



The role of foreign aid in promoting livelihoods of rural farmers in Ghana: A study of Nsawam pineapple farmers

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Background: The last five decades have witnessed significant inflows of donor assistance from the international donor community to support rural livelihoods and development in Ghana. However, after 50 years of consistent aid to Ghana, donor assistance has not fared as expected to improve farmers' livelihoods and agricultural productivity.

Aim: Using the modernisation theory as the basis of the study, this article examines how urbanisation, urban growth, and access to and security of rights to land affect the utility of development aid for farmers' livelihoods.

Setting: The setting is among the pineapple farmers at Nsawam in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Method: Relying on the qualitative research approach, data gathered reveal that because of urbanisation pressures, farmers' rights to their lands are threatened by economic and political powers with stakes in farmers' lands, such that farmers at all times attempt to find alternative livelihoods, even with development aid.

Conclusion: Thus, the study concludes that when farmers' major assets are threatened, they do not necessarily seek to sustain current livelihoods. Rather, they constantly seek alternative ones, a finding that should inform sustainable livelihood analysis to better understand farmers' perspectives and meet their expectations about their own livelihoods. The study advocates 'livelihood transience' as an expanded and integral form of livelihood analysis. This expanded notion should not replace the current focus on 'sustainable livelihood', but rather complement it.

Keywords: Foreign aid; farmers; livelihood; rural farmers; Ghana; pineapple farmers.

Introduction

Support for farmers and the promotion of livelihood among the poor in society is very significant for the donor community in Ghana. Three decades of political turbulence, which characterised the country between 1966 and 1992, plunged the Ghanaian economy into stale economic growth and development. The worsening economic outlook of the country attracted significant donor resources into the country to bridge these development gaps (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2013). Support for the production of non-traditional crops has gained much attention in Ghana. Consequently, donor assistance is sometimes directed to support farmers' livelihoods for higher incomes through encouraging production of new export crops that can also boost foreign exchange earnings for the state. To this end, some donor assistance has sought to support smallholder pineapple farmers in Ghana. Production of pineapple in the Nsawam area has declined over the last decade because of high production cost and a lack of market and capital for farmers. Farmers' livelihoods are crumbling as a result. Indeed, smallholder farmers, private sector industries and the state are all suffering reduced revenues and income. To help boost pineapple production and alleviate this challenge, aid providers provided financial aid to smallholder farmers to improve farming activities and also promote livelihoods. This article focuses on reviewing the experiences of these farmers in three villages around Nsawam to understand how the aid programme fits to farmers' livelihoods experiences. Insights of the article are to contribute to informed policy and programme on sustainable rural livelihoods to better meet the expectations of target people.

Note: This article is partially based on the author's thesis for the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in the subject Development Studies at the University of South Africa, South Africa, with supervisor Dr D.A. Kotze, received in September 2015, available here: http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/19050/thesis_adom_ay.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1

Conceptual framework

Foreign development aid is the transfer of resources from donor nations to needy countries. These donor resources can also be considered as international transfer of capital, goods and services to needy nations (Ekiring 2000). Since independence, Ghana has received foreign development aid, though minimal, from the 1950s to mid-1960s because of the country's relative high economic growth and development then (Kim and Lee, 2013), and the scepticism of Nkrumah's government for Western leadership at the time. Aid gradually became a major form of development assistance for Ghana from the 1970s when political instability and economic mismanagement ensured steep economic decay, loss of jobs and a rise in poverty (Aryeetey & Kanbur 2008). Indeed, between the mid-1960s to early 1980s, Ghana's economic history is referred to as the Dark Days (Killick 2010). To this end, foreign aid became an integral component of the economy for promoting growth and development (Adom 2015; Jomo & Fine 2006). Even the more dire economic decline from the early 1980s following harsh climatic conditions, corruption and worse global markets for Ghana's foreign exchange earning products led the government then in 1983 to embrace the neoliberal Economic Recovery Program (ERP) (Rimmer 1992). The ERP saw the donor community assisting in open (liberal) economic-based reform of major sectors of the Ghanaian economy, through a massive injection of funds into supporting, for instance, agricultural productivity, rural livelihoods and increased natural resource exploitation (Thompson & Casely-Hayford 2008).

