



## THE GHANA INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH NETWORK (GIDRN): A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

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### Background, Vision, Mission and Core Value of GIDRN

#### *Background to GIDRN*

In recent years, Ghana has experienced positive economic growth and reduction in poverty with the country being one of the first in Africa to have achieved the first MDG target before the 2015 deadline. However, the latest round of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS 7) shows that almost a quarter of the population remain trapped in poverty, and inequality is now at its highest level ever (GSS, 2018). For instance, the profile of consumption poverty shows that the country only made marginal progress in the pursuit of poverty reduction since the last round (GLSS 6) in 2012/13. Specifically, the period between 2005/2006 and 2012/2013 recorded a 7.7% decline in the poverty headcount compared to only 0.8% decline in the poverty headcount between 2012/13 and 2016/17 (i.e. from 24.2% in 2012/2013 to 23.4% in 2016/2017). In absolute terms, the number of people living in extreme poverty in Ghana increased from 2.2 million in 2013 to 2.4 million in 2017, based on the 2010 projections. This trend is partly due to the fact that population growth over the period (2013 to 2017) has outstripped reduction of overall poverty incidence, resulting in far more people becoming poor.

There is a lot of variation in the poverty incidence by region. While five of the ten regions namely Greater Accra, Western, Central, Eastern, and Ashanti had rates of poverty incidence lower than the national

average of 23.4 percent, the remaining five regions (Volta, Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East and Upper West) had rates higher than the national average. The poverty incidence actually worsened in Western, Volta, Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions and improved in the Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Central and Greater Accra Regions. Currently, six (6) of the sixteen (16) regions representing 38% have poverty levels below the national rate with the remaining ten (10) of them representing 62% being above the national rate. Specifically, Greater Accra, Western, Western North, Central, Eastern, and Ashanti regions have poverty levels lower than the national poverty rate with Volta, Oti, Ahafo, Bono, Bono East, Northern, Savannah, North East, Upper East and Upper West regions having poverty rates above the national average. Nationally, the trend in poverty has not greatly changed with a marginal increase in the Gini coefficient, indicating that inequality has worsened over the four-year period (2013-2017). This means that the poverty incidence would have been lower than it is but for the worsening inequality which partially offset the poverty reducing effect of growth. Thus, economic growth between 2012/13 and 2016/17 has not been pro-poor and farm households are the worse hurt because households with heads who are farmers are not only the poorest in Ghana but also contribute the most to Ghana's poverty. Households headed by persons engaged as private employees or who are self-employed in non-agricultural sectors are less likely to be poor compared

to those engaged in the agricultural sector. In general, female-headed households appear to be better off than male-headed households in terms of poverty incidence.

The middle class continue to disproportionately benefit from economic growth, while those at the bottom end of the distribution, especially the very poor live in abject poverty with reduced consumption per adult equivalent, suggesting a lack of inclusiveness (GSS, 2018). The Palma Index confirms the lack of inclusiveness in economic growth and the development process, which has been highly disproportionate in favour of the non-poor. The questions of drivers of inequality in Ghana and how inclusive development could be promoted are yet to be answered. It is in the spirit of providing answers to these questions that the Ghana Inclusive Development Research Network (GIDRN), a collaborative effort by the University for Development Studies and UNICEF Ghana was established. The GIDRN aims to provide a multi-faceted platform for local researchers to increase their provision and impact of quality research on inclusive development through improved research capacity, networking, and policy engagement. This is particularly important because while policy and civil society commitments to reduce inequality have increased in Ghana over the years, the participation of academia in this important national dialogue could be enhanced, hence GIDRN. It offers an important opportunity for researchers to add to national evidence on the drivers of poverty and inequality and proffer solutions on promotion of inclusive development across the country.

### ***Vision***

The vision of GIDRN is to become the foremost Network for research, advocacy and policy engagements on inclusive development in Ghana and beyond.

### ***Mission***

GIDRN Mission is to create a pool of academics, development practitioners, policy makers and

implementers to promote evidence-based decision making for inclusive development through high-quality research, policy engagements activities and advocacy.

