

An Assessment of Poverty Reduction Strategies Implemented by District Assemblies in Ghana: The Experience of Beneficiaries in Savelugu-Nanton

Hakim Abdallah (Ph.D., M.Sc., B.Sc., PMP, GIP)
Engineers & Planners Company Limited, Ghana

Abstract:- Poverty reduction remains a significant challenge in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Ghana, where district assemblies are tasked with implementing local interventions. This study evaluates the effectiveness of poverty reduction interventions by the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly (SNMA), focusing on infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were gathered from 353 households and supplemented with insights from 32 opinion leaders and 4 key informants. Infrastructure interventions, including roads, dams, and electricity, were reported to have significantly improved livelihoods, with 60.1% of respondents citing enhanced economic opportunities. These findings align with literature emphasizing infrastructure's critical role in poverty alleviation by facilitating access to markets and services (Adjei & Osei, 2021). Conversely, non-infrastructure interventions, particularly the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme, were less effective. While LEAP improved social inclusion, 80.2% of respondents indicated dissatisfaction with its impact on economic independence. This supports critiques of cash transfer programmes that advocate integrating them with vocational training and credit access for sustainable outcomes (Owusu, 2020). The study further underscores the importance of participatory governance. Limited beneficiary involvement in planning contributed to a misalignment between interventions and community needs. As Freire (1970) posits, active community participation enhances programme relevance and sustainability. Additionally, the financial sustainability of these programmes remains at risk due to SNMA's reliance on external funding. Strengthening local resource mobilisation through taxes and levies is critical for long-term success (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Overall, this study highlights the need for sustainable infrastructure investment, restructuring non-infrastructure interventions for long-term economic empowerment, and fostering participatory governance to ensure effective poverty reduction.

Keywords:- Poverty Reduction, Infrastructure Interventions, Non-Infrastructure Programmes, LEAP Programme, Participatory Governance, Local Resource Mobilisation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains one of the most pressing developmental challenges in sub-Saharan Africa, with Ghana being no exception (Abdallah, 2019). Despite numerous efforts to reduce poverty, particularly in rural areas, progress has been slow and uneven. The Northern Region of Ghana, where the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality is located, continues to experience high levels of poverty, exacerbated by its predominantly agrarian economy, poor infrastructure, and limited access to essential services (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, 60% of the population in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality resides in rural areas, with agriculture being the dominant livelihood for 89.3% of households. These factors, combined with limited access to markets, poor infrastructure, and a high dependence on rain-fed agriculture, have entrenched poverty in the region.

Addressing poverty in this context requires a multi-faceted approach that goes beyond short-term relief efforts. The Ghanaian government, in collaboration with international development agencies and NGOs, has introduced several poverty reduction programmes over the years, including the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme. LEAP is a social protection programme aimed at providing cash transfers to the poorest households to reduce vulnerability and enhance social inclusion (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). Additionally, the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly (SNMA) has implemented various infrastructure projects such as roads, dams, and electricity, aimed at improving economic opportunities and access to services. Despite these efforts, poverty rates remain high, and questions have been raised regarding the sustainability and effectiveness of these interventions (Abdulai & Hulme, 2018).

This study seeks to assess the effectiveness of poverty reduction interventions in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality from the perspectives of beneficiaries. It examines the impact of infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes on livelihoods, while exploring the role of participatory governance and local resource mobilisation in ensuring the sustainability of these interventions. The theoretical framework of this study is built upon two key concepts: self-reliance and participatory governance, which are critical for achieving sustainable poverty reduction in a decentralized development context (Owusu, 2020).

➤ *Background on Poverty and Infrastructure*

Infrastructure plays a critical role in poverty reduction by facilitating access to markets, improving productivity, and providing essential services such as education and healthcare. According to Adjei and Osei (2021), infrastructure investments, particularly in rural areas, have a multiplier effect on economic growth, as they enable greater market access, reduce transportation costs, and improve access to social services. In the context of the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality, infrastructure projects such as roads, small dams, and electrification have been prioritized as part of the broader strategy to reduce poverty. These interventions are particularly relevant in agrarian economies where access to markets and irrigation infrastructure can significantly improve agricultural productivity and incomes (Abdulai & Hulme, 2018).

However, while infrastructure is necessary for poverty reduction, it is not sufficient on its own. The World Bank (2020) emphasises that infrastructure must be accompanied by complementary policies and programmes that enhance human capital development and provide access to financial services. In Savelugu-Nanton, infrastructure investments have facilitated dry-season farming through small dams and improved access to markets through better roads, but there is still a need for greater support in the form of vocational training, access to credit, and social protection programmes that can directly address the underlying causes of poverty.

