



CHALLENGES FACING THE FEEDING PROGRAMMES IN PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES IN KENYA

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Abstract:

Good nutrition is critical in the realization of the potentials in children and in maximizing the benefits derived from educational investment. This article presents the findings from the investigation on the challenges experienced in the feeding programme in pre-primary schools in difficult circumstances in Kenya. The study determined the challenges in the feeding programme in pre-primary schools in Isiolo County, Kenya and also explored the possible strategies that could be put in place to mitigate the challenges. The dependent variable was the feeding programme while the independent variables were the challenges. The target population was all the 200 public pre-primary schools in Isiolo County. Purposive sampling was used to select the schools, headteachers, teachers and parents. Data was collected using questionnaires and observation schedule. Descriptive survey design was deemed appropriate for the study. Qualitative data obtained was transcribed, analyzed thematically and presented descriptively with verbatim quotes. The study established that the feeding programmes were dependent on the government and donor funding. The level of parental participation was low and the food provided was not balanced. More importantly that the major challenges were; shortage of water, food insecurity, inaccessibility, insecurity and harsh climatic conditions. It was recommended that the government and all the stakeholders should develop possible measures to deal with finances and cost options.

Keywords: challenges, children, school feeding programme, pre-primary school and strategies

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1. Introduction

Hunger is an on-going problem affecting more than 1.2 billion people globally. (FAO 2008) purported that the peace and security of any given country was likely to be threatened by poverty and hunger. This has prompted developing countries to initiate many programmes meant to improve the physical and psychosocial health of children. School Feeding programme (SFP) is a popular and a long standing developmental oriented programme in over 72 countries worldwide. SFP is implemented by the World Food Program (WFP) in the low and medium economic countries (WFP 2013). It is offered by the government in collaboration with the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Bennet, 2003). This implies that special attention should be paid to the limited inputs in the SFP.

Globally the objectives of establishing school feeding programme differ from one country to the other. Jomaa, McDonnell and Probert (2011), found out that the service delivery and the nutritional content of food provided and implementation are diverse. In high-income countries, the aim of SFP is to combat rising levels of overweight and obesity as they exemplify healthier life style habits. In low-income countries, the aim of SFP is to improve food accessibility. Owing to the differences, there exists a gap in terms of nutrition standards and menu composition.

Although there is sufficient evidence that indicate the benefits derived from the provision of SFP such as increasing enrolment, attendance and retention, this does not guarantee the overall improvement of nutritional status of children (World Bank, 2007). This report further asserted that, in some cases SFP resulted to school children being less fed by their parents as they use SFP as a replacement of home food. Studies conducted in Mali, Ghana and Rwanda revealed that guidelines on nutrition and menu were inevitable (USDA, 2009). It therefore indicates that children are likely to be underfed, thus the rise in malnutrition among the school aged-children.

To scale up on the human capital development and learning, it is important to tackle the problems of hunger (WHO 2006). According to FAO (2008), food security was determined by socio-economic status, purchasing power of families, domestic production and food distribution networks. It is therefore necessary that children living in the pockets of poverty in the world today should be assisted to meet their needs through budgetary allocations that support SFP.

In Africa most of the countries are experiencing challenges as they try to overcome poverty and hunger. Examples of such countries are Congo, Burundi and Kenya (USDAP 2013). In Kenya the SFP was introduced due to chronic food insecurity and poverty which contributes to reduced opportunities for children to complete primary schools and hence come out of intergenerational poverty (UNESCO 2005). The programme offers lunch to pre-primary and primary school children in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL). The role of the school management was to ensure that the available food was of good quality in terms of nutritive value, availability of proper storage facilities and mobilization of the parents to offer voluntary services where possible (WFP 2013).

The National Education Sector Plan (NESP, 2013- 2018) stated that Free Primary Education (FPE) was adopted as a country's policy towards achieving vision 2030 by building human capital through quality education. The plan indicated that, despite the big strides made by the government, education still faces regional disparities. Children in the pocket of poverty in rural areas, arid and semiarid lands lag behind owing to a number of challenges such as conflicts, lack of school models, food insecurity and high malnutrition that lead to stunted growth.

A report by Kenya Projects Organization (KENPRO) (2016) contended that the implementation of SFP in Kenya could be traced way back to 1980s although with varying degrees of success and failure. They were used to incentivize the enrolment and retention of rural children especially girls. SFPs have for many years played a significant role in realizing Kenya's goal of attaining Universal Primary Education (UPE) (UNESCO 2005). The benefits of SFPs are far reaching in ensuring economic development. Wanjohi (2010) posited that, despite the benefits of SFP, many school-going children especially from poor backgrounds were not able to enjoy the fruits of such programmes and if they did, the very programmes were not sustainable owing to a number of challenges including poverty, management issues, food shortage factors and poor climatic conditions.