### ***Core Values***

The Core Values of GIDRN are guided by the under listed core values – excellence, integrity, commitment to people, culture and monitoring, accountability and shared governance – all of which underpin its operations. GIDRN strives for excellence in all its endeavours comprising the conduct of our research on inclusive development, networking and advocacy activities. In terms of integrity, GIDRN demands the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct from all members. In its commitment to people, GIDRN puts people at the core of its assets. The GIDRN community is composed of researchers, policy makers, policy implementers, development practitioners and activists who bring on board a broad spectrum of expertise, wealth of experiences, loyalty and commitment to the success of the Network. The diversity of its people and their individual capabilities are key to achieving the vision of GIDRN. GIDRN emphasizes the need for the culture of mentoring by nurturing the next generation of researchers, policy makers, policy implementers, development practitioners and activists as an integral component of its research activities, policy engagements and advocacy. Thus, the culture of mentoring and mentorship is an integral part of all the components of GIDRN. Accountability is critical for the promotion of inclusive development. Thus, GIDRN owes it to its financiers, and stakeholders, to ensure that each Ghana Cedi/dollar invested in GIDRN goes into promoting and advocating for inclusive development in Ghana and beyond. GIDRN is made up of researchers, policy makers, policy implementers, development practitioners and activists each of whom provides critical perspectives on how to promote good governance, shared responsibility and transparency in decision making and setting future directions.

## **Conceptual Issues**

### ***Economic Growth, Pro-Poor Growth and Inclusive Development***

**Economic growth** refers to increase in per capita income; this is a narrowly defined technical concept that is measurable and is measured by statistical agencies the world over. Pro-poor growth on the other hand occurs when economic growth leads to reduction in poverty levels. Generally, development at different times is used to refer to (i) just economic growth, (ii) changes in economic structure of production (iii) spatial distribution of population (increasing urbanization), and (iv) improvements in social indicators of education, health, etc. Inclusive development however, refers to the situation where economic growth leads to reduction in both poverty and inequality. It is the equitable distribution of well-being; it considers whether or not development progress is sufficiently widespread for the majority of the population to benefit. Critical to inclusive development is social inclusion (Kanbur & Rauniar, 2009).

### ***Social Inclusion***

In simple terms, social inclusion means all persons in society are taking part in the services, markets and spaces in society irrespective of their age, ethnicity, gender, disability, geographic location, rich or poor, educated or not. Social inclusion is ensuring that all persons in society (Adults, young people, children, male, female and persons with disability) are meaningfully participating and benefiting from various social interventions and policies according to their desired needs to the realization of their fullest potentials without discrimination. A typical example of inclusion in the education sector is about how we structure our schools, our classrooms and teaching so that all children learn and participate together. An inclusive classroom is one that is not only supportive of all learners, including those with special needs and learning disabilities but also challenges and engages gifted and talented learners by building a more responsive learning environment. Social inclusion

also means respecting people from all backgrounds and cultures and creating a much more equitable and tolerant society through participatory, transparent and accountable governance.

### ***Child Poverty***

Child poverty refers to the state of children living in poverty and applies to children that come from poor families or orphans being raised with limited resources. Children that fail to meet the minimum acceptable standard of the nation where they live are said to be poor. Poverty has many detrimental outcomes for children – hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited or a lack of access to education and other basic services. Poverty can cause children permanent damage, both physically and mentally, and in both the short and long term. A lack of essentials can stunt their growth, cause them to fall behind in school, and lead to health problems for them. It must be noted that living in an environment that provides little stimulation or emotional support to children, can remove many of the positive effects of growing up in a materially rich household. About 1 in every 4 children in Ghana is poor in monetary terms and 7 in every 10 children are poor in terms of deprivations. Child poverty is the poverty experienced during childhood by children and young people. It differs from adult poverty in that it has different causes and effects, and the impact of poverty during childhood has permanent effects on children (CHIP, 2004; UNDP, 2004). The prevalence of child poverty varies across regions, districts and ethnic groups. The measures of the prevalence of child poverty are based on internationally agreed definitions based on child rights, namely adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and access to information. Monetary measurement is an important measurement, but it does not capture how poverty affects children in physical, emotional and social ways. Younger and older children particularly those from low-income and poor families are all vulnerable to poverty. Younger and older children living in conflict zones where there is a high

security risk, those living on the street, in institutional care and correctional facilities and trafficked children are severely affected. Child poverty threatens not only the individual child but is likely to be passed on to future generations, establishing and even worsening inequality in society.