➤ *The Role of Social Protection Programmes*

Non-infrastructure programmes, such as LEAP, have been implemented alongside infrastructure projects to provide a social safety net for the poorest households. LEAP aims to reduce vulnerability by providing conditional cash transfers to households, enabling them to meet basic needs and access services such as healthcare and education (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). The programme has been lauded for promoting social inclusion and providing immediate financial relief to beneficiaries. However, critics argue that cash transfer programmes alone are not sufficient to address the structural causes of poverty, such as unemployment, lack of access to credit, and low agricultural productivity (Owusu, 2020).

This study explores the limitations of the LEAP programme in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality, particularly in terms of its long-term impact on poverty reduction. Although LEAP beneficiaries appreciate the financial support, many have expressed concerns about the programme's ability to lift them out of poverty. This finding is consistent with broader critiques of cash transfer programmes, which often fail to provide the necessary support for beneficiaries to transition to sustainable livelihoods (Adjei & Osei, 2021). To address these limitations, there is a growing consensus that social protection programmes must be integrated with economic empowerment initiatives, such as vocational training and access to credit, to create pathways out of poverty (Owusu, 2020).

➤ *The Importance of Participatory Governance*

A central argument in this study is that poverty reduction interventions are more effective when they are shaped by the beneficiaries themselves. Participatory governance, as articulated by Freire (1970), emphasises the importance of involving local communities in decision-making processes. This approach ensures that development interventions are aligned with the priorities and needs of the people they are meant to serve. In the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality, the limited involvement of beneficiaries in the design and implementation of poverty reduction programmes has contributed to a mismatch between the interventions provided and the needs of the community (Abdallah, 2019). For example, while infrastructure projects have been prioritized, many community members expressed a desire for more direct economic support, such as vocational training and access to credit (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019).

This study builds on Freire's (1970) dialogical approach to governance, which posits that development should be a participatory process, with local communities playing an active role in shaping the interventions that affect them. In this context, participatory governance can enhance the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of poverty reduction efforts by ensuring that programmes are responsive to local conditions and priorities. Furthermore, involving local communities in the planning and execution of development projects can foster a sense of ownership, which is critical for the long-term sustainability of these interventions (Owusu, 2020).

➤ *Local Resource Mobilisation and Financial Sustainability*

The financial sustainability of poverty reduction interventions is another critical issue explored in this study. One of the key challenges facing the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly is its overreliance on external funding, which undermines the long-term sustainability of both infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes. According to Owusu (2020), local governments in Ghana face significant constraints in mobilising internal resources, limiting their capacity to fund development projects independently. This reliance on donor funding and central government transfers leaves local governments vulnerable to fluctuations in external funding and political priorities (Abdallah, 2019).

Local resource mobilisation is essential for ensuring the sustainability of poverty reduction interventions. By generating internal revenue through property taxes, market levies, and other forms of local taxation, district assemblies can gain financial autonomy and reduce their dependence on external actors. This approach also fosters local ownership of development projects, as communities are more likely to support and sustain programmes that are funded and managed locally (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). For the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly, strengthening local resource mobilisation is critical for ensuring that poverty reduction efforts are sustainable and aligned with local priorities.

➤ *Research Questions*

This study seeks to answer three key research questions:

- How have SNMA's poverty reduction interventions impacted the livelihoods of beneficiaries?
- What role does beneficiary involvement play in the success or failure of these interventions?
- What challenges are hindering the sustainability of poverty reduction programmes in the municipality?

These questions will guide the analysis of the effectiveness of infrastructure and non-infrastructure interventions in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality. By examining these issues through the lens of self-reliance and participatory governance, this study aims to provide insights into how local governments can enhance the sustainability and impact of their poverty reduction efforts.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods sequential design to assess the effectiveness of poverty reduction interventions in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality from the perspectives of beneficiaries. The mixed-methods approach, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative research methods, allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in poverty reduction interventions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). By combining these methods, the study captures both the statistical trends and the in-depth personal experiences of the participants, ensuring that the findings are robust and contextually relevant.

➤ *Research Design*

The mixed-methods design was selected to provide both breadth and depth in the analysis of the poverty reduction interventions. Quantitative data were collected first to establish broad patterns and trends in the impact of the interventions, followed by qualitative data collection to explore the underlying reasons behind these patterns. This sequential design allows for the integration of data at different stages, ensuring that the quantitative findings are enriched by qualitative insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach is particularly useful in complex social phenomena such as poverty reduction, where both measurable outcomes and subjective experiences are important.

