



SEND GHANA

(A Subsidiary of SEND Foundation of West Africa)

PRESS CONFERENCE

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SEND GHANA COMMENDS AND URGES GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE REGULAR FLOW OF FUNDS FOR PAYMENT TO LEAP BENEFICIARIES

SEND GHANA notes with satisfaction, government's payment of arrears owed beneficiaries of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). SEND believes that, this is critical to restoring confidence in the programme, and guaranteeing the safety and dignity of the poor and vulnerable citizens, who count on LEAP to address their basic needs.

It is recalled that the release of funds for the 61st cycle LEAP payments to beneficiaries across the country was delayed. The delay also affected some 30,000 LEAP households with over 125,000 beneficiaries in 10 districts across the country during the previous payment cycle in June 2019. These delays created a situation of discomfort and anxiety amongst beneficiary households, while some social welfare officers, who have oversight responsibility of the programme at the district level, reportedly suffered some credibility and integrity loss.

As a public policy and advocacy organization committed to promoting good governance and accountability, SEND issued a press statement in September 2019, drawing the attention of government, who may have been out of touch with the predicaments and sentiments being expressed by citizens, and thus, called for its immediate intervention. SEND GHANA is happy to learn that, government responded favourably, and in October last month, funds were released, and payments to LEAP beneficiaries have since being completed in most parts of the regions. We highly commend the government for fulfilling its obligation to the core poor in our society.

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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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While noting the government's swift action and the progress made, SEND deems it extremely necessary to again bring to government's attention, some disturbing reports from our monitoring visits to assess coping mechanisms, adopted by LEAP beneficiaries during the relatively long period of non-payment of their cash grant. While some LEAP beneficiaries within the period, borrowed from friends, others relied on the benevolence of relatives for purposes of feeding and healthcare. Yet, some could not afford to cater for the needs of their dependents in school. Those who engage in subsistence farming could not access subsidized input such as agrochemicals, to help grow their crops etc. It is worth stating, as a matter of fact, that, information gathered from our monitoring, corroborates reports from section of the media that have undertaken a similar monitoring exercise. Key demand of many of the beneficiaries is for government, to increase the grant size and ensure its timely inflows, which in our considered view, largely resonates with the voices of diverse groups and stakeholders, including Civil Society, research institutions and the academia. We are of the opinion that social protection is the right of citizens and that it is not a favour being done to the beneficiaries. Therefore, government's attempt at fulfilling such rights must not be done partially.

For this reason, SEND GHANA urges government to heed legitimate demand of citizens, especially, those enrolled on the LEAP programme due to their vulnerability and poverty status, and to whom the government has committed to making regular payments to uplift their dignity and livelihoods. SEND fully agrees with Oxfam's 2019 commitment to reducing inequality report, that says that "poverty and inequality are not inevitable or preordained, but the result of deliberate policy choices and can be reversed."

In conclusion, SEND wishes to remind the government, as it presents the 2020 Budget Statement and Economic Policy on November 13 2019, to particularly make adequate provisions for social protection expenditure, and ensure that

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such budgetary allocations are fully and timely disbursed. We would like to caution that Ghana risks derailing the progress made in her efforts towards defeating poverty and reducing inequalities if we allow needless delays and irregularities in funds disbursement to undermine the impact of poverty reduction interventions such as LEAP. We therefore urge government to never again delay in the payment of LEAP beneficiaries and the effect of such undue delays could be very devastating on the lives of the poor and vulnerable.

Signed

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(Deputy Country Director, SEND GHANA)

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