### ***Child and Adult Poverty***

Children are not only more likely to live in poverty because they have specific and different needs than adults but also children experience poverty differently from adults. UNICEF acknowledges that children are vulnerable to certain types of deprivation; even short periods of deprivation can impact their long-term development. “Children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual, and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society” (UNICEF, 2005). While an adult may fall into poverty temporarily, falling into poverty in childhood can last a lifetime because rarely does a child get a second chance at an education or a healthy start in life. Even short periods of food deprivation can impact children’s long-term development. If children do not receive adequate nutrition, they grow smaller in size and intellectual capacity, they become more vulnerable to life-threatening diseases, perform worse in school, and ultimately, are less likely to be productive adults.

### **Overview of the Call for Proposals and Selection of First Batch of Research Teams**

Academic institutions in Ghana enjoy a reasonably conducive research environment with respect to academic autonomy and an important history of academic excellence in the sub-region. Academia has an instrumental role to play in development policy and practice as critical non-government actors, as they are

well placed to generate evidence-based dialogue. Given the issues of increasing inequality, persistent poverty and the need to kick-start national dialogue around them, UNICEF launched a Policy Advocacy Plan on Inclusive Development, which aims to support and engage stakeholders and partners to promote the discussion, analysis and policy dialogue on issues of poverty, inequality and social protection. As part of the Plan, UNICEF and the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research and Consultancy Services (IIRaCS) of the University for Development Studies (UDS) formed the Ghana Inclusive Development Research Network (GIDRN) with the goal of establishing a network of both advanced and emerging young academics engaged in research in these key areas, providing a forum for mentorship and capacity building, and networking between academics, policy makers, and practitioners. The GIDRN was established with the aim of:

1. Adding to national evidence available on inclusive development;
2. Providing local researchers increased capacity and support to execute research on inclusive development in Ghana;
3. Promote collaborative research, coordination, and improved dialogue between academics through networking on inclusive development issues;
4. Providing increased policy focus and support for policy engagement around the evidence on inclusive development.

The GIDRN initiative involves the award of small grants to research teams of 2-4 people and assigning of Mentors to each team as well as networking and policy engagement opportunities. A call for research proposals for the GIDRN published in September 2017 attracted 109 submissions across academic and non-academic institutions (Table 1)

**Table 1: Distribution of applications of across thematic areas**

S/N	Thematic focus	Number of applicants
1	Inequality/Inequity	16
2	Poverty	27
3	Child poverty	16
4	Social protection	18
5	Child poverty and social protection	4
6	Inequality and child poverty	5
7	Inequality and poverty	10
8	Inequality and social protection	2
9	Inequality, poverty and child poverty	2
10	Poverty and child poverty	6
11	Poverty and social protection	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>109</b>

The 109 proposals underwent three levels of review for selection. In the first level, proposals that were either incomplete or not directly addressing the relevant thematic areas of the call were eliminated. Overall, 41 out of the 109 proposals representing 38% were dropped at this level. In the second level, the 68 retained proposals were critically reviewed for technical quality and feasibility. Proposals that were deemed by the team of reviewers from the UDS and UNICEF not to be technically competent in terms of methodological approach and rigor were dropped at this stage. In all, 56 out of the 68 remaining proposals representing 82% of retained proposals were dropped at this level leaving 12 proposals. Emails were sent to the 12 teams for the proposals to clarify areas of ambiguities. At the third level, 10 teams that satisfactorily responded to the questions raised were selected for grants and invited to make oral presentations of their proposals (Table 2). Each team was assigned academic and technical Mentors to guide them in their research activities.