The group most negatively impacted by social- economic factors which are related to high food insecurity and malnutrition is Kenya's school-aged population (Gok 2009). Malnutrition experienced during childhood imposes significant economic costs on the nation. Improving the children nutrition is critical on their academic performance hence their long-term productivity as adults. Wanjohi (2010) continues to postulate that, while various international organizations such as WFP, UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank have remained supportive to SFPs in Kenya, there are still evident food gaps especially in the schools in ASAL. He further reported that, SFP in Kenya dedicated 32USD per child per week (WFP 2014), which is just but a fraction compared with the food requirements in Kenyan schools.

A study conducted by Olubayo (2015) in Emuhaya focused on the factors influencing implementation of school feeding program and found out that managerial incompetency, funding, accountability and lack of adequate planning were the major constraints that inhibited the implementation of SFP in the area. He further outlined lack of community participation, monitoring and evaluation systems that affected the implementation of feeding programme. Olubayo recommended further research on the effects of community participation, monitoring and evaluation in the implementation of feeding programme.

Munuhe (2014) in her study on challenges facing SFP in Kajiado County found out that, poor management, funding, lack of political will and harsh climatic conditions influenced the implementation of SFP. The study further revealed that poor management, poor coordination and mismanagement of funds impacted negatively on the implementation of SFP. Awuor (2016) in her study in Machakos County argued that funding, monitoring and evaluation and utilization of funds inhibited the successful implementation of SFP. The literature reviewed indicated that SFP faces challenges

ranging from planning, funding, and monitoring to management challenges. The above studies focused on the managerial challenges. However, the challenges facing the FP in difficult circumstances were not adequately addressed. It is against this background that the study sought to investigate challenges facing SFP in Isiolo County.

2. Research Problem

Good nutrition is important for good health which is the foundation for a strong and productive society. The effect of malnutrition to young children ranges from inattentiveness, lack of concentration, lack of interest in play activities to the overall cognitive functions. Malnutrition in a country has significant economic cost on individuals, households, communities and the country at large. Nutrition deficiency manifests itself as an increased burden, alongside various physical and mental problems. These lead to great losses in terms of human capital and economic productivity for a country.

The Kenya demographic and health survey showed that important strides have been made in addressing malnutrition. From 1998 to 2014 the level of stunted growth in children who were less than five years decreased from 38% to 26%, percentage of underweight children from 18% to 11% and wasting from 7% to 4%. However, regional disparities exist with nutrition indicators being significantly poor in some regions such as Kitui, Kilifi, Westpokot Isiolo and Mandera, with some reflecting more than 40% stunting rates. This correlates with low levels of education which are in turn attributed to limited access to adequate diet and poor hygiene. School feeding programme should not only alleviate short-term hunger but should also achieve the nutritional needs of children. These are critical to their growth and development. It was therefore necessary that a study be conducted to determine the challenges in school feeding programmes in pre-primary schools in difficult circumstances in Kenya.

2.1 Research Objective

- 1) To establish challenges in the feeding programmes in Isiolo County Kenya.
- 2) To explore possible strategies that can be put in place to overcome the challenges.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive design. The dependent variable was feeding programme in pre-primary schools. The independent variables were the challenges experienced in feeding programme in difficult circumstances and the intervening variables were the possible strategies that could be put in place to overcome the challenges. The target population was all the public pre-primary schools in Isiolo County. Purposive sampling technique was applied to identify pre-primary schools in the County that were attached to public primary schools that had feeding programme. Cluster sampling was employed to determine statistical estimate with the largest

variations. The study used simple random sampling to identify the school from each cluster. The sample yielded a total of 20 schools, 20 headteachers, 40 teachers, 50 parents and one education officer the entire sample yielded a total of 131 for the study. Questionnaires and observation schedule were used in data collection. The pilot study was conducted in two public schools that were not included in the sampled schools for the final study. This was done to help in the ensuring validity and reliability of the instruments. Results were presented in frequency distribution tables according to the objectives and preceded by descriptive explanation.

4. Findings and Discussion

Study findings were presented as follows:

4.1 Challenges in the Feeding Programme

The study sought to identify the challenges experienced in the school feeding programme. To obtain this information, the Education officer, the headteachers and the teachers were asked to highlight the main challenges experienced in the feeding programme. The results are shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Challenges in the Feeding Programme

	Yes		No		Total Count
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	
Shortage of Adequate Water	20	100.0%	0	0.0%	20
Poor Infrastructure	20	100.0%	0	0.0%	20
Inadequate Food	20	100.0%	0	0.0%	20
Poverty	17	85.0%	3	15.0%	20
Insecurity	19	95.0%	1	5.0%	20
Harsh Climate/Weather	20	100.0%	0	0.0%	20

Table 1 show that the SFP experienced a number of challenges. The main challenges range from shortage of water (100%), poor infrastructure (100%), inadequate food (100%), harsh climatic conditions (100%) insecurity (95%) and poverty (85%).