By using a mixed-methods approach, this study addresses the limitations inherent in using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone. Quantitative methods allow for the identification of statistically significant relationships between variables, such as the impact of infrastructure interventions on poverty reduction. However, they may not fully capture the lived experiences of beneficiaries or the contextual factors that influence these outcomes. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, provide rich, detailed insights into the perspectives of beneficiaries, but they may not be generalisable to a larger population. Combining both methods ensures that the study's findings are both

statistically valid and contextually grounded (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

➤ *Sampling Procedure*

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select participants for both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. The sampling procedure ensured that the sample was representative of the population in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality, capturing the diversity of experiences across different household types, geographical locations, and economic activities. First, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 353 households across six Area/Town Councils within the municipality: Savelugu, Nanton, Moglaa, Diare, Tampion, and Nyeko (Abdallah, 2019). This ensured that both LEAP households and non-LEAP households were adequately represented in the study. Stratification was based on key demographic variables such as household size, occupation, and access to poverty reduction programmes.

The sample size of 353 households was determined based on the population size of 2,982 households in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality, using Yamane's (1967) formula for determining sample sizes in large populations. This sample size ensures that the findings are representative and generalisable to the broader population of the municipality. The final sample comprised 89 LEAP households and 264 non-LEAP households, allowing for a comparative analysis of the different impacts of infrastructure and non-infrastructure interventions. By stratifying the sample to include both LEAP and non-LEAP households, the study ensures that variations in perceptions and outcomes across different intervention types are captured effectively.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select 32 opinion leaders and 4 key informants. These individuals were selected based on their knowledge and involvement in the implementation of poverty reduction interventions in the municipality. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of participants who can provide rich, relevant, and diverse insights into the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2015). Opinion leaders included local chiefs, religious leaders, and representatives from community-based organizations, while key informants included officials from the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly and the Municipal Social Welfare and Community Development Directorate.

➤ *Data Collection Methods*

The data collection process consisted of both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the full scope of the research objectives. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to the 353 households. The questionnaire was designed to gather data on household demographics, participation in poverty reduction programmes, access to infrastructure, and perceptions of the impact of these interventions on their livelihoods. The use of structured questionnaires allows for the collection of standardised data that can be analysed

using statistical techniques, providing a broad overview of the effectiveness of the interventions (Bryman, 2016).

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the four (4) key informants, while focus group discussions were held with the 32 opinion leaders. The semi-structured format allows for flexibility in exploring new themes that may emerge during the interviews while ensuring that key research questions are addressed (Patton, 2015). Focus group discussions provided a platform for community members to share their experiences and perceptions of the poverty reduction interventions in a collective setting, which encouraged dialogue and the identification of shared experiences and challenges. The qualitative data collection methods are particularly valuable for understanding the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of the interventions, as well as the specific needs and priorities of beneficiaries.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, both the questionnaire and interview guides were pre-tested in a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted with a small sample of 30 households and 5 opinion leaders in a neighbouring district, which has similar socioeconomic characteristics to the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality. The pre-testing process helped refine the data collection instruments by identifying ambiguous questions and ensuring that the tools were culturally appropriate and contextually relevant (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

III. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis process followed a two-stage approach, in line with the mixed-methods design of the study. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations, were utilized to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and illustrate the distribution of key variables related to the impact of poverty reduction interventions (Bryman, 2016). This approach allowed for a clear depiction of the extent to which various poverty reduction interventions, such as infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes, influenced the livelihoods of beneficiaries. These descriptive analyses provided valuable insights into the overall effectiveness of the interventions and highlighted key trends across the surveyed households.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The thematic analysis process began with the transcription of the interviews and focus group discussions, followed by coding to identify key themes related to the effectiveness of poverty reduction interventions, beneficiary involvement, and challenges to sustainability. Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and ability to provide detailed insights into complex social phenomena, such as the contextual factors that influence the success or failure of poverty reduction programmes. The combination of

quantitative and qualitative analysis ensures that the findings are both statistically robust and enriched by the lived experiences of beneficiaries (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

➤ *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the data collection and analysis process. The study adhered to the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation (Patton, 2015). Before data collection commenced, participants were provided with detailed information about the purpose of the study, the data collection methods, and how their data would be used. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences.

In line with ethical best practices, the study ensured that participants were not exposed to any risks or harm as a result of their participation. Sensitive topics, such as household income or access to social protection programmes, were handled with care to avoid discomfort or distress among participants. Additionally, the study employed culturally appropriate language and methods during data collection, ensuring that the participants' rights, dignity, and cultural values were respected throughout the research process (Patton, 2015).

IV. RESULTS

➤ *Impact of Infrastructure Interventions*

The findings of this study confirm that infrastructure interventions have a significant positive impact on poverty reduction in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality. Roads, dams, and electricity provision were particularly influential in improving access to services and enhancing economic opportunities for beneficiaries. As noted, 60.1% of respondents agreed that these interventions improved their livelihoods. This finding aligns with the broader literature, which asserts that infrastructure development plays a critical role in reducing poverty by facilitating market access, enhancing mobility, and stimulating local economic activities (Adjei & Osei, 2021).

