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Evaluating Ghana's Youth-Centered Food-Security Policies: A Collaborative Governance Approach

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Abstract: Food-security issues remain essential for decision-makers at all levels in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and youth-oriented food-security policies in Ghana are no exception. While there are no "one-size-fits-all" policy pathways to eradicate poverty and hunger, various governments, civil society, youth groups, and citizens can afford to ignore the present food policies' status quo. This paper examines the perspective of sustainability when collaborative and open governance approaches are adopted by central governments and their sub-national departments, institutions, and agencies in youth-oriented food-security policymaking, implementation, and evaluation. The extent to which active stakeholder participation and collaboration, or the lack thereof, has either negatively or positively impacted food-security policies is another tangent this paper explores, including the sustainability of the youth-centered food-security policies in Ghana. Using qualitative documentary analysis technique through collaborative and open governance frameworks and drawing on the literature on multisectoral governance and youth-focused food-security policies, this paper identifies several disjointed youth-focused food-security intervention policies in Ghana with hazy institutional arrangements that have failed to ensure adequate implementation and assessment to promote cooperation, accountability, and transparency. The paper suggests the need for collaborative governance, effective policy monitoring, and evaluation strategies that involve government institutions, departments, agencies, civic societies, youth organizations, and citizens' commitments to food security. This research finds that collaborative strategies and active youth participation in all food-security-related policies are essential for Ghana to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 2.

Keywords: collaborative governance; multisectoral collaboration; food security; Ghana; youth; youth policies

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1. Introduction

Over 2.4 billion people worldwide experience significant food insecurity, with 900 million facing extreme food insecurity [1]. Food insecurity remains pervasive in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), including Ghana. Food deprivation confronts millions (123 million people) in SSA, including children and young people, according to the United Nations (UN) special agency, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) [1], and thus, there is a need for broader multisectoral collaboration efforts to curb food insecurity issues [2]. To alleviate the widespread food insecurity issues within the sub-region, it has been argued that the youth should actively participate in agriculture [3] to ensure food availability and stability.

One area that continues to draw the attention of most governments in SSA is the agriculture sector because of its potential to reduce food poverty and serve as an employment opportunity for the teeming youth. Despite youth-focused food-security and socioeconomic policies, young people in Ghana and Africa face global social, political, and economic challenges [4,5]. There is a paradox of youth unemployment in SSA despite the myriad of youth-centered food-security and employment social intervention

initiatives [6,7]. Ambiguity persists regarding youth participation, empowerment, and employment in Africa, including Ghana. Ghana's youth-oriented food-security policies lack clear youth involvement in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation [6].

Nonetheless, the youth's agricultural capacities are being discussed in policy dialogs due to persistent unemployment, poverty, and inequality in Ghana's economically active population [4]. Ghana has a youthful population, and that may be a resource for growth, stability, wealth, and peace if the right policies are formulated, implemented, and evaluated [7]. The future of Ghana's youth is uncertain due to a mix of disjointed youth intervention policies and inadequate youth empowerment programmes [4,5]. Youth involvement in food-security and other social intervention policies and programmes continues to gain greater impetus in major development discourses in Ghana [4,6,7]. Moreover, local and national policymakers are constantly developing youth-oriented food-security intervention programmes to improve food availability, access, and longer-term food sustainability [8–10]. The effectiveness of youth-oriented food-security policies and initiatives, such as the Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP) and Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ), is hindered by inadequate support and collaboration from local stakeholders and the central government.

In 2022, 39.4% of Ghana's population, or 12.9 million people, experienced moderate to severe food insecurity, primarily in rural areas where agriculture is crucial for livelihoods [11–13]. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.1 aims to "end hunger and ensure access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for all people, particularly the poor and vulnerable, including infants, all year round by 2030." The situation in Ghana deteriorated in 2022 because, between 2019 and 2021, moderate to severe food insecurity affected between 11.8 and 36.6 million people, but between 2020 and 2022, it increased to between 12.9 and 39.4 million people, respectively. In the African Union's Agenda 2063, the first aspiration also emphasizes creating a wealthy Africa by eliminating all forms of food poverty and malnutrition by 2025 [13]. The paper argues that Ghana can achieve food-security goals through data-driven policies and multisectoral coordination, despite concerns about food access, availability, and stability [14]. The current food-security policies, programmes, and projects lack continuity, with little to no sectoral collaboration and coordination.

2. Literature Review: Conceptual Review

This section summarizes the four dimensions of food-security issues in Ghana. The first dimension is food availability, which includes the quality, variety, and quantity of food that is readily available to a given population [1]. Food availability, influenced by factors like dietary energy, cereal calories, root and tuber supply, protein, animal-sourced proteins, and average food production value, significantly impacts the dynamics of food production [15,16]. The agricultural sector in Ghana is gaining greater impetus in improving food production and reducing poverty among the masses. The growing youth population in the country presents a potential for increased agricultural productivity, but some scholars argue there is no correlation between this population and productivity [17]. Ghana's food insecurity issue can be addressed by involving young people in the agricultural sector, which can increase household income, reduce poverty, and address food unavailability.

