

SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES, NATIONAL FOOD POLICIES, ACTION OF PLAN AND STRATEGIES ON SCHOOL MEALS AND FOOD SECURITY AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN IN KENYA. (REVIEW)

Angelica M. Kimwele
School of health science, Machakos University
angelica.mueni@mksu.ac.ke

Sophie A. Ochola
Department of foods, nutrition and dietetics, Kenyatta University
sochola@yahoo.com

Mary N. Mugambi
Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Technical University of Kenya
nkmugambi@gmail.com

School feeding programs have been implemented in Kenya since the 1979 with varying degrees of success (Langinger, 2011). It began in 1979 with a government led and short lived school milk programme (Ministry of Agriculture, -MoA, 2011). The ambitious initiative that provided free milk to 4.3 million primary school students failed due to high costs, low accountability, and poor road infrastructure (Langinger, 2011). This was complemented in 1989 with a World Food Programme (WFP) lead programme, that is 71% own by WFP, 15% from local communities' and 14 % Kenyan government (Galloway, 2009). The programme provided a daily ration of 150 grams of cereal, 40 grams of pulses, 5 grams of oil and 2 grams of salt per child per day (Technical Development Plan, 2012). In July 2009, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Kenya launched the Home Grown School Meal (HGSM). It was a transition from externally-driven school feeding programmes to Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF), which was to support government action to deliver sustainable, nationally-owned school feeding programmes sourced from local farmers in sub-Saharan Africa (NEPAD, 2003). In 2011, the programme had reached a beneficiary level of 592,638 children in approximately 1,800 schools in 72 semi-arid districts (Technical Development Plan, 2012 and Langinger, 2011).

The government has also established national policies, action plans and strategies to guide school feeding programmes. The National Food Nutrition Security Policy (2011) with one of its

objective as to increase efforts for improved nutrition and nutrition education in schools with an emphasis on good nutrition practice and positive food habits (Republic of Kenya, 2011). The National Nutrition Action Plan (2012- 2017), it's 6th strategic objective is to Improve nutrition in schools (Republic of Kenya 2012-2017). National School Health Strategy Implementation Plan 2011-2015, where nutrition in schools is one of its eight thematic areas (Republic of Kenya, 2011-2015). National school meals and nutrition strategy (2017–2022), which aims to ensure that all children in pre-primary and primary schools receive at least one nutritious meal per school day (Republic of Kenya, 2017-2022).

With above Government commitments to curbing food insecurity, Kenyan school going children a yet to be food secure; a bean and maize mix that includes oil is encouraged and largely implemented throughout schools (The Technical Development Plan, 2012). While at the same time national food policies, strategies and action plans do not have established guidelines on the nutritional content of school programme menus (Greenhalgh et. al, 2007and Lambers, 2009).

Problem statement

School feeding through the Ministry of Education (MoE) has had notable improvement in increasing school enrollment, attendance, retention and educational achievement (Bundy et.al. 2009). However, there is limited data on its ability to reduce vulnerability to food insecurity among school going children occasioned by food crisis (MoA, 2011). It's evident that School feeding programmes are facing funding challenges to curb food insecurity in terms of offering quality and quantity meals (langinger, 2011). The government limited and flat rate school feeding stipend and ever rising food costs have threatened viability of school feeding programmes (Finam, 2010). During the 2018/2019 financial year Ksh 2.5 billion allocated to school feeding programme in arid and semi-arid areas was far below the Ksh 4.5 billion required (Republic of Kenya, 2018). School feeding programme in Kenya provide the biggest, or even the only meal, for many school going children on a given day (Walingo and Musamali, 2008, WFP, 2010) and UNICEF projections on an increase in the number of children aged below 18 at risk of severe food insecurity to 1.8 million from 1.1 million in August 2017 (Wakaya, 2018).