Road construction, for instance, improved access to markets for agricultural products, significantly benefiting rural farmers. Improved road networks also reduced transportation costs, which, in turn, increased the profitability of farming activities. These benefits are particularly critical in agrarian communities where access to urban markets can mean the difference between subsistence and commercial agriculture (Abdulai & Hulme, 2018). Moreover, the construction of small dams has allowed for dry-season farming, which was previously limited due to erratic rainfall patterns. This intervention increased household incomes and diversified the agricultural base of the municipality, enhancing food security.

Access to electricity also played a pivotal role in improving the livelihoods of the respondents. By facilitating small-scale industries such as welding, ice water production,

and food preservation, electricity has expanded economic opportunities for both men and women in the community. Electricity provision has further enabled extended hours for educational and economic activities, leading to increased productivity. Similar trends have been observed in other parts of Ghana, where electrification has had a transformative impact on local economies (Owusu, 2020).

However, while infrastructure interventions positively impacted poverty reduction, the study identified certain limitations. For example, infrastructure development in Savelugu-Nanton has not been uniformly distributed, with some remote communities still lacking access to essential infrastructure. This uneven distribution risks exacerbating inequalities within the municipality, as those without access to these facilities remain disconnected from the broader economic benefits (World Bank, 2020). Therefore, while infrastructure interventions have significantly contributed to poverty reduction, their long-term effectiveness depends on equitable distribution across the entire municipality.

➤ *Limitations of Non-Infrastructure Interventions*

Non-infrastructure interventions, particularly the LEAP programme, yielded mixed results. While LEAP is designed to provide financial assistance to the poorest households, only 69.7% of LEAP respondents felt the programme promoted social inclusion. However, a much larger proportion (80.2%) of the total respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the economic impact of LEAP, particularly in terms of poverty reduction. This finding highlights a disconnect between the intended outcomes of LEAP and the actual experiences of beneficiaries. As noted by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the effectiveness of poverty reduction interventions is often compromised when programmes are inadequately targeted and underfunded.

A key issue with LEAP is its narrow focus on cash transfers, without sufficient complementary services such as vocational training or access to microcredit. This lack of support limits beneficiaries' ability to use the cash transfers as a springboard for long-term economic improvement. Although LEAP households appreciated the social protection provided by the programme, they also expressed a desire for more comprehensive interventions that could help them achieve economic independence (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). Research suggests that combining cash transfers with initiatives that build skills, offer business development support, or provide access to agricultural inputs would significantly enhance the long-term impact of the programme (Owusu, 2020).

The LEAP programme's effectiveness is also hindered by logistical challenges such as delays in payments and insufficient outreach to the most vulnerable populations. Many non-LEAP households reported that they were unaware of the programme or were unable to access it due to bureaucratic inefficiencies (Abdulai & Hulme, 2018). These findings suggest that while LEAP is a valuable social safety net, its capacity to reduce poverty is limited by operational constraints and insufficient integration with broader development strategies.

Additionally, the study revealed that non-infrastructure interventions, such as agricultural subsidies, were perceived as less effective than infrastructure programmes. Agricultural subsidies, designed to support small-scale farmers by reducing the cost of inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, were underutilised due to poor awareness and access issues. Only 45.2% of respondents reported benefiting from these subsidies, with many citing difficulties in accessing the necessary inputs. These challenges reflect a broader trend in development policy, where top-down interventions often fail to align with the realities on the ground, leading to suboptimal outcomes (Adjei & Osei, 2021).

➤ *Challenges to Sustainability*

One of the critical challenges to the sustainability of poverty reduction interventions in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality is the reliance on external funding. The overdependence on international donors and central government allocations undermines the long-term viability of both infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes. As noted by Owusu (2020), the sustainability of poverty reduction programmes depends heavily on the ability of local governments to mobilise internal resources and reduce their reliance on external aid. This dependency creates a precarious situation where essential poverty reduction programmes can be disrupted or discontinued if external funding sources are withdrawn.

For example, while infrastructure projects such as roads and dams were initially successful, their maintenance has become a significant challenge due to inadequate funding at the local level. Without sufficient financial resources, the municipal assembly struggles to ensure that infrastructure remains functional and continues to benefit the community. This has led to instances where roads and dams have fallen into disrepair, reversing some of the gains made in poverty reduction. Infrastructure deterioration is a well-documented challenge in development contexts where maintenance costs are not adequately planned for (World Bank, 2020).

