <sup>th</sup> (48%)
7. Northern Region	80.1	49.9	3 <sup>rd</sup> (69%)
8. Volta Region	83.9	64.7	6 <sup>th</sup> (38%)
9. Upper East Region	67.1	56.0	1 <sup>st</sup> (88%)
10. Upper West Region	61.9	51.0	2 <sup>nd</sup> (84%)
<b>total</b>			<b>100</b>

From the table above, the regions in southern sector of Ghana have greater access to and enrolment in primary education than the northern sector. The Ashanti region has greatest access to primary education, followed by Central region, Greater Accra and Eastern region. Next is the Western region, followed by the Volta and Brong Ahafo. The Greater Accra has the highest enrolment rate, followed by Ashanti, Eastern and Western regions. The Central, Brong Ahafo and Volta regions follow in that order.

In comparative terms, the three northern regions have the worse rates in access to and enrolment in primary school. The Upper East has the poorest access to primary school, followed by the Upper West and Northern region. Primary school enrolment rates are also the poorest in the three northern regions, with enrolment rate in the Northern, Upper West and Upper East being 49.9, 51 and 56 respectively. The Upper East, Upper West and Northern regions as the first, second and third poorest regions in Ghana, having 88%, 84% and 69% of population leaving in poverty respectively followed by the Central, Eastern and Volta regions. Yet fewer schools are selected in these regions, compared to the concentration of schools in Ashanti, Greater Accra and Brong Ahafo regions, with far greater access to and enrolments in primary education, etc.

3.3.4. From the data, there is blatant unfairness against the three northern regions and Volta region, as school selection in these regions fall far short of the NAD of 7, and the initial PDF of 5 schools per district. It is very significant to compare the total number of 114 GSFP schools selected in the three Northern regions and Volta regions, with 49 districts, to the 170, 206 and 267 schools selected in Brong Ahafo, Greater Accra and Ashanti regions respectively! The degree of unfairness is even more explicit in the fact that, the total number of GSFP selected schools (100) in KMA, as a metropolis, is more than the total GSFP selected schools (80) in three northern regions put together!

What is troubling and wanton unfairness here is not the number of schools selected in either Brong Ahafo, Greater Accra and Ashanti regions or KMA, but the fewer number of schools selected in the three Northern regions and Volta regions rolled together, as compared to the three most favoured regions and KMA!

3.3.5. The attempt by Local Governance Minister to justify this severe unfairness against the three northern regions, tagged the poorest and most deprived regions in Ghana, in name of CRS, WVI and WFP's interventions is unattainable. The CRS, WVI and WFP feeding programme in the North does not cover all schools. There are teeming virgin schools waiting for feeding. Moreover, WVI folded up its feeding programme years ago and CRS is also doing the same. CRS started phasing out its school feeding programme since 2004/academic year and will be doing the final phase out in September 2008. CSR, in 2005/6 academic year, indeed wrote to inform the GSFP NS about the phase out plan and, asked the secretariat to absorb the phased out schools into GSFP. CRS went further to draft a memorandum of understanding between CRS and NS to that effect. However, the NS never deemed it important enough to sign it.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Ghana Human Development Report (Ghana HDR), 2007, page 29

<sup>7</sup> Source: *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> Source: GPRS, February 19, 2003, page 15

*In summary, there is a gross inequality in school selection, resulting in excess selection for three regions and shortfalls in the other regions, going by equal distribution norm. This excesses and shortfalls in school selection are NOT JUST FIGURES but HAVE SERIOUS EFFECTS on access to, and participation in, the GSFP and transfers of funds and resources to the regions and districts.*

#### 4. Analysis of the effects of the discrimination in school selections

From **social equity perspectives**, the skewed selection of the GSFP schools does not promote social equity or protect the vulnerable and deprived regions and social groups but rather promotes social exclusion of the poor in many aspects. By social exclusion “is meant limited/inequitable opportunities and capacities to participate in decision making, gain access to meaningful livelihood opportunities and social services due to discriminatory institutional practices in the political, economic and social spheres...”, etc (Ghana HDR 2007). Table 3 below is used for the analysis