Second, the concept of food access refers to how people in need of a healthy diet can receive and distribute food at the appropriate time using available resources, both material and financial [11]. Food security in Ghana is influenced by economic and geographical factors, with economic access based on purchasing power and physical access influenced by inadequate infrastructure. The number of people living below USD 1.25 in SSA per day in Ghana is increasing, despite poverty reduction in the past two decades [12]. This improvement in poverty has enhanced the fight to reduce hunger in the sub-region and Ghana. However, post-2011, poverty reduction progress stalled for over five years, with minimal adjustment in the number of people living below the poverty line [15]. Due to reasons unknown to many, the percentage of poor people rose to 22.7%, and the undernourished population rose to 224.3 million in 2016 [15]. The report highlights Ghana's stagnant

poverty reduction due to a worsening climate and low food prices, while its development plans align with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and CAADP principles.

Third, various factors affect the availability and stability of food in Ghana, including ecological impact, the current market, bad policies, political, social, and economic conditions, and other socio-cultural realities [3,8,13]. Multisectoral collaborative approaches are critical for alleviating food insecurity, which involve coordinated policy planning, organized monitoring, and evaluation by government ministries, departments, and agencies. Despite Ghana's policy path and support in dealing with each pillar of food security, Boateng and Nyaaba [8] argued that there is more to be done in terms of policy coordination between national and sub-national institutions. Government institutions have implemented various programs to address food insecurity, but there is limited intersectoral collaboration for policies, programs, and strategies to ensure food sufficiency, accessibility, utilization, and stability. Fourth, food utilization seeks to measure the ability of a given population to obtain adequate dietary intake and nutrition absorption in a particular period [14] (p. 26). Nutrition indicators in Ghana are not satisfactory, yet the discourse surrounding nutrition qualms hardly finds its way to the policy agendas [18]. Ghana has taken a pivotal role in responding to health issues such as immunization, malaria control, and epidemics, but very little attention has been given to nutrition issues [18]. A lack of support and policy direction for nutrition issues has prompted development partners like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), World Vision, the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) and the World Bank to initiate nutrition intervention programs. Nutrition issues are multidimensional, as reiterated in the National Nutrition Policy (NNP) ([19], p. iv): "the Government of Ghana recognizes that nutrition issues are multi-dimensional and need to be addressed in a multi-sectoral manner". Despite the multisectoral coordination, the existing hard-pressed decentralized structures in Ghana are a problem in disguise.

2.1. Theoretical Review: Collaborative and Open Governance

Collaborative governance approaches are crucial in inclusive public policymaking because of the "collective" assumption underpinning the concept [20,21]. "Collaborative" theories seek to explain the participatory arrangements that can arise in different social structures and systems rooted in consensus-building decision-making regarding development policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The two major collaborative theories include collaborative governance and open governance [20,22].

This paper uses both theories to establish a theoretical framework for collaborative governance in public policymaking, focusing on consensus-oriented decision-making as suggested by Ansell and Gash [23], which incorporates several stakeholders both in the private and public sectors to undertake a particular development decision [20,24,25]. Collaboration governance has a tenet rooted in devolution and, as such, could take on several arrangements from the local to the national government level. Community-based development approaches, for instance, are embedded in collaboration governance, with several local stakeholders playing different roles in ensuring community development [26,27].

Furthermore, at the national and regional levels, other participatory forms of governance involving non-state actors [20], such as civil society groups and other key stakeholders coupled with public agencies, tend to design, implement, and monitor development intervention programmes. It has been observed that theoretically, many of the accounts of collaborative governance are engrossed in the concept rather than the underpinning assumptions [28]. The extensive literature on collaborative governance tends to provide single or sector-specific governance perspectives such as community networking, community collaboration, community policing, water planning, conflict management, collaborative development, community wellbeing partnerships, and ecological reserve management (the concepts).

This paper based its definition of collaborative governance on Ansell and Gash's various assumptions [20] (p. 545), with six criteria: (1) who initiated the forum for individ-

ual or community participation? (2) who are the participants in the forum and does that include non-state actors such as civil society, (3) To what extent are individual or beneficiary communities allowed to engage in decision-making (passengers or active participants), (4) what is the context (formal or informal) of the stakeholders (even if it is not collective), (5) to what degree is the final policy decision-making rooted in consensus (is consensus achieved in practice or theory), and (6) what is the focus of collaboration (that is; is it at the public policy or management level).