Ghana's touted era of hope, however, witnessed average national economic performance and increased decentralised democracy, where local governments led the process of rural development and support for rural livelihoods. In this context, under the conviction of the international donor community that aid can work for Ghana, the country witnessed an unprecedented level of more than US\$1306.93 million in aid inflows (OECD 2013). The avalanche of donor resources into the shores of Ghana did not improve the economic outlook of the country over the period, neither was it found to improve the livelihood of the citizens. Farmers became the worse affected because the country had to extensively rely on imported food from abroad as part of the conditions attached to most of the aid received. The poor correlation between the quantity of aid received and the dismal economic performance of the country generated strong debate among scholars and policy-makers in relation to the significance of the donor resources in promoting livelihood. While some scholars and policy-makers, such as Sachs (2005) and Easterly (2006), support the debate that aid resources can be employed to bridge the development gap among the poor, Moyo (2009) and Hansson (2007) called for the abolishing of the aid scheme because it has negative consequences for the recipient nation.

The concept of livelihood

The concept of livelihood pervades a number of disciplines, theoretical works and development practice targeting poverty reduction (Krantz 2001; Scoones 2009). Drawing on

Chambers and Conway (1991) and Scoones (1998, 2009), livelihood in this work refers to 'the means and processes to live' (Narh 2015). It entails resources, processes, relationships, capacities and abilities of farmers to access and use resources to live. Conceptualising livelihood this way in this article may be narrow; livelihood sustainability is influenced predominantly by the ability to overcome 'stress and shocks, maintains or enhances its capabilities and assets, and provides sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation' (Dartey-Baah & Ampofo 2015). Scoones (1998) also indicated that livelihood is sustainable also when it does not 'undermine the natural resource base' (p. 4). Nonetheless, with its precise focus on the utility of development aid for livelihood, it is beyond the scope of this article to determine and analyse intergenerational opportunities, multiscale, or natural resource conservation dimensions of livelihood, as Chambers and Conway and Scoones propose. Livelihood analysis has, over the years, been carried out as a process for empowering the poor. The sustainable livelihoods approach is a multidimensional and integrated analytical tool for poverty reduction or guideline for project implementation targeting poor people. It addresses the previous narrow definition of livelihood that informed a focus on isolated and disjointed individual sectoral support (Krantz 2001).

The focus on poor and rural people's livelihoods dominates the programmes and projects of most aid providers. These agencies are not the focus in this article, but it is necessary to mention them here to create a quick mental image of the importance that development aid programmes between Ghana and donor communities attach to the livelihoods of rural people. Although methodological weaknesses of how to identify poverty and the poor remain (Krantz 2001), development aid agencies have, since the 1990s, widely adopted the sustainable livelihoods approach with its exclusive focus on poor people for their programmes and projects. Thus, sustainable livelihood analysis and consequent development policy focus on poor farmers mostly in rural areas.

Livelihood analysis and development practice highlight assets or capital resources as a major component of livelihoods for the poor. Assets for livelihood may take different forms of tangible capital stock or endowments such as land, equipment, technology, cash and other materials, or intangible resources (Ellis 2000; Leach, Mearns & Scoones 1999). In this respect, one of the most important assets of farmers is arable land. Putting this in the context of this article, particular attention will be focused on access and security of rights of farmers to their land assets as a crucial factor affecting their livelihoods. Drawing on the access theory (Ribot & Peluso 2003), it is a contention in this article that rights alone do not define claims over and access to land as assets for farmers. Indeed, assets are negotiated within social, economic and political power contexts.

In view of the power dynamics that affect assets of farmers, in this article farmers' access to and security over their assets, and their livelihood strategies will be analysed under the presumption that to make a living or to develop a livelihood

may not necessarily mean permanent contentment with a particular kind of livelihood. Farmers' strategies may be aimed at changing their livelihoods over time. The dominant analysis of livelihood in the literature, however, is that sustainable livelihood approaches commonly construct target people as 'poor'. Such a construction obscures attention on strategies that poor people adopt to find alternative livelihoods, or even progression away to find completely different forms of livelihood. The point of departure in this article, therefore, is that it is true that people strategise on their livelihoods, but most often they do not intend to only sustain them. Rather, poor people by their strategies also constantly attempt to move out of their current livelihoods to alternative ones, if circumstances provide opportunities for them to do so, and/or if their assets are threatened. Thus, the notion of livelihood in this article is that current livelihood strategies may actually be aimed at finding alternative livelihoods that people perceive to serve their needs better.