Non-infrastructure interventions also face sustainability challenges due to funding limitations. For instance, the effectiveness of the LEAP programme is constrained by inconsistent and delayed payments, which stem from irregular donor funding and budgetary constraints. As a result, beneficiaries are unable to rely on the programme as a consistent source of financial support, undermining its potential to lift households out of poverty (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). Furthermore, the study found that the lack of local ownership of these programmes diminished their long-term sustainability. Programmes like LEAP are often perceived as externally driven, with little input from local communities in their design or implementation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Another significant challenge identified in the study is the limited participation of beneficiaries in the planning and execution of poverty reduction interventions. As Freire (1970) argues, participatory governance is essential for

ensuring that development interventions are relevant and effective. In the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality, the top-down approach to implementing poverty reduction programmes has led to a disconnect between the needs of beneficiaries and the interventions provided. For example, while the municipal assembly prioritized infrastructure development, many community members expressed a desire for more direct support in areas such as vocational training and access to credit. This mismatch highlights the need for more participatory approaches to development planning, where beneficiaries are actively involved in the decision-making process (Freire, 1970).

➤ *The Role of Local Resource Mobilisation*

The findings of this study also underscore the importance of local resource mobilisation in ensuring the sustainability of poverty reduction interventions. Local governments, such as the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly, must develop strategies to increase their financial autonomy to reduce their dependence on external funding. One approach is to strengthen local revenue generation through property taxes, market levies, and other forms of local taxation. As Owusu (2020) argues, local resource mobilisation not only enhances the financial sustainability of development programmes but also fosters greater local ownership and accountability.

The study found that the municipal assembly's limited capacity to generate local revenue hindered its ability to invest in both infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes. For example, while infrastructure development received significant external funding, local governments were often unable to allocate adequate resources for the maintenance of these facilities. Similarly, non-infrastructure programmes such as LEAP were underfunded due to the municipality's reliance on donor funding, which was frequently delayed or insufficient (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019).

Local resource mobilization is also critical for ensuring that poverty reduction programs are tailored to the specific needs of the community. By generating their own revenue, local governments can have more flexibility in allocating resources to areas that are most pressing for the community, rather than being constrained by the priorities of external donors (Owusu, 2020). In the case of Savelugu-Nanton, strengthening local resource mobilisation could provide the financial stability necessary to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of both infrastructure and non-infrastructure interventions.

V. DISCUSSION

➤ *The Role of Infrastructure in Poverty Reduction*

The findings from this study underscore the critical role that infrastructure plays in reducing poverty in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality. Infrastructure, including roads, electricity, and water facilities, directly influences the livelihoods of beneficiaries by improving access to markets, enhancing productivity, and enabling the provision of essential services. The impact of infrastructure development

on poverty reduction aligns with prior research that emphasises the transformative power of infrastructure in boosting economic activity, improving living standards, and reducing rural-urban disparities (Adjei & Osei, 2021). This study affirms that infrastructure interventions have had far-reaching benefits, particularly in agricultural communities where improved access to markets has enhanced the profitability of farming activities, reduced transportation costs, and facilitated access to essential services such as healthcare and education.

Furthermore, infrastructure interventions have contributed to human capital development by improving access to education and health services. For instance, better roads and electrification have enabled children in rural areas to attend school more regularly and study during the evening hours, enhancing educational outcomes. Similarly, improved roads have facilitated quicker access to health facilities, which has been crucial in emergency situations, particularly in maternal and child health. As argued by the World Bank (2020), investments in infrastructure are fundamental to enabling human capital development, which is inextricably linked to long-term poverty alleviation. Therefore, the role of infrastructure in improving both economic and social outcomes highlights its significance in achieving sustainable poverty reduction in the region.

➤ *Non-Infrastructure Interventions: The Case of LEAP*

While infrastructure interventions have been instrumental in driving poverty reduction, non-infrastructure programmes such as the LEAP initiative have shown limited effectiveness. This is not entirely surprising, given that the design of the LEAP programme focuses on providing short-term cash transfers rather than fostering long-term economic independence (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). The study revealed that although LEAP succeeded in promoting social inclusion and providing immediate relief to the poorest households, its impact on long-term poverty reduction was minimal. This finding aligns with existing critiques of cash transfer programmes, which often provide temporary alleviation of poverty but fail to address structural economic challenges, such as unemployment or the lack of access to credit and training (Owusu, 2020).

A more sustainable approach to poverty reduction through non-infrastructure interventions would require integrating cash transfers like LEAP with complementary programmes. For instance, cash transfers could be paired with vocational training, agricultural support, or access to microfinance, empowering beneficiaries to generate sustainable income beyond the immediate relief of cash transfers (Adjei & Osei, 2021). Without these additional supports, cash transfer programmes risk becoming dependency-inducing rather than transformative, as beneficiaries may remain reliant on government aid without improving their long-term financial standing. This reinforces the importance of comprehensive poverty reduction strategies that go beyond direct cash assistance to focus on building human capital and enabling access to productive resources.