4.1.2 Shortage of Water

Table 1 show that among the least available resources was water. Most of the schools did not have access to clean and safe drinking water. From the observation it was discovered that some schools used water from seasonal rivers. In some schools, there are times when food was not cooked due to lack of water. Prompted by the shortage of water, pupils are required to carry water to school to be assured of a meal. At times the pupils are forced to walk for long distances in the heat of the day in search of water. One of the head teachers in response to the question on the availability of water, said:

“At times the pupils are forced to walk for long distances in the heat of the day in search of water. This leads to delay in the preparation of food and in class attendance.”

According to the quote above, shortage of water is critical as it generates sanitation challenges. Children are likely to drink unsafe water. Apart from dehydration, hunger is a major effect of water scarcity. Direct impact of shortage of water is on the crops and livestock. These may lead to food shortage and more importantly starvation and malnutrition. It was reported by some of the teachers that shortage of water was a hindrance for the children to attend school frequently because they were either too sick or were too tired to attend school after walking long distances in search of water. One of the headteachers had this to say:

“The prolonged drought has resulted in many children not attending classes since there is no water to cook food. Even if they attend, they are likely not to learn because of fatigue.”

From the above excerpt it is important to note that, to ensure the sustainability of the school feeding programme appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene practices are essential in the whole process of food preparation and provision. Access to sustainable development could be linked to food security, healthy bodies and possibility of people lifting themselves out of intergenerational poverty cycle. These findings are in conformity with the report made by Finan (2010) who asserted that, water scarcity and inadequate infrastructure has continued to cripple the sustainability of the feeding programmes in ASAL area.

4.1.3 Poor Infrastructure

In an interview while responding to the question why the government delayed to supply food, it was noted that; distance was the main impediment as the terrain was rugged and impassible hence it took a toll on the government to supply the foodstuff. Sometimes the shortage of food was caused by the depletion of food supply before the intended time. Food did not last for the intended period as it did not serve only the school children, but even the old people who come into the schools during meals hoping to relieve the purges of hunger. Food shortage in the area made some of the pupils to carry big dishes so that they could take home some food for their siblings who had not attained the school age.

Most of the headteachers and teachers were in agreement that delayed food delivery was as a result of inaccessibility of the schools. It was reported that the Isiolo river bridge had collapsed years ago. Whenever it rained, learning in some schools came to a halt. Due to the flooded river some of the schools could not be accessible hence the delay in stock replacement. It is therefore imperative that food in such schools could only be supplied after the waters had subsided. It was also echoed that:

“Whenever there are delays in food supply, the school enrollment dropped by 50%. The lack of food also impacted negatively on the pupil’s attention in class and as a result learning became very difficult.”

The above quote indicates that the attendance of children wholly depend on the availability of food in schools. It thus implies that, to retain children in school, food should be supplied timely. For prompt supply of food the infrastructure should be improved.

It was observed that in all the sampled schools, there were no dining halls. As a result, pupils were served food outside. It was revealed that children handled food in dusty and unhygienic way which was likely to cause infections among the children. Most of the children sought for shelter from the scorching heat under bushes that grew in the school. Inaccessibility of clean water led to poor hygiene practices as some of the children ate without adequately washing their hands.

4.1.4 Insecurity

The other major cause of the inaccessibility as reported by the education officer was insecurity. Relative security is important for the success of any project. The mobility of teachers and pupils was highly affected by insecurity. It was reported that the instances of insecurity were so frequent that it was difficult for the suppliers to access some of the schools. The results suggest that insecurity and the challenge of poor infrastructure led to the delay in the replacement of the stock.

Most of the headteachers reported that lack of training for persons who manage the feeding programme led to massive wastage of food stuffs. The office did not have monitoring tools to help in controlling the wastage. Similarly, it was reported that there were other reasons that led to the loss of stock. These were; pest infestation as the food could not be fumigated while in the school stores, poor storage infrastructure that did not allow free circulation of air leading to food getting aflatoxin contamination and theft especially during communal conflicts. One of the headteachers had this to say:

“During conflicts, the schools are deserted; those fighting break into the stores and take what could be there...”

It emerged that the frequent communal conflicts were ignited by the limited resources. The community was likely to be ignorant of their responsibility to offer security for their schools. It was also reported that the major economic activity in the area was pastoralism. Most of the families lived in poverty. The adults are always on the move with their livestock in search of pasture and water. The insecurity in the area is ignited by cattle rustling. This affected learning as most of the children joined their parents in hiding for months. As the schools were deserted, most schools lost food through theft. This could imply that the food supply delivered by the government to schools did not last the intended period of time as it was likely to be depleted before. The study findings conformed to the report by SMART (2017) who cited that, poverty levels were high and the main cause was poor rainfall performance across all livelihood zones. The critical situation was aggravated by emerging inter-community conflicts among the pastoralists in Isiolo. This affected food security.