**Table 3: Distribution and transfer of GSFP opportunities and resources between regions as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007**

1. Region	Social exclusion/inclusion		Social Equality/Inequality	
	2. Opportunity for pupils' participation <sup>9</sup>	3. Opportunity for women employment <sup>10</sup>	4. Population of pupils <sup>11</sup>	5. Transfer for feeding, 09/6/07 (c) <sup>12</sup>
1. Ashanti	+46,455	+504	136,334	8,686,864,000
2. G. Accra	+46,740	+656	112,272	7,214,064,000
3. Brong	+10,545	+148	73,723	4,482,456,000
4. Eastern	-11,400	-160	38,991	2,423,532,000
5. Western	-6,270	-88	33,709	2,092,952,000
6. Central	-7,410	-104	33,730	1,902,318,000
7. Northern	-23,370	-328	16,191	1,025,310,000
8. Volta Region	-20,235	-284	14,471	955,086,000
9. Upper East	-10,260	-144	12,012	792,792,000
10. Upper West	-10,260	-144	6,281	414,546,000
<b>total</b>			<b>477,714</b>	<b>¢29,988,920,000</b>

#### 4.1. Analysis of the table:

4.1.1 *Social exclusion*: School feeding creates and provides opportunities for a minimum of 285 children (240 for primary and 45 KG) of school going age to be fed, to enhance their enrolment, attendance and completion of primary education. From column 2 of table 3, more and more children in Ashanti, Greater Accra, Brong Ahafo and the other three regions, are given opportunities to benefit from the programme, compared to the less and less children in the three Northern and Volta regions. As a result of the extra selection of schools, minimum number of 46,455, 46,740 and 10,545 additional children are fed in Ashanti, Greater Accra and Brong Ahafo regions, respectively, adding up to 103,740 children.

On the other hand, 11,400, 6,270 and 7,410 pupils in Eastern, Western and Central regions, respectively, are excluded from feeding, adding up to 25,280 children, as a result of shortfalls in schools selections.

The shortfalls in school selection also results in a minimum number of 23,370 children in the Northern, 20,235 pupils in Volta and 10,260 children each in the Upper East and Upper West regions being denied opportunities for feeding. These add up to 64,125 excluded pupils, out of which 43,890 children are missing out on feeding from the three northern regions.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Writer's construction. Figures are obtained thus: 40\*6 primary classrooms+ 45 (KG)\* shortfall or excess in school selection per region.

<sup>10</sup> Source: writer's construction. Figures obtained thus: 4 (cooks per school)\* by shortfalls or excess in school selection.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Daily Graphic, Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2008

<sup>12</sup> Source: Accountant and Controller General Department,

**In summary, inequality in school selection translates into unequal opportunities for participation in the programme. Children from poor and deprived areas like north do not have the same opportunities as children from wealthier regions like Ashanti region to benefit from the GSFP.**

4.1.2. *Livelihood opportunity:* The GSFP also offers opportunities for employments to local women in the selected school localities to manage the kitchen as cooks and matrons or caterers. The norm, in most schools, is that a minimum number of four women are employed as cooks, besides the caterer or matron. Due to the excess school selection in Ashanti, Greater Accra, Brong Ahafo, a minimum number of 505,656 and 148 additional women have been employed respectively.

160, 88 and 104 potential women employees also suffer the same fate in Eastern, Western and Central regions respectively.

Due to the unfairness against the north in school selection, a minimum number of 328 women in Northern Region and 144 women each in Upper East and Upper West regions are denied livelihood opportunities under the GSFP. In Volta region, 284 women are also excluded. By extension, the women are denied the opportunity to earn GH¢30.00 each per month, as allowance. Hence, the total earnings denied women in Northern Region is GH¢9840, and for Upper East and Upper West regions it is GH¢672 each.

