



SEND GHANA

(A Subsidiary of SEND Foundation of West Africa)

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PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of SEND GHANA Preliminary Assessment of Selected Sectors of the 2025 Budget Statement and Economic Policy

Accra, 17th March 2025—SEND GHANA applauds government for incorporating key recommendations of citizens into the 2025 national budget. This marks a positive step in strengthening budget transparency, inclusive, and accountable governance. The government's decision to uncap the National Health Insurance Levy (NHIL) and allocate GH¢9.93 billion to the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) in the budget is a major step toward sustainable healthcare financing. This action will not only improve access to quality healthcare for Ghanaians but also help the country move closer to achieving Universal Health Coverage. Additionally, the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) has been uncapped, allowing for more resources to address critical infrastructure deficits and enhance the quality of education at the SHS and tertiary levels.

The government's commitment to strengthen Ghana's major poverty reduction programs — the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Programme, the School Feeding Programme, and the Capitation Grant is particularly noteworthy. LEAP benefits have now been indexed to inflation, with the number of beneficiary households set to increase from 350,000 to 400,000 by July 2025. The School Feeding Programme budget has also seen a 30.8% increase, rising from GH¢728.8 million in 2024 to GH¢953.5 million in 2025, enhancing both the quality and coverage of school meals. The fight against menstrual inequity have received significant boost with the government's commitment to allocate GH¢292.4 million for providing free sanitary pads to female students in primary and secondary schools. This initiative is crucial in reducing absenteeism among girls and ensuring they can manage their menstrual health with dignity. These efforts, if fully implemented, will enhance Ghana's chances of achieving key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite these remarkable steps, our analysis reveals some critical gaps that require urgent consideration by the government. These issues cut across social protection, healthcare, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), education, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene.

Sector specific issues

Social Protection

Fully roll out the LEAP re-assessment for graduation of beneficiaries.

The LEAP program has experienced significant improvements, including periodic adjustments of the cash grant amount, a steady increase in enrolment expected to reach 400,000 households, and the recent introduction of an indexation mechanism. While this is a cause for celebration, successive governments have not prioritized the periodic reassessment of beneficiaries, which is a requirement of the program.

Vision: A Ghana where people's rights and well being are guaranteed.

The Mission of SEND is to promote good governance and the equality of women and men in Ghana.

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According to the 2022 Auditor General's report, the government's failure to carry out these assessments resulted in improper payments totalling GH¢396,620.00 to beneficiaries who no longer qualify for the program. In 2024, some reassessments were conducted in 10 districts in the northern regions of Ghana, with plans for further assessments in the remaining regions. Although the 2025 budget aims to continue this activity, it does not specify the timelines for completing the reassessments. The government must establish clear and strict deadlines for the full implementation of these reassessments to prevent wasteful expenditures, improve program coverage, and ensure its sustainability.

Index school feeding against inflation, too.

In addition to increasing the school feeding grant, it is essential to index the grant against inflation to prevent depreciation in value and ensure sustained impact similar to what is done for the LEAP program. The government also needs to establish clear policy guidelines for recruiting caterers for the school feeding program, moving away from political patronage. This approach will ensure that skilled individuals are hired to provide quality meals for students and creating job opportunities for the youth who have acquired catering skills. Furthermore, like the LEAP program, the government must guarantee timely disbursement of funds, even beyond the IMF program. This will enhance efficiency and prevent the frequent agitation among caterers that we have witnessed recently.

Healthcare

Increase domestic resource mobilization

The proposed uncapping of the National Health Insurance Levy (NHIL) presents a crucial opportunity for the Government of Ghana to significantly enhance domestic resource mobilization for claims payments. Although the NHIL is supported by government funding, the current allocation of approximately GHS 9 million into the NHIF is insufficient due to the expansion of care services to include critical care, vaccine payments, primary health care, and the funding gap left by USAID. There is a high risk that NHIL may become overburdened. For instance, the vaccine payment aligns with the government's commitment to achieving vaccine sovereignty by 2029, especially as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, begins to phase out its co-financing support for Ghana. However, currently, Ghana owes an outstanding amount of \$16.25 million in addition to its co-financing obligations for 2025. Vaccine payment alone is much more than the allocation to the NHIF.

To prevent vaccine stockouts, which could occur if there are delays in co-financed vaccine procurement, the government must increase the amount to the NHIF and ensure the early and consistent disbursement of NHIL funds.

Address Epidemic Preparedness Through Dedicated Pool of Resources.

The Government acknowledges that immunization is a means to addressing the challenge of epidemics, and thus wants to tackle Ghana's epidemic preparedness and response through it. However, immunization does not completely solve the problem. For instance, as the case of meningitis has shown, the new strains of the disease has not been responsive to available vaccines which use to provide immunity for at least 10 years. This means dedicated funds are required to respond immediately to emerging diseases if known measures become ineffective.

The Government needs to create a dedicated pool of resources for the purpose of epidemic preparedness research, education/sensitization, effective surveillance, monitoring and evaluation and capacity strengthening of health personnel.