The limited success of LEAP in achieving its intended outcomes also highlights the importance of targeting and programme design. While LEAP aimed to target the most vulnerable populations, this study found that many eligible households either were unaware of the programme or encountered significant barriers in accessing it. These findings reflect the broader challenge of effective targeting in social protection programmes, where exclusion errors (i.e., the exclusion of eligible beneficiaries) can undermine the programme's impact (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Addressing these issues would require improving programme outreach, enhancing the efficiency of beneficiary identification processes, and ensuring that payments are regular and reliable.

➤ *The Need for Participatory Governance and Local Resource Mobilisation*

One of the most significant findings of this study is the need for greater participatory governance in the planning and execution of poverty reduction interventions. The limited involvement of beneficiaries in decision-making processes has contributed to a disconnect between the types of interventions implemented and the actual needs of the community. This is particularly evident in the case of non-infrastructure interventions, where beneficiaries expressed a desire for more direct economic support, such as vocational training or access to credit, rather than cash transfers alone (Freire, 1970). The study highlights that when communities are actively engaged in the planning of development interventions, the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of those interventions are significantly enhanced.

Participatory governance is a crucial element of successful development planning. Freire's (1970) notion of the "dialogical approach" underscores the importance of creating spaces where beneficiaries can actively participate in the decision-making process. Development interventions that are informed by the perspectives of beneficiaries are more likely to be responsive to local needs and contexts, reducing the likelihood of failure or ineffectiveness. In the case of the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality, involving beneficiaries in programme design could have led to a better alignment between the community's actual needs and the interventions provided. For example, local farmers might have advocated for more substantial investments in agricultural extension services or access to affordable credit, which could have supported more sustainable livelihoods.

The sustainability of poverty reduction interventions is also closely linked to local resource mobilisation. The study found that the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly's dependence on external funding hindered the sustainability of both infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes. As Owusu (2020) notes, external funding sources are often unreliable, subject to political shifts or donor priorities that may not align with local needs. To ensure the long-term viability of poverty reduction efforts, it is essential for local governments to enhance their capacity for internal revenue generation. By mobilising local resources through taxes, levies, or other local revenue streams municipal governments can have more autonomy in determining

development priorities and ensuring the sustainability of funded interventions.

Local resource mobilisation not only ensures financial sustainability but also fosters local ownership of development initiatives. When local governments and communities contribute directly to the financing of development programmes, there is a greater sense of accountability and responsibility for the success of these interventions. This approach aligns with the self-reliance framework, which emphasizes the importance of communities controlling their own development processes rather than depending on external actors (Ndlovu-Gatseni, 2020). By strengthening the capacity of local governments to generate revenue, Ghana's district assemblies can improve the sustainability of poverty reduction programmes and reduce their dependency on donor funding.

➤ *Addressing the Challenges of Globalization and Technological Dependency*

While this study focuses on local poverty reduction interventions, it is important to situate these findings within the broader context of globalisation and technological dependency. As Ghana continues to integrate into the global economy, its development trajectory is increasingly shaped by external forces, including global market trends, foreign investments, and international aid. These external forces can both help and hinder local development efforts. On the one hand, globalisation provides opportunities for economic growth, access to new technologies, and international trade. On the other hand, it can exacerbate inequalities, create dependencies on foreign technologies, and undermine local knowledge systems (Owusu, 2020).

The findings of this study suggest that poverty reduction interventions must be designed in ways that mitigate the negative effects of globalisation and technological dependency. For example, while infrastructure development is critical for reducing poverty, it is important to ensure that infrastructure projects do not increase dependence on foreign technologies or external expertise. Local governments should prioritise building local capacities to maintain and operate infrastructure systems, thus reducing dependency on external actors. This can be achieved through capacity-building initiatives that train local workers in the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, as well as through the use of locally sourced materials whenever possible (Abdulai & Hulme, 2018).

Additionally, the challenge of technological dependency is particularly relevant in the agricultural sector, where farmers often rely on imported technologies and inputs. As part of a broader strategy to reduce poverty, local governments and development partners should invest in developing indigenous technologies that are better suited to the local environmental and economic context. This approach would reduce dependency on expensive foreign inputs, promote sustainable farming practices, and encourage the use of local knowledge in agricultural production (Adjei & Osei, 2021).