The results and analysis in the next section will show that in the Nsawam area where land values are rising as the area gradually urbanises and Accra extends its frontiers, farmers' rights to land are being subverted by people with economic and political power. In view of this subversion, people constantly strategise to confront the maze of powers that come to bear on their major assets, land (Ellis 2000; Marchetta 2011). In this article, farmers' livelihood strategies are engendered by threats to their assets (King 2011). It will be seen below that farmers try to use their current assets to shift to alternative livelihoods other than farming. Thus, livelihood is dynamic, changing from time to time according to how circumstances and strategies evolve in attempts to derive utility from existing and new assets.

The modernisation theory

Modernisation is one of the first theories that emerged in the development discussion in Europe and gained the world's attention when developing countries started gaining independence in the 1950s (Adom 2015; Giddens 1991). According to the modernist, emerging economies must be prepared to 'walk' the path of development to be able to actualise development in their respective young nations. This, according to the modernist, was what nations like the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and France have done to graduate from poor and underdeveloped societies into 'modern industrial giants'. The modernisation theory advocates for the 'right' mobilisation of both internal and external resources in the march towards appreciable development (Passe-Smith 2003; Todaro & Smith 2009).

Analytical framework

The analysis and discussions in this article are guided by the access theory (Ribot & Peluso 2003). In this framework, the article interrogated the utility of development aid for pineapple farmers' livelihood, and how this utility is affected by 'access to and security of rights' to land as the major livelihood asset for the farmers. Ribot and Peluso (2003:153)

further argue that 'access to resources refers not only to property rights but also to the ability to benefit from things'. This implies that 'property is not only about rights, but also about all different forms of obtaining and maintaining access to resources'. In the context of this article, access theory relates to instances where powerful individuals are able to assert their authority, based on varied circumstances, to dispose farmers of their rights so that these farmers, though they are entitled to their lands, find their ability to derive benefits from their lands curtailed altogether.

Methods and study area

Understanding farmers' experiences of their livelihoods and the financial assistance from the MCA was the major goal in collecting primary data for this study. For this reason, a case-study design was adopted. This approach draws from Yin (2012), Baxter (2010), and Gibbert, Ruigrok and Wicki (2008) that the case study enables holistic in-depth understanding of the issue under investigation. Thus, the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality was chosen as the case for this work because of the area's proximity to Accra, the national capital of Ghana, which the authors thought could likely shape unique experiences of maintaining rural livelihoods. The Municipality is approximately 23 km from Accra, and it is situated in the southeastern part of the Eastern Region of Ghana. It is bordered to the south by the Ga and Tema Municipalities of the Greater Accra Region, to the north by Akuapem North Municipality, to the west by Suhum Municipality and Upper West Akyem District, all in the Eastern region (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS] 2014).

Agriculture, forestry and fishing closely follow the wholesale and retail sector as the major economic activity for the majority of people in the Municipality. Agriculture is dominant in rural areas, with 71.7% of households in agriculture as their major livelihood (GSS 2014). Crops produced most are cassava, plantain, fruits and vegetables. The Municipality is best known for its production of pineapples for the local and international markets. There are fruit juice companies such as Blue Skies and the Nsawam Cannery that use pineapples in their production.

Empirical primary data were collected between October and December 2015 from a total of 16 pineapple farmers who had accessed the MCA loan facility, and five family heads in three villages. The villages are Sekyikrom, Fotobi and Ankwa Dobro. Visits were also made to the twice-weekly Nsawam open market to meet and discuss the issues, especially with women farmers. Consultations were also held with three officials of the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipal Assembly. The primary data were transcribed, and analysis was facilitated by the use of the Atlas.ti qualitative analysis computer software, where codes and themes were drawn inductively from the interview transcripts. Subsequently, the analysis in the article draws on the access theory (Ribot & Peluso 2003). The theory allows for addressing the outcomes of development aid as affected by various factors shaping security of access to and ownership of

land, which is the major livelihood asset for pineapple farmers in the Nsawam area.

Ethical consideration

All the ethical principles were strictly adhered to in this research.