Low health budget threatens gains made in Primary healthcare delivery

The government has allocated 6.32% of the total national budget to health care. While this represents a slight growth in 2024, it remains below the Abuja Declaration's guideline of allocating 15% of the national budget to the health sector. Alarming, 74% of this year's allocation is directed towards compensation, an increase from 72.4% in 2024 and 57% in 2023. However, there has been no corresponding rise in the number of professionals receiving financial clearance or in their salaries. This situation deepens our reliance on unpredictable donor support for healthcare services and related projects, threatening our primary healthcare. Consequently, the country may incur additional debts by borrowing and receiving loans to fund capital expenditures and services, raising concerns about sustainability.

Furthermore, the government allocated 20% of the total health budget to goods and services and 6% to capital expenditures (CAPEX). The Ministry of Health's Mid-Term Review for 2023 highlighted several underperforming indicators related to goods and services and CAPEX. These include stock-outs of essential medicines, poorly functioning ambulance service stations, community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) zones lacking effective emergency transport systems, underdeveloped Accident and Emergency (A&E) units in public hospitals, and insufficient implementation of planned preventive maintenance. It is crucial for the government to reduce allocations to the compensation line item and increase funding to the goods and services and CAPEX components to enhance healthcare services.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

Remove taxes on sanitary products for inclusive access

The government's provision of GH¢292.4 million for free sanitary pads in public and basic schools is a positive step. While the initiative is commendable, it does not extend to marginalized out-of-school and those in apprenticeship programs, who equally face challenges related to menstrual health. Inclusivity in menstrual health strategies is vital for addressing period poverty among all adolescents. Though the government lifted taxes on certain locally produced pads in the 2024 budget, this has not translated into lower prices for consumers, hindering accessibility. A full tax exemption on all sanitary products would significantly enable girls in apprenticeship and out-of-school to buy their own pads. This is a more sustainable approach which will contribute to combating period poverty and fostering menstrual health equity. The government must adopt clear, a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to ensure sufficient and equity in implementing the initiative.

Increase fund allocation to the Domestic Violence Fund.

The Domestic Violence Act led to the establishment of the Domestic Violence Fund (DVF), which provides essential support to survivors through material assistance, rehabilitation, reintegration, shelter construction, and personnel training. However, the fund has faced financial constraints over the years, limiting its impact. The 2025 budgetary allocation to the DVF has been reduced by 87.5%,

receiving only GHS 337,500 compared to GHS 2.7 million in 2024. This significant decrease further weakens the fund's ability to fulfil its mission. The lack of prioritization undermines support systems for survivors, leaving many without access to essential services. Without sufficient funding, crucial services for survivors will be severely affected, hindering their recovery and reintegration into society. The government must prioritize the DVF by increasing its financial allocation to ensure its effective operation.

Education

Infrastructure deficit at both basic and secondary undermines quality education

The education sector continues to face significant challenges at both the basic and secondary levels. Over 700 junior high schools remain under trees and in poor structures and many second-cycle institutions are still implementing the double-track system to alleviate overcrowding among students. However, this system increases the strain on school facilities, and the high intake of students negatively impacts the existing infrastructure and learning.

Government funding for goods and services, as well as capital expenditures (currently at 10.63%), is grossly inadequate to address the infrastructural deficits and to deliver quality educational services in the country. Basic education particularly suffers from chronic underfunding. According to our 2023 budget analysis, approximately 3.5 billion is needed annually to improve infrastructure in basic education. Government must increase allocations for goods and services and capital expenditures to enhance teaching and learning. While the allocation of 20% of allowances to incentivize teachers assigned to underserved communities is a positive step toward improving the teacher-pupil ratio and conditions for these educators, allocating 87% of the education budget to compensation is not equitable.

Capitation grants releases are characterised by frequent delays

The capitation grant has increased from GH¢84,000,000 to GH¢145,511,700 (raising the per-child allocation from GH¢10 to GH¢15), aimed at improving school performance through better access to teaching and learning materials. The increase is commendable, but the real value of the allotted funds due to inflation already renders the allocation inadequate to address the needs of basic education. Thus, timely release is necessary, as delays will only impact negatively on the grants.

We urge the government to index capitation against inflation and ensure the timely release of funds so schools can utilize them effectively.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Promote the local production of reusable sanitary pads

The allocation of GH¢292.4 million for the distribution of free sanitary pads to female students in primary and secondary schools is highly commendable. This initiative will promote good hygiene practices and reduce period poverty among schoolgirls. However, we urge the government to leverage this initiative to encourage local production of reusable sanitary pads. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure that there is unhindered access to water and changing rooms in schools, allowing girls to feel comfortable and maintain hygienic practices during their periods.

Take bold step to save our water bodies

The government's plan to dredge *“all major river bodies with specific emphasis on the Black Volta, White Volta, Pra, Ankobra, Oti, Birim, Offin and Lower Volta basins to remove sediment, debris, and toxic pollutants that accumulate due to illegal mining activities to restore water quality”*. Galamsey directly impacts the cost of producing potable water and contributes to unhygienic conditions due to pollution. However, we are skeptical about whether the budget allocation of less than GH¢1 billion to the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing will be sufficient to clean all the rivers to ensuring access to clean water for people, especially those living in areas affected by galamsey.

We urge the government to take a critical look at concerns raised and address them so as to guarantee full benefits of the laudable initiatives spelt out in the 2025 budget statement.



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