VI. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the effectiveness of poverty reduction interventions implemented by the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly (SNMA) through the perspectives of beneficiaries. The findings revealed important insights into how different types of interventions, particularly infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes, contribute to poverty reduction in the municipality. While infrastructure-related interventions such as roads, dams, and electricity have been largely successful in improving livelihoods, non-infrastructure programmes like LEAP have shown limited effectiveness. The study highlights the importance of local resource mobilisation, participatory governance, and the challenges of sustaining poverty reduction efforts in the face of globalisation and technological dependency.

➤ *Infrastructure as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development*

The success of infrastructure interventions in driving poverty reduction cannot be overstated. Roads, electricity, and water infrastructure have played a pivotal role in enhancing access to markets, services, and economic opportunities, directly impacting the livelihoods of beneficiaries (Adjei & Osei, 2021). The positive effects of infrastructure improvements align with the broader development literature, which emphasizes that physical infrastructure is essential for creating an enabling environment for economic growth and human development (World Bank, 2020). In Savelugu-Nanton, these interventions have spurred agricultural productivity, improved access to education and healthcare, and increased employment opportunities in small-scale industries such as welding and food processing.

However, while infrastructure interventions have proven effective, their sustainability remains a critical challenge. The reliance on external funding for infrastructure projects means that the long-term maintenance and functionality of these assets are often at risk when funding dries up (Owusu, 2020). Therefore, as the municipality continues to develop, it must prioritise building local capacities for infrastructure maintenance and management. This requires not only financial investments but also the training of local professionals and technicians who can ensure that roads, dams, and electricity grids continue to operate efficiently over time.

➤ *The Shortcomings of Non-Infrastructure Interventions*

In contrast to the success of infrastructure projects, non-infrastructure interventions, particularly the LEAP programme, have shown limited impact on poverty reduction. While LEAP has promoted social inclusion, providing financial assistance to the poorest households, it has not generated significant improvements in long-term economic outcomes. Beneficiaries expressed dissatisfaction with the programme's ability to lift them out of poverty, primarily due to its focus on short-term cash transfers without sufficient support in the form of training, job creation, or access to credit (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019).

The limitations of the LEAP programme highlight the need for a more integrated approach to social protection. Cash transfer programmes like LEAP can be more effective when complemented by initiatives that foster economic self-sufficiency. For example, pairing cash transfers with vocational training or agricultural support could help beneficiaries develop skills, increase productivity, and ultimately reduce their dependency on government aid (Owusu, 2020). Addressing the limitations of non-infrastructure interventions requires a shift from short-term relief strategies toward programmes that empower beneficiaries to build sustainable livelihoods.

➤ *Participatory Governance and Local Ownership*

One of the key findings of this study is the limited involvement of beneficiaries in the design and implementation of poverty reduction interventions. Participatory governance, as emphasised by Freire's (1970) dialogical approach, is essential for ensuring that development programmes are responsive to local needs and contexts. In the case of Savelugu-Nanton, the lack of meaningful participation from community members has contributed to a mismatch between the interventions provided and the actual needs of the beneficiaries. For example, while infrastructure development has been prioritised, many community members expressed a desire for more direct economic support, such as access to credit or vocational training programmes.

The study underscores the importance of incorporating local voices into the decision-making processes for poverty reduction interventions. When beneficiaries are actively involved in shaping the design of these programmes, the likelihood of success increases, as the interventions are more likely to reflect the priorities and needs of the community (Freire, 1970). This requires creating mechanisms for dialogue between local governments, development partners, and community members, ensuring that interventions are co-designed and co-implemented with the people they are meant to serve.

➤ *Local Resource Mobilisation and Financial Autonomy*

The overreliance on external funding is a major barrier to the sustainability of poverty reduction interventions in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality. Both infrastructure and non-infrastructure programmes are heavily dependent on international donors or central government allocations, which makes them vulnerable to funding fluctuations and external political priorities (Owusu, 2020). The study highlights the need for local governments to enhance their capacity for internal revenue generation as a means of ensuring the continuity of poverty reduction efforts.

Strengthening local resource mobilization, through mechanisms such as property taxes, market levies, or other forms of local taxation, can provide municipal governments with the financial independence they need to sustain development programmes. Local resource mobilisation also fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, as communities are more likely to support programmes that are funded and managed locally. This approach aligns with the

broader concept of self-reliance, which emphasizes the importance of local control over development processes (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). For the Savelugu-Nanton Municipal Assembly, building financial autonomy through local revenue generation is essential for reducing dependency on external donors and ensuring that poverty reduction interventions are both relevant and sustainable.

➤ *Addressing the Challenges of Globalisation and Technological Dependency*

Finally, this study places the findings on local poverty reduction interventions within the broader context of globalisation and technological dependency. As Ghana continues to integrate into the global economy, its development trajectory is increasingly shaped by external forces such as global market trends, foreign investments, and technological imports. These external forces offer both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, globalisation can provide access to new markets, technologies, and investment opportunities. On the other hand, it can exacerbate inequalities, create dependencies on foreign technologies, and undermine local knowledge systems (Owusu, 2020).