Nonetheless, there are several local and national public institutions, such as indigenous administrative structures (chieftaincy), local government agencies, civil society groups, courts, legislatures, ministries, departments, and other governmental bodies, that play an essential role when it comes to policy development. Thus, intersectoral collaboration between and among these institutions is crucial to the design of public policies. In constitutional democracies like Ghana, the executive branch of government has significant power to influence policymaking, influencing collaboration to score political points or fulfill legislative orders [29].

2.2. Open Governance

Old public policy design, implementation, and evaluation have become obsolete in recent years due to the quest for citizen participation. Open government is gradually becoming an apparent concept because of the "openness" assumption underpinning the approach [22,30,31]. The approach has continued to gain greater impetus in recent years in most constitutional democracies [32,33]. Open government initiatives are implemented at the national and local levels to ensure citizen participation [34]. The approach is rooted in tenets such as transparency, accountability, participation, and collaboration [22,34]. Thus, this research focused on open government and collaborative/participatory development approaches, which provide a plethora of interesting governance and citizen participation perspectives.

The extensive literature on the concept maintains that open government mirrors various assumptions underpinning good governance, accountability, transparency, collaboration, dialog, and empowerment, among others [22,34–37]. However, ref. [36] (p. 843) argued that the concept has three key dimensions: "information availability, transparency, participation, collaboration, and information technology". The dimensions of policy sustainability can be analyzed through governance structure and participatory tenets, providing reliable insights for practitioners, scholars, and policymakers in policy design, implementation, and monitoring. To what extent are the individual and beneficiaries' communities cognizant of the policy objectives? What is the degree of stakeholder participation? What is the role of civil society in the design, implementation, and monitoring of these youth-oriented policies?

Despite the varying scope and principles of open government [34], it is gradually attaining the status of the new public management (NPM) that was espoused in the 1980s and 1990s [38–40]. The notion is that development policies designed within the ambit of collaborative and open governance will have several structures and levels for stakeholder participation, openness, partnership, and transparency, among others. Thus, such policies will take into consideration the powerless and voiceless in society in the policy design process, which could lead to active citizen participation and satisfaction [34]. This has the potential to enhance policy sustainability [25,41]. The author utilized these concepts to gauge the level of stakeholder involvement in youth-oriented food-security policies in Ghana. This paper calls for the establishment of collaborative and open governance approaches to youth-oriented food-security policies to create viable policy paths based on participatory development systems.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative documentary analysis approach, as put forward by Patton [42] and Bowen [43], through data triangulation techniques [44]. This paper

empirically reviewed documentary data relating to youth-centered food-security policies obtained at the continental and national levels, with a special focus on Ghana (see Table 1). Employing documentary analysis methods grounded in collaborative and open governance approaches, this paper analyzed the issues of multisectoral coordination and the lack thereof in youth-oriented food-security intervention policies and strategies in the past three decades in Ghana. Several documents and web pages were selected for the analysis.

Table 1. Documents and other auxiliary data analyzed.

Document Origin/Authors	Type of Document	Year	Document Title	Frames	Ministries/Department/Agency Responsible
Government of Ghana (GoG) and African Union (AU)	Policy	2010	National Youth Employment Policy (NYEP)	Socioeconomic	Ministry of Youth and Sports, National Youth Authority (NYA)
GoG	Policy	2022–2032	National Youth Policy (NYP)	Food security and socioeconomic	Ministry of Youth and Sports and National Youth Authority, NYA
GoG	Policy	2006	Microfinance and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC)	Agro-based and socioeconomic	Office of the President
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Policy	2013	National Nutrition Policy (NNP)	Food security	Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, MoFA, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, the NDPC
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Policy	2007	Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy II (FASDEP II)	Youth in agriculture and food security	MoFA
African Union (AU)	Policy	2006	African Youth Charter	Socioeconomic	AU
GoG	Strategy	2006	National Youth Employment Program (NYEP)	Food security and socioeconomic	Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR)
GoG	Strategy	2017	Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ)	Food security	Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA)
GoG	Strategy	2012	Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA)	Agribusiness and socioeconomic	Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR)
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Strategy	2011	Local Enterprise and Skills Development Programme (LESDEP)	Socioeconomic and agribusiness	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD)
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Strategy	2012	Youth Enterprise Development (YESDEP)	Socioeconomic and food security	Ministry of Youth and Sports
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Strategy	2011	** Youth Enterprises and Skills Development Centre (YESDEC)	Food security and socioeconomic	Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR)

Table 1. *Cont.*

Document Origin/Authors	Type of Document	Year	Document Title	Frames	Ministries/Department/Agency Responsible
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Strategy	2006	The Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (GPRSP II)	Socioeconomic and food security	Private Public Partnership with the Government of Ghana
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Strategy	2014–2017	Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA II)	Socioeconomic and food security	National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Strategy	2014–2017	Medium-Term Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (METASIP II)	Food security and agribusiness	MoFA
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Social intervention	2011	Graduate Business Support Schemes (GEBSS)	Socioeconomic and food security	Private Public Partnership with the Government of Ghana
Government of Ghana (GoG)	Social intervention	2011	Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP)	Food security	Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA)

All the youth and entrepreneurial development initiatives have modules focusing on youth in agriculture. ** Private-public partnership (PPP), collaborating with the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP).