Moreover, the several national food and nutrition policies strategies and action plan developed by the government: The National Food Nutrition Security Policy (2011), National Nutrition Action Plan (2012-2017), National School Health Strategy Implementation Plan 2011-2015 and National school meals and nutrition strategy 2017–2022 among others are integral part of developing an effective school feeding programs to curb food insecurity among school children (Saber, 2011). This is because they provide an opportunity for national leadership to demonstrate a commitment to school feeding programmes and ensures accountability for the quality of programs (Saber, 2011). They also have a multi-sectoral approach to encourage cooperation of relevant sectors, including education, finance and health, the challenge is the rate at which they are being implemented, and some are at draft stage while others are facing stiff challenges thus unable to benefit school feeding programs in curbing food insecurity.

Hence the need for this study to identify the gaps in the implementation of school feeding programme, the role national food policies, strategies and action plan in provision of school meals and also highlight the food security status of school children in Kenya.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the extent to which school feeding programmes have been implemented in Kenya
2. To determine the food security status of Kenyan school going children
3. To assess the role of national food policies, strategies and action of plans on the implementation and provision of school meals in Kenya.

Significance of the study

This study provides information to the government on status of school feeding programmes, national food policies, strategies and action plan and their role in curbing food security among school going children. The study should also be useful to the ministry of education and ministry of health in implementing and improving school feeding programme, national food policies, strategies and action plan and therefore the health of school-going children. This study is a useful source of knowledge for other researchers in the area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Origin and implementation of school feeding in Kenya

School feeding has its origins in the 1930s, when feeding schemes were introduced in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) with the explicit aim of improving the growth of children (Richter, Griesel and Rose, 2000). In the late 1960s and early 1970s this benefit was withdrawn from all, except for those children considered to be particularly needy (Tomlinson, 2007). School feeding was soon introduced to South Africa, which started as a programme to supply free milk to white and colored schools (Kallman, 2005). Since then, school feeding has broadened to include the provision of fortified biscuits, nutrient supplementation or full meals and became a practice in many other countries including, including Haiti, Liberia, Pakistan and Senegal (World Food Programmed-WFP, 2004). The meals are either at full or subsidized cost (mostly in the UK and US), or free (more typical of countries in the developing world) (Tomlinson, 2007).

Kenya began school feeding programmes in 1979 with a government and WFP assistance (Langinger, 2011). The primary role was to increase enrollment and retention children in school thus contributing to realization of universal primary education, (Langinger, 2011; Bodo, 2012; Reche, et.al., 2012). The programme heavily relied on foreign aid and management (Langinger, 2011). During this time 71% of programme costs were provided by WFP, 15% was local communities' obligation and only 14 % came from the Kenyan government (Galloway 2009). This limited the Kenyan government's role in the direction and stewardship of the programme, in an effort to transit to a more sustainable alternative school feeding programme, with a shift in the financial responsibility Kenya was involved in the piloting of NEPAD supported HGSFP in 2009 (Langinger, 2011). The Government of Kenya has demonstrated leadership in this field and is implementing HGSFP targeting areas of high poverty that have high and medium potential to grow food and areas that have high levels of school drop-out, poor primary school performance, and high levels of malnutrition (Langinger, 2011).

School feeding and food security status for school aged children in Kenya

Food insecurity remains one of the challenges that face our world today with 925 million people suffering (WHO, 2017). There are many approaches taken in the world from different stakeholders to combat food insecurity across many fields. The school feeding programmes are

just one approach that many international organizations and governments have adopted it as a successful tool of protecting children from food insecurity and malnutrition (Abdelrahmanmossad, 2016). School meals are essential as they are the only meal, for many schoolchildren on a given day (Walingo and Musamali, 2008). However, there is limited research on the impact of school meals on household and individual food security but dependency on school meal is experienced in some school going children. In some cases, school children are fed less at home as some parents use the school feeding programme as a replacement for feeding at home, while other parents view the school feeding programme as an income transfer and tend to spend the food budget of these school children on other household purchases (Aliyar et al., 2015).