To address these challenges, poverty reduction interventions must be designed with a clear focus on building local capacities and reducing dependency on external technologies and expertise. For example, while infrastructure projects are essential for development, they should be designed in a way that prioritises local ownership, maintenance, and operation. This includes training local workers to build and maintain infrastructure systems and encouraging the use of locally sourced materials whenever possible (Abdulai & Hulme, 2018). Similarly, in the agricultural sector, efforts should be made to promote indigenous technologies and farming practices that are better suited to the local environmental and economic context, reducing reliance on expensive foreign inputs (Adjei & Osei, 2021).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1: Yamane (1967) sampling model

Yamane (1967) sampling model was applied:

$$n_y = \frac{N}{1 + N(\alpha)^2}$$

Where:

- n_y = the Yamane sample size (?)
- N = the sample frame (2,983)
- α = the confidence interval (0.05)

Substituting the data above into the sampling model it generated the following as the sample size to be the studied.

$$n_y = \frac{2,983}{1 + 2,983(0.05)^2} = 352.7$$

$$n_y \approx 353$$

Appendix Table 1.2: List of Settlements, Sampled Households and Opinion Leaders

Sampled Area Council	Sampled Community		No of HH	LEAP HHs	Non-LEAP HHs	Sampled HH	Opinion Leader
				A	B	A+B	
Moglaa	1	Tarikpaa	173	5	15	20	2
	2	Moglaa	142	4	13	17	2
	3	Kanshegu	90	3	8	11	1
	4	Libga	77	2	7	9	1
	5	Duko	63	2	5	7	1
	Sub-Total (A)		545	16	48	64	7
Diare	6	Diare	1207	36	106	142	10
	7	Zoosali	115	3	11	14	1
	8	Tuunaayili	58	2	5	7	1
	9	Dipale	100	3	9	12	1
	10	Kukuobila	84	3	7	10	1
	Sub-Total (B)		1564	47	138	185	14
Nanton	11	Nanton	644	19	57	76	7
	12	Kpachelo	81	3	7	10	1
	13	Gbumgbum	56	2	5	7	1
	14	Sahakpaligu	47	1	5	6	1
	15	Fazihini	45	1	4	5	1
	Sub-Total (C)		873	26	78	104	11
Grand Total (A+B+C)			2982	89	264	353	32

Note: HH - Household

Appendix Table 1.3: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable		LEAP Households		NON-LEAP Households		Total Households	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq.	%
Sex	Male	73	82.0	169	64	242	68.6
	Female	16	18.0	95	36	111	31.4
	Total	89	100	264	100	353	100.0
Age Group	18-30	15	16.9	28	10.6	43	12.2
	31-43	41	46.1	101	38.3	142	40.2
	44-56	18	20.2	82	31.1	100	28.3
	57-69	14	15.7	49	18.6	63	17.8
	70+	1	1.1	4	1.5	5	1.4
	Total	89	100	264	100	353	100
	Level of Education	None	84	94.4	91	34.5	175
Primary		1	1.1	29	11.0	30	8.5
Middle/JHS		2	2.2	64	24.2	66	18.7
Second cycle		2	2.2	62	23.5	64	18.1
Tertiary		0	0.0	11	4.2	11	3.1
Non formal education		0	0.0	7	2.7	7	2.0
Total		89	100	264	100	353	100
Primary Occupation	Crop farming	62	69.7	151	57.20	212	60.1
	Livestock farming	7	7.9	37	14.00	44	12.5
	Trading	11	12.4	55	20.80	66	18.7
	Artisan (specify)	9	10.1	11	4.20	20	5.7
	Public service	0	0.0	10	3.80	11	3.1
	Total	89	100	264	100	353	100
Secondary Occupation	None	9	10.1	12	4.5	21	5.9
	Crop farming	11	12.4	47	17.8	58	16.4
	Livestock farming	39	43.8	117	44.3	156	44.2
	Trading	18	20.2	60	22.7	78	22.1
	Artisan (specify)	12	13.5	28	10.6	40	11.3
	Total	89	100	264	100	353	100
Number of Years in Community	1-5 years	5	5.6	3	1.1	8	2.3
	6-10 years	6	6.7	11	4.2	17	4.8
	11-15 years	27	30.3	83	31.4	110	31.2
	16-20 years	2	2.2	36	13.6	38	10.8
	21-25 years	36	40.4	108	40.9	144	40.8
	26+years	13	14.6	23	8.7	36	10.2
	Total	89	100	264	100	353	100