Document selection occurred in three stages. The first stage was informed by the researchers' observations of key political and national events related to youth intervention and food-security programmes with different intersectoral groups. Documents were retrieved through the interactions of stakeholders, largely focusing on youth social intervention policies, strategies, policy reports, newsletters, and political manifestos that had shaped the national discourse of youth-oriented policies.

In the second stage, references from the documents received in the first stage were followed and searched for on the websites of the various ministries, departments, and agencies responsible for such policies. Annual ministerial reports and plans across sectors were scanned to identify whether there was any text referring to youth-oriented policies, with a deliberate effort to explore if food-security issues and youth participation were prioritized in these policies of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MoGCSP), among many other ministries (see Table 1).

In the last stage, broader national-level policies or documents that focused on youth intervention programmes and food security were identified, including agribusiness and entrepreneurship policies and strategies, as well as the relevant continental literature on youth, food security, and agriculture. A total of 17 documents were obtained and analyzed (listed in Table 1) after these selection processes (6 policies, highlighted in light blue; 9 strategies, highlighted in light green, and 2 social intervention programmes, highlighted in light grey).

Following the selection process, the documents were first examined to determine their important content and then coded in Microsoft Excel 2021 (Microsoft 365) using an a priori coding system based on policy conceptualization through collaborative and open governance concepts [20–22,30,31]. An example of the deductive coding process is shown in Table 2, where ideas as solutions were coded as statements that referred to what each document identified as the solution(s) to the problem. Ideas as programmes were used to code the "how" of the policy solution(s), including instruments or the detailed approach mentioned. Based on the "what" and the "how", the underlying continental views were coded based on why those solutions and programmes were chosen and which arguments

were used to support that statement. During the coding process, text speaking to the rationales used to justify the focus on youth-oriented food security or development, and any statements on intersectoral collaboration were extracted.

Table 2. Coding process.

	Coding	Example from Document Codes (National Youth Policy of Ghana 2010)
A priori coding structure	Ideas as solution	"What" "This shall be done through the National Youth Council (NYC)…The NYC shall continue with its core function including the under-listed: • Mobilize and organize the youth for participation in governance, economic, social, and cultural activities. • Promote and inculcate in the youth a sense of patriotism, volunteerism, and nationalism. • Provide a platform for youth development activities"
	Ideas as policy or programme	"How" "Youth in Modern Agriculture initiative [will] provide employment for a majority of Ghana's population (including the youth) … Increased productivity in agriculture ensures food security and contributes immensely to the health and well-being of the people promotion of the participation of the youth in modern agriculture as a viable career opportunity for the youth and as an economic and business option."
	Ideas as continental view	"Why are the above policy solutions and programme selected." "The Youth is one of the critical resources of the nation considering their potential, numbers, vitality, and capabilities as change agents for national transformation"
	Rationales	"Food security and youth better future"
	Discourse on intersectoral collaboration	"This shall be done through the National Youth Council with the active participation of the youth and in collaboration with ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/institutions, and other stakeholders"

The codes extracted from the texts were evaluated following a thematic analysis approach [45] and then arranged into more specific topics for further analysis. The first step in this research procedure is comparing codes with arguments to find common patterns. At this point, the various issues with collaboration and their apparent remedies were deduced by examining the many assumptions based on the ideas of open government. This made it possible to generate several issues with themes and related policy recommendations. The themes and policy recommendations were then developed through ongoing comparisons with the various data, and four major themes were eventually generated. Thus, using the underlying ideas as a guide, this article determines how themes relate to one another and whether they shed light on the issues when considering the complete set of data.

4. Findings

Since 1992, the governments of the Fourth Republic have discontinued or altered youth-focused socioeconomic and food-security intervention initiatives while failing to implement critical policy directives to enhance their living circumstances. For instance, the NYEP, which was under the NPP, was replaced with the GYEEDA in October 2012 by the NDC administration. The LESDEP and GYEEDA, which were also under the previous government (NDC), were recently abandoned due to the change of government and corruption-related issues. Ghana's two national youth policies—one from 2010 and the latest from 2022 to 2032—are over-politicized and lack stakeholder collaboration, affecting

the country's youth-oriented initiatives. However, common statements such as "National Youth Policy guides all-inclusive, integrated, and coherent youth development [46] (p. 14), or National Youth Policy enables the Government to engage the youth and other stakeholders in a meaningful partnership to develop appropriate interventions and services for youth empowerment and development" [47] (p. 3). The analysis indicates that most policies and programs are political manifesto promises, implemented for short-term political gain, rather than long-term goals like food security, youth development, and employment. These policies are often rushed and lack effective dialog and collaboration between the government and various stakeholders, including the youth. METASIP argued that there is a need to "facilitate and coordinate youth in agriculture training programmes in the country" [48] (p. 48) to ensure adequate participation and collaboration.