Results and analysis

Primary data were collected on the perceptions and strategies of farmers on their livelihoods and how the MCA loan supports such livelihoods. The data reveal several issues that connect from different angles and piece together to produce deep insights. Access theory and the concept of livelihood, as discussed above, come in handy to explain the primary data to show that circumstances affecting livelihood assets, which are land in the case of Nsawam pineapple farmers, mediate the actual effect of development aid on farmers' livelihood. To this end, the primary data show that property rights alone do not secure land for farming as a sustainable form of livelihood. Farmers' rights to their lands are affected by economic and political power of actors with stakes in farmers' lands – this, in turn, affects how development aid works for farmers' livelihoods. Because of the spatial spread of Accra and the gradual urbanisation of Nsawam, economic power of urban developers couples with political power of family heads to buy off farmers' rights to their lands. Consequently, the data show that development aid, which is oblivious to these challenges, does not align with the expectations of farmers about their livelihoods. Thus, power, be it economic or political, and how it affects livelihood assets, is a crucial element that should be addressed in any support for farmers. Next, these issues from the primary data are analysed before they are pieced together in a discussion in the 'Results and analysis' section.

Access to land for pineapple farmers

Access to land and retention of that land, or security of tenure, is precarious now for the smallholder pineapple farmers in the study area. Interactions with these farmers reveal that security of rights to land has been weakened severely over the last two decades. The lands in the area are owned and administered on the basis of customary law by families. Thus, rights to land are organised customarily in a hierarchy, from allodial rights as the supreme and most comprehensive rights to land and held by the family head in trust for the entire extended family, to the usufructuary rights as use rights held by individual members of the family, and to tenancy rights held on rental basis by any other person. The usufructuary and tenancy rights are therefore derivations of the allodial right. They are both use rights. However, the usufructuary right can be held only by a person who holds membership of a landowning family by blood, adoption or gift. Usufructuary rights holders possess wide discretion and autonomy to use land because as a member of the family, an individual should at all times have unrestricted access to customary land for their livelihood, and they should be able

to pursue their livelihoods on the communal land without any undue hindrances (Narh 2015). Most of the farmers in this study area hold the usufructuary right. They, however, lament that family heads and urban developers connive to allocate their lands for physical development.

Yet, farmers claim that for the economic power of urban people seeking to buy land, family heads alone cannot sell off their lands without a major breach of customary norms. In this respect, farmers' understanding of their rights to land reveals a misconception created in the literature that the usufructuary rights to land can be abrogated by a decision made on the basis of the allodial right. Actually, the farmers indicate that the usufructuary right, though considered use rights and subject to the allodial rights, in reality can not be taken away just anyhow at any time. Only a serious breach of the custom regarding land tenure can result in a farmer being dispossessed of their usufructuary rights. To this end, it is opined that whether the usufructuary right can be abrogated or not is dependent directly on how much economic and political power one holds to abrogate or defend such rights. In the case of Nsawam area farmers, most often it is the family heads and urban developers that hold the power.

The dominant reason given for the weakening or disappearing rights to land in the study area is the stashing away and incorporation of rural lands into urban schemes. The growth of Accra is spreading out towards Nsawam, currently having engulfed the villages of Dobro and Medie. Nsawam, the Municipal capital, is also growing and engulfing surrounding village lands. Thus, the economic value of land is increasing at a fast rate. In response, family heads (but also sometimes farmers themselves) even without the consent or knowledge of land users lease out increasing tracts of farmland to developers. Consequently, farmers adopt different strategies to confront the land sales or find alternative livelihoods other than farming. Box 1 is an Atlas.ti software reproduction of a farmer's experiences with the practice of land sales and how it affects his livelihood. The statements in Box 1 represent the dominant experiences obtained from the field¹.

Influence of power on land rights

As indicated in Box 1, power is crucial in maintaining rights to land in the Nsawam area. But then, family heads contend bitterly that as custodians of customary land, they are entitled by custom to manage family lands as they deem appropriate to benefit the family. Thus, they are not ready to relinquish this responsibility just because some family members claim they are deprived. In these complicated situations, intra-family conflicts over rights to land are not uncommon because the value of land appreciates from urbanisation and urban growth. Some farmers lament the rising intra-family conflicts that are impacting negatively on security of rights to land.