Other social groups excluded, as a result of the discrimination, are potential caterers and suppliers and the farmers in the discriminated regions and districts. But the northern exclusion is more troubling because of the endemic poverty in the area.

4.1.3. *Opportunity for participation:* The disparity in school selection also results in inequality and unfairness in the distribution of opportunities to participate in, and benefit from, the programme. According to the Local Governance Minister, the total pupil population benefiting from the programme as at 31 December 2007 is 477,714. The breakdown of the distribution among the regions, as given by the Minister, is presented in column 4 of table 3 above. The Brong Ahafo, Greater Accra and Ashanti regions, with 46 districts, have 73,723 (15.43%), 112, 272 (23.50%) and 136,334 (28.53%) respectively, adding up to 322,329 (67.5%)! The Eastern, Western and Central regions, account for 38,991 (8.16%), 33,709 (7.06%) and 33,730 (7.10) respectively, summing up to 106, 436 (22.28%).

The three northern region account for only 7.21% (34,484 pupils) of the population, with Northern, Upper East and Upper regions having 16,191(3.39%), 12,012(2.51%) and 6,281(1.31) participating children apiece. The Volta region accounts for 14,417 (3.03%) pupils. In sum, the Volta region, together with the three Northern regions, account for a total number of 48,955 pupils (10.24%), merely!

4.1.4. *Distribution and transfer of funds/resources:* The unfair/skewed distribution also translates into inequality in the transfers of GSFP funds/resources to the regions and the districts, as disbursement has direct relationship with the number of selected schools per region and/or district and total enrolments in those schools. From column 5 of table 3, the total amount of money disbursed to the ten regions under the GSFP, as at 29<sup>th</sup> June 2007 is €29,988,920,000. Out of this amount, the Ashanti, Greater Accra and Brong Ahafo regions received €8,685,864,000(28.96%), €7,214,064,000 (24.06%) and €4,482,456,000(14.94%) respectively. This sums up to €20,382,384,000, representing 68% of the total disbursement and leaving €9, 605,536,000 (32%) for the rest of the seven regions.

From the remaining amount, Eastern, Western and Central regions received €2,423,532,000(8.08%), €2,092,952,000 (6.98%) and €1,902,318,000 (6.34%), totalling up to €6,418,802,000. This represents 21.45 of the total disbursement for the period under reference. The remaining €3,187,734,000 (10.6%) is disbursed to the last four regions, with Northern, Volta, Upper East and Upper West regions receiving €1,025,310,000(3.41%), €955,086,000 (3.18%), €792,792,000 (2.64%) and €414,546,000 (1.38%) respectively.

6.1.5. For the reader to appreciate the level of extremism of the unfairness involved in the disbursement (contingent on the disparity in selection of schools at regional and district levels), it is, again, necessary to go beyond region by region comparison to regions to districts comparisons. Table 4 below illustrates point:

**Table 4: GSFF disbursements to districts , third term 29 June 2007<sup>13</sup>**

1. Rank	2. District	3. Amount(¢)	4. Region
1	Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)	4,136,682,000	Greater Accra
2	Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA)	3,924,558,000	Ashanti
3	Atebubu Amen	1,361,448,000	Brong Ahafo
4	Tema Metropolitan Assembly (TMA)	1,171,500,000	Greater Accra
5	Ga East District Assembly	986,106,000	Greater Accra
6	Affigya Sekyere District Assembly	898,656,000	Ashanti
7	Shama Ahanta East	887,568,000	Western
8	Techiman Municipal Assembly	773,652,000	Brong Ahafo
9	Atwima Nwaiagya District Assembly	744,480,000	Ashanti
10	Offinso District Assembly	729,234,000	Ashanti