The two dominant political parties in Ghana (NPP and NDC) have implemented several youth-oriented food-security and socioeconomic policies (see Table 1) but with little to no participation from the teeming youth, youth organizations, or individuals. Common statements such as "successive governments have over the years, realized the need for policies that would empower the youth for effective participation in the national development agenda" [47] (p. 3) are often stated in these policies with no clear proposition as to how they were or will be achieved. Moreover, citizen participation in policy conception has been seen as a catalyst for socioeconomic development and policy sustainability. Citizen participation in policy creation is crucial for fostering accountability, transparency, and good governance. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) and other international statutes and agreements state that every human being has the right to "participate" in the life of their community for the benefit of all.

Most of the youth-oriented food-security and socioeconomic policies (see Table 1) are political parties' manifesto-driven policies that often saw very little to no beneficiary participation. The lack of beneficiaries' participation in some of these policies is unfortunate if the notion of "participation" has been thought to be anchored in sustainable development. For instance, PFJ was an agricultural campaign of the NPP party, which was officially launched on April 19, 2017, when the party took office. Thus, planning for these intervention policies is often inadequate, which tends to affect the project's sustainability. A statement in FASDEP II expressed that "project activities and impact are seldom sustained because of inadequate plans for phasing out and mainstreaming project activities with budgetary support from the government" [49] (p. 14) and the GPRSP II also argued that "inadequate sectoral capacity for formulating and implementing . . . policy that is sensitive to the needs of women, youth, and people living with disability" [50] (p. 108). The NYP and GSGDA II realized that there is "inadequate participation of the youth in political governance, community development, and decision-making" [46] (p. 58) or ". . .a significant proportion of the youth lagging behind in participation in the socio-economic development of the country, as well as in political decision-making" (GSGDA II, 2014-2017:106). The manner and degree of stakeholder participation in the formulations is a central concern, and it is likely to be abandoned when a different political party besides the NPP comes to power. There is an increasing shift from the usual top-down development of policies, plans, and ideals to one that has increased beneficiary or community control and influence in decision-making, policy monitoring, and evaluation processes [4,5]. However, given the situation with youth-oriented food-security strategies, the country needs further rethinking.

The power dynamics between the policy initiators, implementers, and beneficiaries were deduced from the documentary data. Beneficiaries tend to be mere passengers in the policy process, as observed by Boadu and Ile [4] in their study in Ghana, where the beneficiaries in the LESDEP were passively involved in policy initiation, implementation monitoring, and evaluation as mere respondents. A "collaborative governance approach", which has been expressed in documents such as the National Youth Employment Policy (NYEP), the National Youth Policy (NYP), and the National Nutrition Policy (NNP), could help curb the power disparities between and among all the stakeholders and beneficiaries. Statements such as "collaboration with sectoral line ministries and the supporting institu-

tional structures, identified priority areas will be allocated sufficient funding in the [policy] planning process" [51] (p. 36). Documents consistently mention that youth-oriented food-security intervention strategies should focus on "strengthening institutional collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, among stakeholders, for better outcomes" [46] (p. 19). Participatory social intervention programs could reduce power disparities between policy initiators, implementers, and recipients, as top-down approaches to socioeconomic development are challenged by collaborative scholars [25,26,52].

The paper reveals that government agencies sometimes use pseudo-coordinated policy development strategies to pacify disadvantaged groups and donors. Policy coordination and harmonization were identified in most of the documents analyzed as problems, as expressed by: "achieving coordination and coherence at policy and implementation levels, particularly in youth development, has become a major challenge for governments and key stakeholders" [46] (p. 51), "coordination between the projects has been lacking" [49] (p. 15) or "major problems plaguing the design and implementation of social development programmes to address vulnerability are inadequate institutional framework, capacity, and poor coordination" [50] (p. 55). The poor coordination among government departments, civil societies, key beneficiaries, and other stakeholders has hampered the value of policy harmonization, stakeholder coordination, beneficiaries, and community-based evaluation [53–56], sustainable policy development [57,58], community/beneficiary engagement [59], and community empowerment and participation in social intervention policies [5,52,60,61].