¹'Query report' in all boxes are quotations from interview transcripts generated by the Atlas.ti software. 'Interpretation' in all boxes are the authors' own interpretation of quotations.

BOX 1: Land sales to urban developers and consequent livelihood strategies.**Query Report**

... [a]nd you know it is the same; in my family each person takes land from his father, and it becomes the property of those siblings. Like me and my brother, we took our lands from our own father. But I can say that we are lucky because we are only two so there is big land for each of us. Some people are many in their families so they inherit only small pieces of land: <ref>P 1: Clement.docx - 1:4 [(3:3)] by Super</ref>
 Yes, yes, I want to sell this land so that abusua panyin [family head] and his crook people do not come ask me to leave it for them to sell: <ref>P 1: Clement.docx - 1:7 [(7:7)] by Super</ref>
 Well you know, everybody needs land to build. You can see that Nsawam is no more a small place now. So I will see if I can do something else other than pineapple. You know you cannot farm anymore when many people in this place have sold most of the land and building surrounds you: <ref>P 1: Clement.docx - 1:26 [(11:11)] by Super</ref>

Interpretation

Clement, a smallholder farmer, is a middle-aged farmer having cultivated pineapple for the last 20 years on a 3-acre farm. He has considered his land an inalienable inheritance passed on to him by his father. However, he has already concluded transactions to sell off (i.e. lease) 2 acres of this land because he fears the extended family (represented by the family head) will soon forcefully sell off all his land as pressure of urbanisation and urban growth builds up on the area for vacant land. Ironically, Clement considers the possible actions of his extended family to sell off his land legitimate, because the family head holds the allodial rights to the land. But the family head can do so only in circumstances where he (Clement) has committed a grave offence against the customs of the family. Yet, if his land should be sold at all, it should provide him as much benefit as others in the family. This, however, is often not the case as the family head maintains a non-transparent system that denies family members of benefits from land sales. For Clement, to sell his land first before the family does so is to be smart. But this means he will have to change his livelihood from pineapple farming. He hopes that he can secure an alternative livelihood that provides greater and more secure benefits than farming.

BOX 2: Capital-intensive nature of pineapple farming.**Query Report**

Aahh, this pineapple business, hmmm; you make the money and spend it again on chemicals on the farm. This year I have spent close to 7,000 Ghana cedis on chemicals and fertiliser to improve my farm. I hope that I am able to pay off so many loans I have already taken around: <ref>P11: Yoofie.docx - 11:5 [(5:5)] by Super</ref>
 Since our father left this land for us, the men have not been interested to use it. I think they prefer to acquire their own property. But it is our father's so if we own it we actually do so much good for him. Our children will also come to use it. My brothers are in Accra now, but they come home from time to time. They give me some money when they come. Who knows, if pineapple farming remains this expensive, maybe I will also join them there in Accra soon to do something else. If there is no one to take care of this land if I should go to the city, I will have to sell it: <ref>P11: Yoofie.docx - 11:13 [(15:15)] by Super</ref>

Interpretation

In all, Yoofi's experiences indicate that she hardly makes enough profit from her farm to convince her that she should continue farming pineapple for a long while more. Thus, it can be expected that saving is rare, except when her brothers remit her or visit from Accra and bring some money along. All her three brothers left the village for the city to live and work. In her early 30s, Yoofi believes she may have to abandon pineapple farming to do something else, probably in the city too, if pineapple farming remains capital intensive. Because her brothers are not really interested in the land that they inherited from their father, she is considering leaving it in the care of a neighbour if she should leave for the city. But then, as land values are rising from urbanisation and urban growth, she cannot be sure to maintain the land when she is not in the village. Perhaps the family head will sell it, but she can rather sell it first.