Compare the ¢4,136,682,000 transferred to AMA to the ¢3,187,734,000 disbursed to the northern and Volta regions, put together. Also compare the ¢3,924,558,000 for KMA to the paltry sum of ¢2,232,648,000 disbursed to three northern regions, ranked first to third poorest regions in Ghana, with 34 districts! Further compare the ¢1,025,310,000 for the Northern Region, exclusively, to ¢1,361,448,000 for Atebubu Amenten District in Brong Ahafo; the ¢792,792,000 handed to the Upper East with 8 district to the ¢898,656,000 for Afigye Sekyere district in Ashanti region and; the ¢414,546,000 for at Upper West region to the ¢729,234,000 received by Offinso district in Ashanti! Finally, compare the ¢955,086,000 for the Volta region as against the ¢986,106,000 disbursed to Ga East in the Greater Accra region.

This region-district comparison is very necessary because the transfers are largely, a function of the unfairness in school selection, not just enrolments in the GSFP schools in individual regions and districts!

**In summary, from the data above, it is the poorest and most deprived regions, that ought to be given top priority in the distribution of opportunities and transfer of feeding money, going by the concept and implementation strategies of the GSFP, that are suffering the most extreme unfair treatment. Taken into account the fewer opportunities and resource offered and transferred to the three northern regions, compared to the well endowed regions in the south, one can only conclude that, the GSFP in its implementation, has become a strong weapon for social exclusion of the poor and deprived. Hence, the GSFP has become a very strong tool for widening social inequalities between the north and south, between rural and urban areas and, between the poor and rich, in Ghana!**

<sup>13</sup> Source: Accountant and Controller General Department

## PART TWO

In part I, we discussed the policy direction of the GSFP, the inequalities and unfairness in school selections and the effects of such discrimination. In this part, the writer looks at the causes and consequences of unfairness and makes recommendations therein.

### 5. Why the inequality-causes of the skewed selection and unfairness

Inequalities in the distribution of opportunity and resources, no matter where it hits most, is inimical to poverty reduction and collective participation in development processes and must be halted. There is therefore a strong need for sober reflection and analysis of the causes, so as to reverse and halt it. The basic source of the inequality is the serious departure from the GSFP programme document. Factors that have contributed, and are still contributing, to that serious deviation include the following:

5.1. The non application of the 2005/6 and 2006/7 planned distribution formula (PDF) of 5 GSFP schools per district contributed greatly to creating the imbalances in school selection. Most Districts, if not all, selected and submitted names of five schools each to the NS for participation in the programme, as requested by the NS. Instead of following the PDF, the GSFP NS rather abandoned it and allowed patronage and influence peddling to dictate the direction of the selection.

In my interactions with some of the DCEs, they revealed that when they realized that the GSFP NS was not selecting and distributing the benefits of GSFP as per the letter sent to districts and, that other districts have being allocated more and more schools, they also took it upon themselves to lobby the NS for more schools. I am aware that the Tamale Metropolis got extra four schools as a result of the personal efforts of Hon. Mr. Muhammad Amin Anta, the MCE. Mfansipin District in the Central region also got more schools as a result of the efforts of DCE, partly.

5.2. The activities of some politicians from the ruling party, especially Ministers of state and MPs, also contribute to the skewed distribution. Some of them see the GSFP as a tool for enhancing their personal political marketability, and that of their party. Hence, they influenced NS to select more schools from their favoured areas and constituencies, so as to enhance their chances of winning elections. For instance, the 30 GSFP schools in the Nkoranza District, in Brong Ahafo region, were mostly selected during the period leading to the last by-election in the area in 2006. Evidence of that is in the dates of commencement of feeding in most of the selected schools.

In allowing political expediency to determine the selection of schools, the interest of Ministers of State and MPs, is now the paramount consideration in spreading the benefits of the programme, and not the equality norm and/or poverty-deprivation criteria for school selection.