**Table 2: Distribution of applications across institutions and selection of teams**

Institution	Number Received	Number Successful	% of success
UDS	14	3	30
KNUST	1	0	0
B-Poly	1	0	0
UCC	5	2	20
UG	9	3	30
Ghana Christian Univ. College	3	0	0
UENER	1	0	0
GIMPA	5	1	10
UPSA	4	0	0
CSIR	2	0	0
Two or more academic institutions	45	0	0
Non-academic institutions	19	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Each of the research teams received the Ghana Cedi equivalent of US\$4,000 as grants award. All the research teams submitted their draft research reports and policy briefs, which were reviewed by Mentors and a team of reviewers from UDS and UNICEF. The comments and inputs were sent to teams for incorporation for the dissemination meeting, which took place on October 23, 2018 at the Coconut Grove Hotel in Accra. Various media outlets including Metro TV and Ghana News Agency among other local online networks covered the event. The articles in this special issue of the journal are the final part of the outputs of the first batch of teams supported by GIDRN.

### **Summary of Articles in this Special Issue**

The GIDRN makes conscious efforts to promote evidence-based decision-making by supporting researchers across Ghana to conduct research on poverty, inequality, child poverty and social protection issues. This effort resulted in the production of articles published in this special issue of the *UDS International Journal of Development*. The following provides synopsis of the articles in this special issue.

In their article entitled, **“Impact pathways from agricultural policy to improved nutrition outcomes: The case of the PROMISE Project in North-Eastern Ghana”**, Abazaami, Atuik and Dasoberi based on the performance of the project and wide consultations with beneficiaries and key local institutional level stakeholders, concluded that among other things, the most promising results in terms of increased nutrition outcomes through the consumption of soybean and cowpea by women were galvanized through the Community Food Demonstration or Exhibition Bazaars/Durbars. Using the Community based micro finance schemes commonly known as the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) as conduits to improve nutrition education proved to be effective platforms

for easily reaching women with skills and techniques for adding value to soya and cowpea. The approach was found to be women-friendly, women-dominated (usually 80% to 95%) and self-sustaining that afforded and enhanced access to nutrition information aside the direct financial security it offered to project beneficiaries.

Quagraine, Adams and Awunyo-Vitor in their article entitled, **“Social protection in the informal sector and the urban poor: A case study of greater Accra region, Ghana”** found among other things the fact that the urban poor in the urban informal sector are exposed to diverse risks but are not well resourced to deal with these risks. The authors concluded that with unemployment and underemployment being a critical issue in Ghana, one key strategy is to promote labor-intensive industries to absorb the excess labor. Thus, the Government’s agenda of “One District One factory” and “One Village One Dam” should be given the desired support to succeed because it can contribute significantly to expanding the local economy and promoting inclusive development. The authors observed that many of the urban poor see skills training, especially entrepreneurial capacity development as an important route out of poverty. Thus, business related capacity building and skills training efforts can be used to leverage on the existing competencies of the urban poor to make them create and manage their own businesses.

Afful, Nunoo and Arthur-Biney studied the **“effect of economic dependency on income and wealth inequality in Ghana”** and argued that inequality is a major problem facing many countries including Ghana. Using the Gini coefficient, the authors among others report that there is a decrease in wealth inequality whereas income inequality is on the increase, with wide disparities across the geographical areas in terms of household income or assets. The source component decomposition analyses suggest that income inequality in the urban, rural, male and female have increased over the study period while that

of the female has reduced. Asset inequality on the other hand, decreased in the urban but increased around rural, male and female. They recommend that government through the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) should run more training and entrepreneurship seminars to equip the unemployed with employable skills to reduce economic dependency for decreased income inequality.

Damba, Abarike, Nabilse and Akudugu examined, **“Urban poverty in Ghana”** using the Tamale Metropolis as the case study. They noted that poverty is a huge concern among urban dwellers due to low average monthly income with an exorbitant basket of expenditure. This is a concern even among household heads as remittances and other sources of income are not forthcoming. Urban poverty is exacerbated by the lack of social capital coupled with increasing utility tariffs with a translated cost in production and processing activities. The result is an increased expenditure on food prices and utility tariffs. Urban dwellers consider themselves as either poor or rich and perceive poverty as either a lack of money or their inability to meet basic household needs. Urban dwellers consider unemployment as poverty but still consider living in urban areas better compared to rural areas due to the availability of basic amenities such as toilets, access to portable drinking water and electricity.