"Elite capture" and "political reservation" phenomena were identified in some of the documentary data reviewed in this study (see Table 1), which tend to undermine policy design and implementation. An example includes this statement from the GPRS II: "it is essential for Ghana to dialogue freely with its development partners on these political or ideological issues so that the implementation of [the policy] is not obstructed by hidden political reservations" [49] (p. iii). The documents examined revealed pseudo-collective policy decision-making, with government officials, agencies, and civil society organizations involved in policy design, implementation, and evaluation, but with minimal youth involvement. An example includes the following statement from NYP: "inadequate opportunities for youth participation in decision making" [47] (p. 6). A "quasi-collective decision approach" is susceptibility to "elite capture" [62]. Thus, a well-thought-out participatory policy approach that tends to empower the various stakeholders and youth groups and build their capacity for collective action could also enhance policy sustainability. Moreover, it has been argued that a local "elite capture" could be detrimental to public welfare policies and undermine collective decision-making [63].

The documents examined revealed intersectoral collaboration among government ministries, departments, agencies, civil society, and youth, with referrals to public institutions, NGOs, and faith-based organizations for engagements. Several of the documents mention intersectoral collaboration, promoting coordination, partnership, and participation, but lack specific ideas on how it is undertaken or what policy collaboration and participation entail. Common statements include: "collective action and coordination of strategies for youth development among government institutions, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and youth organizations, as well as other stakeholders for youth empowerment" [46] (p. 24) or "Strengthen institutional collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, among stakeholders" [47] (p. 24).

This paper observed that several of the national youth-oriented food-security and socioeconomic policies frequently have overlapping institutions that are tasked with implementing and monitoring to ensure the set goals are achieved. Additionally, some are carried out by quasi-state and non-state actors who were themselves not engaged in the creation and review of the policies at the outset. Others do not have the institutional, human, and resource capacity to operate, and with overlapping responsibilities, they are often burdened with a lot to do and are therefore unable to do what is expected of them effectively. Inadequate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks exist to evaluate

the efficiency and effectiveness of these policies, evidenced by statements such as "inadequate institutional capacity that limits enforcement of existing food safety regulations and standards" (59) (NNP 2013:15) or "inadequate skilled staff in implementing the M&E system" [48] (p. 74). The multidimensional nature of food-security strategies necessitates the establishment of intersectoral collaborations and institutional capacities to facilitate policy design, implementation, and evaluation.

5. Discussion: Strategies for Collaborative Governance

This section discusses the coordination and collaborative challenges in creating youth-oriented food-security intervention policies, offering suggestions to avoid intersectoral collaboration pitfalls.

5.1. Policy Initiative, Institutional Capacity, and Implementation

Youth-oriented food-security initiatives in Ghana require comprehensive problem identification, policy creation, implementation, and evaluation. However, most of these strategies are political promises with little consultation or participation from stakeholders, including the youth. Many are abruptly terminated or re-designated, making it difficult to sustain them. Evaluating the power structures and participative character of a social intervention programme or policy is a typical method for researching its sustainability [5]. Consequently, the national or sub-national establishments in charge of policy initiation, implementation, and evaluation need to incorporate several collaborative structures by taking into consideration the powerless and voiceless stakeholders within the policy process, as observed by some scholars in their respective studies [20,64] Scholars have noted a significant gap in stakeholder involvement in Ghana's youth-focused food-security programs, particularly among the target recipients and beneficiary communities [4]. To effectively address local and national food-security issues, comprehensive multisectoral collaboration between the central government, implementers, policy recipients, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders is necessary.

Lack of financial, human resources, and administrative capacity building hinders youth-oriented food-security intervention policies and intersectoral collaborative measures, hindering collaborative planning, decision-making, accountability, transparency, and consensus building. No public funds have been specifically allocated for youth-centered food-security intervention initiatives, except for those mentioned in party manifestos as campaign promises. Moreover, inadequate human capital among the youth population has hindered their potential involvement in policy initiatives, implementation, and evaluation [4]. The abrupt desertion of food intervention initiatives is a result of their initial hasty conception and a lack of consultation and participation. The paper emphasizes the importance of identifying key government departments, ministries, agencies, youth organizations, and other stakeholders for creating multisectoral structures for collaborative policy initiation, implementation, and evaluation. This might reduce the bureaucratic tendencies that are ingrained in the development, application, and assessment of such social intervention policies and initiatives. The paper identifies fragmented youth-centered food-security initiatives and policies that require comprehensive policy analysis to assess the necessary institutional and financial capacities for successful implementation.

5.2. Participation of Stakeholders in the Policy Process

Despite the central role of government in Ghana, there is a growing paradigm shift from the classical understanding of central government as a deliverer of public goods and services to an enabler of a conducive political, social, and economic environment for comprehensive policy design, implementation, and evaluation. Nonetheless, this requires well-thought-out collaborative strategies between the central government, citizens, and perhaps civil society. Several of the youth-oriented food-security policies, such as the flagship agricultural campaign, PFJ, came about because of a political campaign promise put forward by the leader of the then-biggest opposition party in Ghana, the NPP. They

were later adopted as the leading youth in an agricultural campaign by the government on 19 April 2017, in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. Moreover, a primary objective of the program was to furnish employment prospects in agriculture and related industries for the multitude of jobless youth [65]. Moreover, the so-called "teeming youth" was nowhere to be found in the initiation of the food-security programme that was targeting the youth. Thus, policy initiation, implementation, and evaluation are likely to be rooted in a quasi-collaborative approach that is often devoid of open governance assumptions such as transparency, accountability, and citizens' participation. Moreover, the emerging dimension of collaborative governance is hinged on traditional linear policy agreements deeply rooted in top-down policy initiation strategies [35,66].