5.3. Strongly related to the above point is a seeming unequal power relation between the majority party MPs/Ministers of State. Those who hail from regions which are strong holds of the ruling party seem to have stronger capacity to lobby and attract more schools to their areas, compare to those who hail from regions which are not. The advantage is even greater when the MP is a Minister of state. For instance, all the districts that have 3 to 4 schools selected in the three northern regions have MPs who either belong to, or support the course of, the majority party in parliament! Compare this to the number of schools selected in the most favoured districts in Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Greater Accra, Western Region, etc. As a result of this unequal power relation, the GSFP has become, to a large extent, a tool for the marginalization of areas where the ruling government is less present, in term of parliamentary representation.

5.4. Another strong factor is the style of managing the catering system. Instead of allowing DAs to appoint their caterers/suppliers, as per provision of the GSFP programme document, the GSFP National Secretariat (NS), appointed and imposed caterers and suppliers on the districts. That opened up the NS for party functionaries, including MPs and Queen mothers, to patronize the officials of the NS and get themselves positioned as caterers/suppliers. These categories of suppliers see the GSFP more as business entity rather than

a social programme and are able to use their political influence to get more schools selected in their operational areas, for profit maximization. For instance, as at March 2008, the least number of schools a caterer is responsible for feeding in the Kumasi Metropolis was five. The researcher has informed belief that this is still the case, up to date.

5.5. What reinforced the above factors is *the how and nature of the appointment* of the GSFP Executive Director. With a social programme of the school feeding status, in the opinion of the writer, a technocrat, instead of politician, should have been appointed as Executive Director, with clear implementation benchmarks and management agreements or terms of reference. Appointing a politician, who is a card bearing member of the ruling party, as Executive Director, as was the case with the former Executive Director, Dr. Amoako Tuffour, inherently opened up the GSFP for political patronage and expediency.

***In summary, the causes of the inequality and unfairness in school selection and distribution of opportunities and funds/resources under GSFP is due to a shift in focus from the direction of the programme document to political expediency and promoting the interests of caterers and suppliers.***

## **6.0. Consequences of the discrimination against poorer regions - Why the inequality is improper**

### 6.1. Consequences on goal, objectives and MDGs

The discrimination against poor and deprived areas and social group has serious consequences for attaining the goal, objectives and, intended impact of the programme, inter alia.

6.1.1 Although, generally, there is an increase in school enrolment, coupled with improvement in retention and attendance rates in GSFP selected schools, attaining the objective on enrolment, retention and school attendance is far from reality. When officials go about using this enrolment increases to argue that meeting this objective is on course, they fail to realize, advertently or inadvertently, that they are only emphasizing skewed **outcomes** rather than spread **opportunities**. More than 80% of the selection is in regions where access to and enrolment in primary education and literacy rates are higher, i.e. rich regions and urban centres, as opposed to the poorest regions/areas, where access to and enrolment in primary education are worse. In otherwise, there is an egregious **unequal outcome** across the regions as a result of the **unequal opportunities**. So long as the GSFP continue to concentrate school selections in rich regions and urban centres, to the disadvantage of poorest regions and districts, the observed outcomes will remain *cosmetics or attenuated!*

6.1.2. Meeting the objective on reducing hunger and malnutrition in children is also under serious threat due to *wrong targeting* that result in unwarranted exclusion of the poorest and most deprived regions and rural districts. For instance, as much as 134,334 pupils are fed in the Ashanti region, compared to the mere 34,484 children in the three the northern regions put together!

In relation to the goal of the GSFP and the GPRS, what purpose is being served in neglecting or excluding pupils from poverty endemic regions like the north, while providing more feeding opportunity for relatively well off regions like Ashanti and Greater Accra? In short, the school feeding programme, in implementation, is more becoming, more or less, menu for the rich rather than the poor, for whom the programme is designed, in the first place. The programme is, therefore, off track in achieving this objective.

6.1.3. As a strategy for attaining the objective on boosting domestic food production, farmers are expected to be mobilized and organized to produce to feed the GSFP schools. *The target is to purchase 80% of locally grown food stuff to feed the children*, for the purpose of creating job opportunities within the agricultural sector and providing ready market for produce of Ghanaian farmers, so as to enhance their incomes.