The role of National food policies, strategies and action of plan on school meal

The government has also established national policies, action plans and strategies to guide school feeding programmes. The National Food Nutrition Security Policy (2011), it is the policy of the government that all Kenyans, throughout their life-cycle enjoy at all times safe food in sufficient quantity and quality to satisfy their nutritional needs for optimal health. One of its objectives is to increase efforts for improved nutrition and nutrition education in schools with an emphasis on good nutrition practice and positive food habits (Republic of Kenya, 2011). The National Nutrition Action Plan (2012- 2017), its purpose is to provide a framework for coordinated implementation of nutrition intervention activities by the government and nutrition stakeholders. Its 6th strategic objective is to improve nutrition in schools and other institutions and the activities proposed for action include; conducting a situation analysis on school/ institutional feeding and reviewing existing guidelines for school/institutional feeding and to promote adequate nutrition (Republic of Kenya 2012-2017). National School Health Strategy Implementation Plan 2011-2015, is a national school health strategic implementation plan which aims to identify and mainstream key health interventions for improved school health and education. Nutrition in schools is one of its eight thematic areas, with the following objectives: to sensitize stakeholders at all levels on the importance of school nutrition services, to ensure all schools have instituted sustainable home-grown meals programmes by 2014, to standardize home –grown school meals programmes, to address micronutrient deficiencies among others (Republic of Kenya, 2011-2015). National school meals and nutrition strategy (2017–2022), it's aim is to ensure that all children, in pre-primary and primary schools receive at least one

nutritious meal per school day. A three-pillar approach is recommended for school meals in Kenya: regular provision of meals every school day throughout the school year, acknowledgement of nutrition and nutrition education as core components of school meals and linking smallholder farmers with the demand for school meals by procuring directly from these suppliers where possible (Republic of Kenya, 2017-2022).

Summary of Literature Review

In general, the literature provides valuable information especially on the aims and objectives of the school feeding programme, national food policies, strategies and action plan and how they should be conducted and managed. There is however, a gap on the effectiveness of school feeding programmes in improving food security status of school going children a major challenge for school aged children in Kenya (Partnership for Child Development, 2013). There is limited information on the implementation status and role of national food policies, strategies and action plan in the provision of school meals. In addition, high numbers of school going children rely on school feeding meals as a main meals (Walingo and Musamali, 2008) the beneficiary level is 72 semi-arid districts (Technical Development Plan, 2012 and Langer, 2011)

METHODOLOGY

This is documentary research utilized information from the secondary source. Data was obtained from written materials; some are published and others not published.

RESULTS

School feeding status

The government of Kenya has admitted over 500,000 primary school children to school meals especially from arid and semi-arid areas) and has promised to keep on adding the number by 50,000 children each year until full coverage (Finam, 2010). Unlike before where school feeding was lead by WFP (Galloway, 2009) the government, has now taken full responsibility of school feeding, The government has transited to HGSF with the aim of delivering a sustainable, nationally-owned school feeding programmes sourced from local farmers (NEPAD, 2003 and Langer, 2011) with a beneficiary level of 592,638 children in approximately 1,800 schools in 72 semi-arid districts (Technical Development Plan, 2012 and Langer, 2011). In addition

Kshs.2.5 billion in the national government financial year 2018/2019 was allocated on school feeding far below the Kshs. 4.5 required (Republic of Kenya, 2018). The swelling numbers of beneficiaries of school feeding and the limited government funding to the programme has affected the quality and quantity of food hence negatively affecting food security among school going children.

Food security status

Approximately 47% of the Kenya's population is food insecure, and with the rising cost of living and drought the figures could rise (Republic of Kenya 2015-2022). In some regions, per-capita food availability has dropped by 10% over the last three decades (World Food Programme and Government of Kenya, 2013). The number of food insecure persons in Kenya could increase to 3.9 million this year (2018), up from 3.4 million last year (2017), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), there is also possibility on an increase in the number of children aged below 18 at risk of severe food insecurity to 1.8 million compared to 1.1 million in March and 1.6 million in August 2017 (Wakaya, 2018). In addition a third of Kenya school children dwell in Arid and Semi-Arid regions (ASAL) where the school meals contribute to between 30-90% of the total food intake per day for over 90% of the children (WFP, 2010) or even the only meal in a day (Walingo and Musamali, 2008).The parents of the children from these areas, cannot afford to purchase of enough foods because of poverty, (Aliyar et al., 2015).