Stakeholders in policy development tend to be dormant or dominant depending on the power differentials, legitimacy, and control [67]. These stakeholders are crucial when it comes to policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and sustainability. While the dormant stakeholders tend to have a direct influence on the policymaking process, the dormant tend to be interest groups, civil society, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), inter alia, who have an ancillary interest in policymaking [68]. Stakeholders in youth-oriented food-security policies in Ghana are the role-players who are either directly or indirectly involved in the policy design, implementation monitoring, and evaluation [60]. Although several participants in the policymaking process are considered "stakeholders" in Ghana's youth-oriented food policies, in reality, they have very little influence over the implementation and outcome of these policies [4,69]. Citizens' participation is crucial in constitutional democracies since it tends to strengthen the various institutions designed to serve as representative grounds. The interface between government and citizens is deeply rooted in accountability, collaboration, transparency, and participation [20]. Stakeholders' networks or platforms and active citizen participation in public issues create platforms where a participatory policy decision is communicated, and varying implementation and evaluation strategies are put forward to curb policy collaboration challenges in the country. These stakeholder networks, civil society groups, and youth associations tend to champion youth and other civil societies' participation in national and local governance, poverty alleviation programmes, and socioeconomic issues and provide several strategies and opportunities for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as women, children, and the youth, in national decision-making processes [5].

The NPY recognized the need for the participation of the youth, civil society, religious-based or faith-based youth organizations, traditional authorities, socio-cultural groupings, and the private sector in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of youth policies; however, the roles and responsibilities played by these organizations are vague. Likewise, the extent to which these organizations are actively included in the intersectoral arrangement by the central government remains ambiguous. In their study in Ghana, Boadu and Ile [4] argued that, generally, youth policies are politically motivated with the intention of scoring ad hoc political points with little or no public input in problem identification and proposed remedies. Consequently, well-delineated collaborative strategies and guidelines for citizens, civil society, youth-based groups, and other NGOs to participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of these youth food-oriented policies are recommended.

5.3. Policy Guidelines for Institutional Arrangement at Regional and District Levels

Food security is a multifaceted concept and needs interdisciplinary collaboration and a well-coordinated system between the central government and regional and local government institutions [23,70]. Youth food-security policies equally require intersectoral policy approaches and a functioning institutional framework designed to ensure that food-security strategies and other agricultural-related policies and programmes are implemented and evaluated effectively. Ghana has the NNP, PFJ, NYP, GPRS II, and other several food-security-related intervention policies, such as the Medium-Term Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (METASIP II), which was designed using the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA II) guidelines linked to the African Union (AU) 2003

Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security; nonetheless, it lacks a clear institutional arrangement at regional and district levels. The AU Maputo Declaration of Ghana is a signatory that urges member state governments to allocate 10 percent of their national budget towards agriculture- and food-security-related issues. Furthermore, Ghana also appended her signature to the AU/NEPAD Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) to implement the Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy II (FASDEP II), another medium-term strategy to develop the agricultural sector to address food-security issues [8]. Tied to these policies is the current government's flagship youth-oriented food-security programme, PFJ. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture, while primarily responsible for policy direction, faces multidimensional food-security issues that necessitate collaboration, coordination, and participation from various national and sub-national institutions. A single-sector approach for food and nutrition policy and programmes design and implementation is not feasible [18], therefore, unlike these policies, necessitates early multisectoral engagement and ought not to be an afterthought.

The review analysis revealed that to guarantee that all stakeholders are actively engaged in the policymaking processes, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), the collaboration structures across the national, regional, and district levels are imprecise and require a clear policy direction. Boadu and Ile [69] observed in their study in Ghana that beneficiaries (youth) of these policies tend to be mere passengers in the policymaking process and evaluation activities. The analysis suggested that present decentralized systems require a suitable structure to allow for active local beneficiary participation in food-security strategies. To ensure inclusivity, Article 240 (2) (e) of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992 states that the decentralized local government system has the mandate "to ensure accountability of local government authorities, people, in particular, local government areas shall, as far as practicable, be allowed to participate effectively in their governance" [71]. Thus, the policy process should involve MMDAs and other local government units as they implement local policies and central government services influencing the four dimensions of food security. Regional and local government institutions are crucial for central government service delivery, monitoring, and evaluation, as they are directly accessible to local communities. Despite the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution's Article 240 (2) (a), which requires the central government to distribute duties, authority, and resources to local government units in a coordinated way, the social, political, and economic strength of regional and local governments is still relatively limited [71]. It was found in this analysis that a number of these MMDA institutions are deficient in human resources, adequate leadership structures, and adequate service delivery mechanisms that would support the implementation and assessment of central government food policy plans like the NNP.