The concentrations of schools in urban centres, as against fewer selected schools in food crops production areas like northern Ghana and rural districts, as well as the focus on the catering system, endanger the attainment of this objective. For instance, in the Ashanti West District, the District Agricultural Directorate has developed an action plan meant to mobilize farmers to produce food crops for GSFP schools, but the limited

number of schools in that district is frustrating the smooth implementation of the action plan. During the inventory exercise, it was found that the amount of food stuff bought, directly, from local farmers was 10% and below.

6.1.4. In “discriminating” against poorer regions and districts, in favour of relatively richer regions and urban districts, the long term **goal** of the school feeding programme of contributing to poverty reduction and food security in Ghana is also well off track and cannot be achieved, unless the “discrimination” is reversed.

6.1.5. The GSFP is Ghana’s efforts towards achieving MDGs on eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality. The MDGs is explicit in on the social groups and geographical locations that should be targeted for support to achieve the objectives. Under the GSFP, it is this very targeted social groups and regions that are being excluded and unfairly treated. As a result of exclusion of poorest regions, the GSFP has become a tool for undermining efforts aimed at achieving the objectives of MDGs in Ghana!

6.1.6. Access to and enrolments in primary education are function of availability of educational facilities /infrastructure, poverty and general deprivation, among others. In excluding, or “discriminating” against areas where access to and enrolments in primary education is the lowest, the GSFP has become a tool for magnifying the structural causes of poverty; the inequality in the distribution of national resources and investment in job creation and social services between the North and the South, arising from deliberate public policy implementation.

6.1.7. In design, the GSFP is seen to be consistent with various development strategies Ghana, including the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy), the Education Sector Plan (2003 – 2015), Imagine Ghana Free from Malnutrition (a concept paper produced by the Ministry of Health), Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy (Ministry of Food and Agriculture), Ghana National Social Protection Strategy – GNSPS – (Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment). However, in implementation, the GSFP contradicts these strategies, through the exclusion of, or “discrimination” against, the poor regions and social groups who are the target of support of these strategies.

## **6.2. Other consequences**

6.2.1 From the corridors of donors and international NGOs, one of the strongest reasons why donors who have initially shown willingness to invest in the programme are drugging their feet and, those who are already supporting the programme are either withholding support to, or threatening to discontinue funding, the GSFP, is the strong deviations from agreed programme direction. The discrimination against poor regions and districts and the lack of efforts to link the GSFP to agriculture, sends signals that Government is not all that sincere in fighting poverty, especially, in the north and poor rural areas. What government is interested in, is to continually use the plights of these poor constituents to secure donor support, only to lean on other consideration in the management of the funds.

6.2.2. The skewed selection strengthens the perception of winner takes it all attitude of some politicians. There is a belief out there that the three northern regions and Volta region have been deliberately discriminated against because they are opposition party strong holds. The fact that all the districts that have more than two schools selected in the three northern regions either have MPs who belong to the majority party or identifies with the majority, in parliament, adds to the perception. Such perception tends to poison the political environment.

6.2.3. The deviation from the programme document a goes to confirm, to large extent, the growing observations that, in recent times, the substitution of national agenda for narrow regional and ethnic interest, by some public officers, especially politicians, as a major contributor to the inequality in resource and opportunity distribution. The goal and objectives of poverty reduction programmes, such as the GSFP, are obvious. Yet, the very public officers who are supposed to facilitate the successful implementation of such programmes would

rather hijack the benefits to their regions/areas, deservingly or otherwise, regardless of the objectives of the programmes.