The role of National food policies, action of plan and strategies on school meals

The National Food Nutrition Security Policy (2011)

By implementing this policy, the Government was to ensure that safe and high quality food is available to all Kenyans, at all times, by creating public awareness on relevant issues, and by setting, promoting and enforcing appropriate guidelines, codes of practice, standards and a regulatory but it is recognized that not all required activities can be implemented immediately and simultaneously. While some priority actions can start immediately, others may require further development, advocacy, preliminary research or a pilot phase. This will allow a realistic approach for funding arrangements over time. Under this phased approach, the policy was to be developed covering a 15-year period, with three 5-year phases, each with carefully planned,

mutually supportive activities that build from the preceding phase (Republic of Kenya, 2011) . This means it may take time to achieve the policy objectives of achieving good nutrition for optimum health of all Kenyan, increasing the quantity and quality of food available, accessible and affordable to all Kenyans at all times and protecting vulnerable populations using innovative and cost-effective safety nets.

The National Nutrition Action Plan (2012- 2017)

The purpose of the national nutrition action plan was to provide a framework for coordinated implementation of nutrition intervention activities by the government and nutrition stakeholders. The 14 priority nutrition areas spelt out in the Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (FNSS) provided a conceptual guide to the development of this plan of action, which further identifies 11 strategic objectives each with corresponding activities and expected outcomes (Republic of Kenya, 2012-2017). Under this Strategy, the Ministry responsible for health shall be directly in charge of coordinating the implementation of the Plan at national level (Ministry of public health and sanitation, 2012-2017). However, under the new governance system in Kenya, and the devolved coordination systems at the county levels, which will feed into the national level, then coordination unit could be a source of delays in the implementations.

This Nutrition Action Plan also provides an estimation of the total resources required to achieve the goal and objectives to cover the five years (2012-2017) of implementation cost as Kshs. 69 billion which is higher even than the total government financial expenditure over the ministry of health activities in the year 2018/ 2019 of 55.6 billion (Government of Kenya, 2018).

National School Health Strategy Implementation Plan 2011-2015,

This strategy intends to provide a framework for implementation of a comprehensive school health programmed in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2011-2015). Kenya government did not provided enough resources to effectively implement this policy (Wasonga, et.al., 2014) . Additionally, the policy covers a wide range of issues and tries to address different components of health which have been clustered into eight thematic areas, namely: i) values and life skills; ii) gender issues; iii) child rights, protection and responsibilities; iv) water, sanitation and hygiene; v) nutrition; vi) disease prevention and control; vii) special needs, disabilities and rehabilitation; viii) school infrastructure and environmental safety. However, the Kenya school health policy

implementation team has focused on water, sanitation and hygiene(Wasonga et al., 2014) leaving behind the areas of food security such as nutrition and disease prevention and control which have an implication on food security of school going children.

National school meals and nutrition strategy 2017-2022

The strategy is build on a three-pillar approach: regular provision of meals every school day throughout the school year; acknowledgement of nutrition and nutrition education as core components of school meals and linking smallholder farmers with the demand for school meals by procuring directly from these suppliers where possible. To achieve the strategy objectives, the government requires multi-sectoral planning and intervention. This will be coordinated by the Ministry of Education, with the participation of key actors in agriculture, health, social protection, finance and others. This is complexity and broad undertaking requires strong multi-sectoral governance and institutional arrangements, and clear shared and specific responsibilities and accountability which may derail its implementation.

CONCLUSION

The benefits of school feeding to school children in terms of enhanced school enrolment, increased school attendance, and positive learning outcomes is well documented across the globe. There is increasing evidence, with resulting international concern, that the high level of food insecurity in this age as food insecurity remains one of the challenges that faces our world today with 66 million school children people suffering globally (WHO, 2017). There is little or limited documentation on the implementation and effectiveness of national food policies, strategies and action plan to curb food insecurity among school going children in Kenya.

Recommendation

1. The government should increase its financial commitment to the implementation of a school programme to handle the problem of rising food cost and frequent droughts.
2. There is need for more research to establish the effectiveness of school feeding programs in curbing food insecurity among school going children

3. National food policies, strategies and action plan on school meals should be fully implemented or reviewed because they have the potential of cubing food insecurity among school going children

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