5.4. Evidence-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Policy Frameworks

Well-designed evidence-based M&E strategies are crucial for youth-oriented food-security policies, as they are essential in public policymaking and analysis [72]. The analysis of these policies revealed that most of the policies reviewed mentioned the need for M&E but had no national, regional, or local government frameworks to evaluate the policies. Ghana's government departments are not M&E-ready, with inadequate processes for acquiring development and performance data for effective decision-making, implementation, and assessment. The youth-oriented food-security initiatives evaluated are not an exception [60]. However, M&E outcomes are vital for policymakers, researchers, and evaluators in developing countries, including Ghana, because the outcomes provide the basis for learning and policy review [73–75]. The FAO argues that achieving food security requires evidence-based decision-making and evaluation systems to track and map successes and failures [1]. A real-time evidence-based M&E framework that is lacking could have the potential to track, map, and assess the impacts of these youth-oriented food-security policies. This could further allow the implementers and beneficiaries to learn and make informed decisions in the policymaking processes, as has also been observed by

the FAO [1]. There should be a paradigm shift from a traditional expert-driven M&E to a new results-based and participatory approach, as recommended by Boadu and Ile [60] in their study in Ghana. The reviewed policies lack clear M&E results and feedback structures, hindering the effective learning and decision-making process. The study confirmed that a well-coordinated M&E system, based on accurate stakeholder information, can effectively evaluate policy objectives, targets, and achievements.

Policy M&E activities tend to assess the policies before, during, and after implementation, but there are vague, disjointed M&E structures and lack the necessary institutional, human, and material resources at the national, regional, and district levels to improve service delivery. This finding is congruent with a study conducted in Ghana, where the authors noted that intended beneficiaries of social intervention programmes are usually just passengers in the M&E processes [76–78]. Stakeholders and institutional collaboration about M&E matters for achieving the objectives of these youth-centered food-security policies [79,80]. For instance, the Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation, which was established in 2016 by the GoG to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate policies, programmes, and projects of all government ministries, departments, and agencies to ensure effective service delivery, was suddenly dissolved by the central government in 2021. Feasibility studies can help improve Ghana's youth food-security policies. The MoFA and regional and district units should coordinate food production, access, supply, and sustainability. NYA should have regional and district supporting offices. Further studies should unpack monitoring systems in government ministries, departments, and agencies.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Ghana's complex food-security and social issues necessitate non-linear programmes and measures. Moreover, food-security issues and youth intervention policies require a non-linear approach for design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Intersectional collaboration between government ministries, civil society, and local and national departments is crucial for successful policy sustainability. Ghana's food security is a multifaceted issue involving multiple ministries, departments, and agencies, with the National Nutrition Policy and youth-oriented programmes demonstrating government recognition of intervention needs. An all-inclusive policy design with effective collaboration is recommended, considering open governance principles like accountability, transparency, participation, dialogs, and consensus-building. This study recommends collaborative and open governance in public policy design, implementation, and evaluation because it could promote intersectoral and participatory approaches to youth-oriented food-security policies in Ghana. This approach aims for accountability, transparency, dialog, and active stakeholder participation. Nonetheless, linear decision-making has stifled stakeholder participation and policy sustainability, as seen with the 2010 NYEP and 2022 NYP. Based on the study findings, a holistic analysis of the capacity of all government implementing agencies, ministries, and departments, as well as civil society, youth groups, and other relevant stakeholders involved in policy initiation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, is recommended. The establishment of practical stakeholder networks with various communication and collaborative pathways between the sub-national or national governments is further recommended in the development of food-security policy implementation and evaluation strategies. It is recommended that MMDAs, community stakeholders, local youth organizations, and other key policy players are actively engaged to serve as advisory and advocacy bodies in the development of national and sub-national strategies for the design, implementation, and evaluation of national policies on food-security and nutrition strategies. Clearly defined patterns of reports and information gathering from the districts and regions to the national level about the state of food security in Ghana are recommended. There must be a ministry- and government-wide national M&E framework with clearly defined strategies and guidelines to evaluate national and local government policies for optimal policy implementation, evidence-based policy assessment, and effective service delivery. Moreover, there should be a uniform M&E framework from the national

to the local level where indicators agreed upon by the central, regional, and district-level stakeholders can be effectively assessed. This paper further recommends inter-regional and district collaborations since they could have the potential to generate nationwide data on public issues such as food security and youth unemployment, to assist policymakers in making real-time evidence-based policy decisions.

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