***In summary, the major consequences of skewed distribution is that it contradicts the development goal and objectives of the GSFP in particular and the poverty reduction agenda of the country and the MDGs in general, as many people, including women, children and farmers from poor and deprived regions and districts, for whom the programme is designed, are excluded from programme and more and more opportunities and resources offered and transferred to rich regions and districts. This inequality and unfairness, not only reinforces the existing structural inequalities and widens the gaps between the north and the south and rural-urban areas, but also contradicts the spirit of the constitution of Ghana that guarantee equal treatment for every region in the distribution of national resources. Resultantly, the Ghana school feeding programme, instead of being a tool for poverty reduction, has become a tool for widening the existing social inequalities between the north and south!***

## **7. Summary, Recommendation and Conclusions**

### **7.1. In summary:**

7.1.1. There is gross inequality in the selection of schools, resulting in unfairness in school selection across seven regions, with the three Northern regions and Volta region being the most affected.

7.1.2. The basic source of the inequality and unfairness is serious departure from the GSFP programme document. The causes of the departure include political expediency, the promotion of the interests of caterers and, appointing a politician to direct and manage the programme.

7.1.3. By the concept and implementation principles and strategies of the GSFP, the three Northern regions, being the poorest and most deprived, should have been top priority in school selection, distribution of opportunities and transfer of feeding resources. Yet, from the analyzed data, these are the regions that are suffering the most extreme unfair treatment, if not discrimination.

7.1.4. Taking into account the fewer opportunities and resources offered and transfer to the three Northern regions, compared to the endowed regions, one can only conclude, the GSFP, as it is being implemented now, has become a strong tool for the exclusion of the poor.

7.1.5. In a nutshell, in concept and design the GSFP is a tool for poverty reduction and primary education for all. However, in its implementation, it has become a tool for widening the existing social inequalities between the north and south and, between rich urban districts and poor rural districts. Hence, the GSFP, currently, is a very strong tool for widening the existing social inequalities in Ghana.

### **7.2. Recommendation**

7.2.1. To avoid or minimize the political expediency and influence that characterized school selections, a technocrat should be appointed as executive director, instead of a politician, with clear terms of reference/job description. If Dr Tuffour replacement is also a card bearing member of a political party, then there is a need to advertise the position for recruitment. If this not possible, then it is imperative that he is given a term of reference that ties him to deliver, largely, on the implementation principles and strategies of the GSFP programme document, and to take steps to arrest and correct the inequalities in the selection of schools and distributions of opportunities and benefits.

7.2.2. The application of the equal distribution norm in school selection and distribution of opportunities to addressing the inequalities is necessary. Resources received for up scaling the programme for 2008/9 academic year should be used to correct the inequality and reverse the unfairness.

In up scaling the programme in the next year, September 2008, priority should be given to regions and districts that are outside the initial planned distribution formula (PDF) of 5 schools per district and the minimum national average of 7 schools per district. This implies that all districts that have 5-7 selected GSFP schools are not to be considered in the up scaling until all the districts that are outside that bracket are brought to that level. This should be done in the first term of the 2008/9 academic year. Progressively, in the second term of the academic year under discussion, all districts that have 8-10 selected schools in their areas are also not to be considered until all the districts that are outside this bracket are also brought into that bracket. Next in waiting should be the districts with 11-14 selected schools, for others to catch up with them, and so on and so forth.

If managers of the GSFP are to demonstrate their commitments to poverty reduction, fairness and political tolerance, the next academic year must be used to reduce the inequality, to the barest minimum, in favour of deprived and disadvantaged regions and districts that have suffer gross “discriminations”.

7.2.3. It is highly recommended that the GSFP absorb schools under CRS’ feeding programme in the northern sector in the 2008/9 academic year, for several reasons. Firstly, doing that will represent strong steps towards correcting the unfairness in the selection of schools. Secondly, absorbing the CRS schools entails minimal cost, compared to selecting virgin schools. With a newly selected school, a lot needs to be done to prepare the school for participation in the programme. Preparation include investing in infrastructure like kitchen, dining, store rooms and water storage facilities, as well as forming and training community members to participate in the programme. This expenditure can be avoided if the CRS schools are absorbed, as all these infrastructures are already in place, together with well trained community participation structures/institutions.