Added to the influence of power on their rights to land, farmers face another challenge in maintaining their pineapple farming. Significantly, the farmers indicate that they cultivate pineapple currently, but this is no more an attractive business because of a lack of off-season storage and processing, poor soils, worsening climatic conditions, besides weakening property rights. Many farmers use artificial fertilisers to replenish nutrients and bring plants to fruit quickly. Pineapple farming is thus a capital-intensive business. Farmers reveal that an acre of pineapple farm requires on average between 4000 and 7000 Ghana cedis (1067 and 2000 Euro as of December 2015) to cultivate. Some fruit processing plants like Blue Skies have had to operate at lower than usual capacity because of the inability of farmers to supply to fill factory stock. Many farmers are not able to meet the specifications of the fruit processing factories like Blue Skies. Therefore, these farmers often resort to the local market where the bumper season sees lower prices. In the lean season, however, price of pineapples rises quite high, but it is also the period when the weather condition is most unfavourable and more chemicals have to be applied on the land to produce to meet market demand. Thus, relative cost of production is still high in either bumper or lean season. Box 2 reproduces representative statements from a farmer on the cost of pineapple farming and its effects.

In the circumstances of precarious rights to land, high capital requirements and unstable pineapple markets, most farmers who obtain forms of aid support are unable to produce expected yield on their loans. Consequently, for many pineapple farmers loan repayment is a problem (Ankrah & Dorward 2015). Quite revealing, some farmers after securing the aid loans deliberately do not invest all the money in their pineapple farms and use a

part of the aid support to find and secure other forms of business. This practice though may be defined as deceit, a more in-depth attempt to understand the plight of farmers in the context of their precarious land rights, unstable pineapple markets and growing urban economic opportunities will enable a better appreciation of farmers as active agents who seek to maximise any resources at their disposal to advance their interests, and this interest may be finding alternative livelihoods other than farming. Box 3 reproduces statements from a farmer on his loan repayment experience.

The farmers in the study have different livelihood experiences. However, the common point running through their experiences is that farming may cease to be their livelihood over time. The underlying common factor for this is the precarious nature of their rights to land as developers and family heads buy off more land to develop. Rising land values in the Nsawam area means the pressure on property rights of farmers is likely to increase, not abate. The ensuing strategies of farmers to possibly abandon farming and find different livelihoods leave development aid programmes with the task to understand farmers' expectations and their livelihood aspirations if it is to make any meaningful impact for farmers. It is conclusive from the farmer experiences listed above that pineapple farming may not necessarily be a sufficient livelihood for farmers if they see alternative, more secure livelihoods that earn more income and yet do not entail the strains of land rights and pineapple market challenges.

Discussion

In this section, development aid is placed in farmers' experiences. The insight from the data analysis is that even

BOX 3: Challenges for loan repayment.**Query report**

Oh, this year [2015], it has been good. We got good rains so the land produced more. But the problem is that you take all to the market and return home with so little money because everyone is selling: <ref>P 2: Fofie.docx - 2:5 [(3:3)] by Super</ref>
 You cannot depend only on one job. I have a small fitting shop that I want to expand. I will combine it with the pineapple farming. I will do this mechanic work as well to see how far I can succeed. That shop, I get about 30 Ghana cedis [8 Euro as at December 2015] a day at least. If the day is good then I get a bit more. But I have to keep using the land else people will say it is vacant and they will pay huge money to get it. I will not allow that to happen: <ref>P 2: Fofie.docx - 2:9 [(7:7)] by Super</ref>
 ...[b]ut you see, I also need money for my fitting shop so I cannot put the entire farm loan into pineapple farming. It is not their problem; it is my problem to pay so anyhow I will pay it is not their problem. I will surely pay, whether for pineapple or for fitting shop: <ref>P 2: Fofie.docx - 2:20 [(26:26)] by Super</ref>

Interpretation

Harvest has been good this season as many farmers invested their loans in farming. But the consequence is that prices drop and wipe off any high returns from the loans. Therefore, with about 30 Ghana cedis for a day's income, Fofie is convinced his new fitting shop can earn him about the same level of livelihood as in pineapple farming. He does not intend to abandon pineapple farming altogether, but he concentrates as much on his mechanic work. When he received the MCA loan, Fofie divided the loan into two halves, one for his pineapple farming and the other to build a shed and its accessories for his fitting shop. But his mechanic business is new and needs time to recoup profits to repay the loan.
 In effect, Fofie deliberately divested some of his loan from pineapple farming and is unable to fully pay the loan currently. He hopes things turn around for the better. But already he thinks he cannot maintain his current livelihood as farming alone. He needs to add an alternative, if not a higher income, livelihood, hence his fitting shop. He will keep his farming livelihood though, to safeguard the land.

though the MCA support had good intentions for pineapple farmers in the Nsawam area, in the context of the challenges to land rights it failed in two respects: firstly, it took for granted that farmers possess assets that remain theirs, that is, they have secure rights to land; and secondly, the fact that its conception of farmers' livelihood did not see livelihood as a dynamic phenomenon. These two points are discussed next.

