

## **The embeddedness challenge and Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes: the case of local food networks and the Ghana School Feeding Programme.**

School feeding programmes in middle- and high-income countries tend to rely on local procurement of commodities, while similar programmes in low-income countries usually depend on external sources of food aid (Bundy, Burbano et al. 2009). The Ghana School Feeding Programme has as one of its objectives to procure food locally in order to create market for local smallholder producers and thereby boost local agricultural production (GoG, 2006). A stable demand from the school feeding market is expected to give local farmers the confidence and the needed resources to make investments in improved technologies as well as build their capacity to access new markets and hence trigger multiplier effects on economic growth (Mitchell 2009). However, little has been achieved in practice to this effect in Sub-Saharan Africa (USDA, 2009). Studies that have focused on the Ghana School Feeding Programme have found similar results (USDA, 2009; SEND Ghana, 2008; ECASARD, 2009; Lopatka, 2008; SNV, 2007; SNV, 2008).

Unfortunately, all these studies have not paid enough attention to the social context in which these programmes are implemented. The process and forms of these local purchase schemes are better analyzed from the perspective of economic sociology, which takes into account the context, process and outcomes of exchange (Hinrichs, 2000). The concept of embeddedness then becomes relevant here since it is key in economic sociology. This phenomenon affords us the opportunity to examine the embeddedness challenge and its role in conceptualizing economic activity. This is because such programmes are based on neoclassical economic models and have been observed so far not to be working as planned. The notion of embeddedness is suspected to be the explaining factor for such observations.

The problem is that the degrees and qualities of embeddedness of the GSFP and those of the local networks of food provisioning it targets are not fully understood. The main objective, then, is to understand the GSFP market and the local networks of food provisioning that it targets and then determine their degrees and qualities of embeddedness. This research will contribute empirical evidence to the embeddedness challenge of explaining economic activity as well as provide information that could be used to improve the design of such development interventions for the desired impact.

Through in-depth case studies, this study will make use of the notion of embeddedness, the actor-oriented approach and actor-network theory to examine the Ghana School Feeding Programme and its interaction with local networks of food provisioning. Though these theoretical lenses focus on different things, they complement each other to enable a holistic understanding of the issues at stake in this research. A qualitative case study design will be used to collect, analyze and interpret data. Data collection will be in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations. Secondary sources of data in the form of reports and programme documents will also be used.