Examining **“Inequality among crop farmers in Ghana”**, Tsekpo, Afram and Torvikey report that poverty, inequality and social exclusion are rife in Ghana despite marked improvement in socioeconomic indicators. The authors indicate that inequality persists among farmers in Ghana, particularly those cultivating food crops such as vegetables, tuber and root crops, and cereals. In other words, the incidence of poverty and inequality in the agricultural sector is disturbing in many ways, especially as the sector contributes significantly to Ghana’s GDP and employs more people than any other sector. Fixing the agricultural sector to make it

more productive and rewarding underpins every essence of poverty alleviation and fostering socially and economically inclusive society. Thus, agricultural policy makers and actors must concern themselves seriously with issues of inequality and poverty reduction through innovative ways that target rural areas where these phenomena are highest. It must also equally focus on the entire agriculture value chain as the impact of the unequal relations within the values system is felt more among the agricultural population residing in rural areas. Besides, ongoing efforts by government and other stakeholders to improve agriculture and make it attractive to the youth such as; investment in research and development to create more resilient crop breeds, investment in agro-based technology to reduce post-harvest losses among others must be targeted at the poorest social segments of the society.

In their article entitled **“Poverty in Upper West region of Ghana: determinants and policy prescriptions”**, Ibrahim, Sare and Adam empirically examined factors that uniquely influence monetary and non-monetary poverty in addition to whether the effect of government social protection programmes on both measures of poverty differ. They found varying determinants of both measures of poverty. For instance, on the demographic factors, gender of household head matters more for non-monetary poverty than monetary poverty while household size and educational level robustly relates to only monetary poverty. Age weakly influences only multidimensional poverty while exhibiting some non-linearities in the relationship. Only location dummies are significant drivers of both monetary and non-monetary poverty. In other words, households in rural areas are more likely to be poor relative to those in urban areas. They concluded among other things that a specific policy response is needed to spur household income and asset accumulation in order to improve welfare.

In their paper entitled, **“Waging a successful fight against chronic rural poverty in Ghana: what**

works?” Jatoe and Al-Hassan argue that since 1995, Ghana’s development plans and policies have espoused her focus, nationally, at poverty reduction through growth. Between 1991 and 2013 significant reductions in poverty have been achieved; the country was successful in reducing poverty by 50 percent from its 1991 level. The challenge, however, is that gains in poverty reduction have varied substantially by location and socioeconomic group; and poverty in Ghana continues to be a rural phenomenon. While the country continues its fight against poverty, various researchers and development practitioners have noted with concern widening inequality in the country, especially between the north and south. As Ghana works towards the SDGs (especially, SDG 1, 8, 10 & 12) there is the need for not only a better understanding of the links between economic growth and poverty reduction, but also the nature and causes of poverty as well as why poverty persists in certain areas or among some groups. Indeed, it is not enough to know the poor, but what causes their state if success at fighting poverty is the goal. It is important that efforts at addressing inequality, engendering inclusive growth and promoting broad-based poverty reduction must give special priority to rural Northern Ghana in the national development agenda. Doing otherwise risks widening the gap and/or reversing poverty reduction gains made so far. In the short to medium term, efforts to fight poverty must focus on providing access to credit and promoting ownership of motorized farm equipment in rural Northern Ghana. In rural Southern Ghana, efforts must focus on providing access to credit, promoting ownership of fishing equipment and availability of fertilizer in the communities. In the medium to long term, efforts to fight poverty must focus on promoting family planning education; and removing barriers to education for all that constrain progression beyond basic education.

## **Conclusion**

There is growing inequality in Ghana at the back of economic growth in Ghana. While economic growth is accompanied by declining poverty, inequality is rather on the increase. This means that the development process is not inclusive because inclusive development only occurs when economic growth is not only accompanied by poverty reduction but also reduction in inequality. Understanding the drivers of inequality is critical in the effort to promote inclusive development and this is why the establishment of the GIDRN is critical. It provides the opportunity for academics to work closely with policy makers and implementers to promote evidence-based decision making for inclusive development.

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