Rights to and security of assets

On the basis of farmers' strategies to pursue other forms of investments and livelihoods to overcome the challenge of land rights insecurity, livelihood assets are not only affected by property rights, but also by a host of factors including power of people with stakes in these assets (Ribot & Peluso 2003). In their theory of access, Ribot and Peluso (2003) emphasise that accessing things, for example resources, is more than a bundle of rights (property). Instead, it is a bundle or a web of powers that enables actors to gain, control and maintain access to resources in which they have or perceive a stake and from which they derive benefits. Thus, though pineapple farmers hold rights to their lands, they have to face the power of other stakeholders, that is, family heads and urban developers. Property is not only about rights, but also about all different forms of obtaining access. To this extent, farmers' rights are just one of many forms of power that enable access to and maintenance of resources. When the other forms of power overcome farmers' rights to land, their assets are insecure, as is the case of the pineapple farmers.

It will therefore be our contention that farmers are practical agents who see development aid not just to boost their current farming activities. Rather, how much useful development aid is for farmers' livelihoods will depend on how such aid supports or hinders their strategic ways to confront powerful intrusion into their rights to land. It will also depend on whether they are determined to find alternative livelihoods as a response to their weakening land rights. Farmers are not expected to just accept any form of aid without an assessment of its usefulness for their livelihood aspirations. They have agency and will always manoeuvre situations. Agency is generally understood to mean the capacity of individuals to act independently of institutions and other restraints, within various situational contexts, to make their own free choices for their interests (Brown &

Westaway 2011; Giddens 1984; Loyal & Barnes 2001; McLaughlin & Dietz 2008). In this regard, one key argument for emphasising agency with respect to farmers strategising on development aid for their livelihoods is that it helps to overcome the view of people as powerless or passive victims of situations or events affecting their lives. Individuals as actors in a given situation do not just passively adapt to the situation. Rather, such situation or landscape is a contested terrain, where actors simultaneously adapt to and actively attempt to reshape the landscape for their interests (McLaughlin & Dietz 2008).

Property and access are about relations among people concerning benefits or values – their appropriation, accumulation, transfer and distribution. Therefore, access is framed within dynamic political and economic relations that help identify the circumstances by which some people are able to benefit from particular resources, while others lose out. Any support for farmers should not overlook how these dynamic relationships affect livelihood assets of people. Development aid managers fail to recognise that the livelihood assets of farmers can be made productive or not, depending on the level of their vulnerability to power in the unequal relationships they face (Krantz 2001:22–23). For the pineapple farmers in the Nsawam area, the economic and political power of urban developers and family heads combine to deny these farmers the benefits of their livelihood assets, land, as urbanisation and urban growth threaten to engulf the pineapple growing communities. In the circumstances, development aid has worked for farmers not to boost their current livelihoods, but rather as a useful resource to explore alternative livelihoods.

Dynamism and transience of livelihood

Collectively, the actions of farmers to manoeuvre the challenges facing their livelihoods reveal that livelihood is a dynamic process and transient. People constantly seek to make a better living, thus at all times explore opportunities to improve on or change from current livelihoods to alternatives ones, according to their own life circumstances. For the pineapple farmers in the study area, they will not want to be farmers always. For them, to confront current livelihood challenges means that they must find alternative livelihoods or modify existing ones for better outcomes. If opportunities

become available, farmers do not aim to maintain the same livelihood for the rest of their lives. Nonetheless, it is important that analysis of the dynamism of livelihoods and livelihood strategies is placed within their situational context to determine if and why really people will want to seek alternative livelihoods.