The researcher is reliably informed that the WFP has agreed to cater for three days feeding cost per week of any school selected in the Northern Ghana, leaving only two days feeding expenditure for the GSFP to bear. I am told that a MoU between the WFP and GSFP secretariat has been signed to that effect. This should be a great incentive to the National Secretariat to select more schools from the north. Resources saved from this arrangement could be used to double or triple the schools selection in the north.

7.2.4. The GSFP national NS should stop appointing and imposing caterers on the districts. This could help curtail the lobbying and give them the needed peace of mind to manage the programme by the dictates of the programme document.

7.2.5. It is necessary to re-train managers of the programme to understand and appreciate the implementation strategies of the programme and the structural causes of poverty and, how to deal with it, if we are to avoid or minimize the lopsided manner the programme is been implemented.

7.2.6. The Executive Director of the GSFP should arrest the deviation from the programme document. He should develop and apply a blue print for addressing and correcting the inequality and imbalances in school selection. The blue print should clearly specify tangible steps, criteria and strategy to be taken to address the inequality, within a defined period.

### **7.3. Conclusion:**

7.3.1. Since 2000, we have seen best practices in designing social projects. The Emergency social relief programme (ESRP), MASLOC, SIF, MCA and the GSFP are clear examples of well designed social projects. But, when it comes to the implementation of such social projects, we have also seen worse practices in inequalities in the distribution of opportunities and benefits of the programmes, with the North, mostly, been at the receiving end.

For examples, the initial seed money released under the emergency social relief programme (ESRP) to the regions by Government in 2001, allocated c1billion to the three northern regions and c2 billion to Central Region alone<sup>14</sup>. In terms of poverty ranking, the three northern regions occupy the 1, 2 and 3 positions, whilst

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<sup>14</sup> Northern Advocate, March 2002 edition

Central region is fourth (4th). When one compares the poverty ranking, the population and number of districts of the individual regions, one wonders what criteria were used to allocate more resources to Central region than the three northern regions all put together? It is not the amount allocated to Central region that was wrong, but the relative minimal amount allocated to the three northern regions put together.

The President's Special Initiatives (PSI) was among the tools government used to distribute poverty reduction resources aimed at supporting rural enterprise development and wealth creation. One would have thought that, under the PSI, the Government would identified the potential of each region, or crops that each region has comparative advantage in producing, for simultaneous policy support. But alas, the north was completely excluded from benefiting from the programme; all the commodities that were adopted and supported were southern based.

7.3.2. The GSFP bothers on issues of basic rights and responsibilities; on one hand are poor people's rights to accessible and affordable quality basic education, health, food and nutrition and livelihood opportunities, under the programme. On the other hand, are the responsibilities of those in political authorities to respect and promote those rights. When people vote political parties into power, what it means is that the people have transferred their right to govern to the party, not their rights to these basic necessities of life.

7.3.3. It is very wrong and unjust to use the plights of these poor constituencies to source funding for social and poverty reduction programmes, only to turn round to "discriminate" against them in spreading and distributing the opportunities and benefits of such programmes. The current administration must not allow it to become a historical record that it was during their administration that the existing inequality between the north and south, and haves and have not, instead of being closed, became widened.

7.3.4. Closer attention needs to be paid to the equality and fairness in the distribution of national resources, especially, opportunities and benefits of the various poverty reduction programmes and schemes. There comes a time in a person's life when silence is "ungolden", but striking a balance between silence and measured words is golden.....

**8. Way forward:** as part of the advocacy to have the inequality redress

- Publish an article on the issue/get it published in newspapers
- Send petition to parliament/circulate to parliamentarians,
- Circulate this paper to stakeholders, including the GSFP Secretariat and donors
- Circulate this paper to media houses, etc.

**Sharif Yunus Abu-Bakr**  
**31 August 2008**