We can posit then that the dynamism of livelihood, as the experiences of the pineapple farmers reveal, is where people possess active agency to manoeuvre situations and resources to improve on or change from their current livelihoods, even if livelihood interests are at variance with official policy and programme goals. Indeed, many policy and programme failures are because of a lack of recognition of the agency and power of target people to subvert aims of these policies and what governors believe is good for them (Mayntz 1998). The sustainable livelihoods approach, discussed in the 'The concept of livelihood' section, is an appropriate tool to capture agency of people in manipulating programmes. In doing so, it is nonetheless important that the sustainable livelihoods approach does not regard people as content with their current forms of livelihood. The farmers' experiences indicate that when people find the opportunity, they use their agency to always find alternative improved livelihoods.

One key argument for drawing on agency in analysing the relationship between farmers' livelihoods and development aid is that it helps to understand pineapple farmers as not powerless or passive victims of the challenges they face, but as active entrepreneurs who constantly draw out opportunities from these challenges to make better lives. Focusing on environmental vulnerability and the role of agency in the incidence of vulnerability and coping mechanisms of people, McLaughlin and Dietz (2008) argue that differential risks on people and their responses to vulnerability should be approached from a dynamic perspective, recognising that phenomena are contested terrain where actors through their agencies constantly adapt to and actively attempt to reshape the phenomena. Their main argument is that human agents have the capacity to reshape phenomena affecting their lives, in efforts to adapt to changes in those phenomena.

It is therefore evident that livelihood analysis should entail an appreciation of the diverse range of major factors that affect particular forms of livelihood (Morse & McNamara 2013), and how these factors aid alternative livelihoods. Putting together the two limitations of the MCA support for pineapple farmers in the Nsawam area, it is demonstrated that in real life livelihood is indeed dynamic, changing from time to time according to how circumstances, relationships and strategies evolve (Marchetta 2011) and the attempts of people to identify and pursue opportunities for alternative livelihoods. As such, it should be acknowledged that external aid not only supports current livelihoods, but can possibly be a window for people to escape current livelihood entrapments for alternatively better livelihoods. When development aid

for farmers is understood this way, governments and donors will see beyond current situations and include future livelihood prospects of people.

In effect, we suggest an expanded form of livelihood analysis, where equal focus should also be placed on 'livelihood transience'. The concept of livelihood transience is the composite of strategies that utilise current opportunities and resources not for maintaining existing livelihoods, but rather for securing new livelihoods. The notion of livelihood transience, however, should not replace the current focus on 'sustainable livelihoods'. It should build on and complement it. What is important in this regard is to recognise that the notion of sustainable livelihood that views people as settled with their current forms of livelihood and therefore will want to 'sustain' them is inadequate to explain the dynamism of livelihoods. In the notion of livelihood transience, people will be seen rather as constantly striving to find alternative better livelihoods. Thus, with this new notion, any livelihood analysis will consider the aspirations and strategies of people to move from one form of livelihood to another, and what resources they are using in this regard.

Conclusion

In this study, the relationship between development aid and livelihood of smallholder pineapple farmers in three villages in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality was investigated. The work solicited the experiences of these farmers to explore the utility of development aid for their livelihoods. It is informed by the quite low impact on poverty reduction and improved livelihoods that the massive inflows of donor assistance into the Ghanaian economy have achieved so far. While external assistance seeks to support farmers to maintain and improve their farming, empirical data reveal that particular local circumstances stimulate farmers' strategies to find alternative forms of livelihoods as a way of confronting or overcoming challenges to their assets. Thus, donor assistance for rural livelihoods does not yield the desired results on livelihoods because donor managers are either oblivion of or fail to address the challenges that confront assets of farmers, such as how powerful actors weaken farmers' rights to land. In other words, development aid often fails to achieve its goals because it does not align with the expectations that farmers have of their livelihoods. In the context of pineapple farming in the Nsawam area, to make aid relevant to beneficiary farmers, donors can direct some focus on supporting measures to secure the major assets of farmers, that is, land.

It is concluded that livelihood is dynamic and transient. Livelihood transience focuses on how people identify alternative livelihoods from current opportunities and resources. Support programmes on livelihoods should be mindful of the fact that target people possibly see such support not as a resource to maintain current forms of livelihood, but as a window to escape current entrapments to find alternatively better livelihoods. To this end, governors and donors should see beyond current livelihood situations

and include in their programmes future livelihood prospects that people see. In effect, this study advocates 'livelihood transience' as an expanded and integral form of livelihood analysis. This expanded notion should not replace the current focus on 'sustainable livelihood', but rather complement it.

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Author's contributions

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