4.1.5 Poverty

The other challenge that affected SFP was lack of community awareness of their responsibility in the school feeding programme. This could be an outcome of the traditionally held belief that the community was poor and needed to be assisted always as put by one of the parents:

“We residents of Isiolo are pastoralists. Persistent drought and frequent communal conflicts have kept poverty levels very high. To survive we need assistance from the government and the NGOs.”

From the above excerpt it was important to note that the poverty levels were a major cause for the community to depend on the government and the NGOs. These promoted donor dependency among the community.

Although parents were expected to supplement for the inadequacy of funds to pay the cooks, they were not able. Some headteachers asked their cooks to bring in their families during meals. Feeding the family served as payment for cooks. Although feeding the family supplemented the payment for the cooks, it also contributed to the depletion of the stock before the intended time. In a different interview it was cited that poverty was another hindering aspect for the parental participation in the feeding programme. Some of the parents highlighted that, they had suffered from long spells of drought that led to lack of the essential resources that could be used. One parent aptly said:

“Crop farming is not possible in the area and therefore we do not have resources to contribute instead we also depend on the assistance offered by the government.”

The above statement revealed the fact that most of the families lived without a stable source of income hence the dependency on the government. The teachers and the headteachers were in agreement that parents did not participate through provision of food items as it was provided by the government and some NGOs.

The education officer in the area reported that, the NGOs who worked in the area did not support SFP in schools but offered assistance to households to meet their needs. These NGOs were; Action Aid, Child Welfare Society, Compassion and World vision. Similarly, it was also reported that the church based organizations offered assistance to the community by drilling boreholes in schools that served the neighboring families. It therefore implies that parental inability to participate was attributed to the levels of poverty among the parents. These findings agreed with UNESCO (2010) who attributed the low social economic status of parents to the inability of families to meet the essential needs of their children. This is in conformity with Pollit (2001) who posits that poor parents may be unable to provide or support financially the school feeding programmes. It therefore implied that the parental participation was determined by their social economic status.

4.1.6 Food Insecurity

As shown in table 1 the other major challenge was food insecurity. It was reported that the main cause of inadequate food was poor performance of rainfall, lack of arable land and insecurity. Most of the respondents reported that food insecurity was critical. It was also reported that there was food consumption gaps in most of the households. The result suggested that there was likely hood of acute malnutrition prevalence to escalate. One of the headteachers reported:

“Malnutrition and high morbidity rates have raised in the school among the pre- primary school children.”

From the above quote, it was clear that children were the most affected group by food shortage due to their general needs for growth and development. It was also reported that there were no feeding programmes for the pre-primary schools. The pre-primary schools attached to public primary schools benefitted. These pre-primary schools enrolled high numbers of children. Some of the under-age children were brought to school not to learn but for food. Since the government supplied food based on the primary school enrolment, such schools where under-age children were enrolled experienced food shortage. Food insecurity was highly associated with prolonged drought which is frequently experienced. These led to the loss of livestock and poor crop production. It emerged that the challenges were heightened by inadequate water supply and insecurity caused by limited resources. The conflicts disrupted transport and more importantly the distribution of food to schools.

The food supplied by the government was unfamiliar to the children. As the researcher interacted with the children, it was noted that the food provided was not liked as they claimed that it was meant for horses. Nanyeit, a class five pupil had this to say;

“We eat the food just to reduce the purges of hunger and not that we enjoy. It was better if they gave us maize and beans or rice and beans instead of bulgur wheat.”

The government instead of funding the programme, it supplied food stuffs. This was to lessen the duties of the management of sourcing and procurement of the food substances. The management is left with no option to purchase any food, but to utilize the food supplied. In the school where rice was provided, it was the initiative of the county government to supplement for the pre-primary school. However the support from the county government was not always assured.

These outcomes concur with the findings of Bwonda (2005) who cited that rural schools widely without kitchen, clean water and money to pay cooks find it challenging to provide daily meals without burdening parents for the missing input. Additionally, these results were in line with the report of MoA, (2010) which opined that severe droughts in the historically precarious Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) contributed to high rates of crop loss, malnutrition and violence over limited arable land and scarce

water. The study findings also agreed with The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2013-2018. The plan indicated that despite the big strides made by the government, education still faces regional disparities. Children in the pocket of poverty in rural areas, arid and semiarid lands lag behind owing to a number of challenges such as conflicts, lack of school models, food insecurity and high malnutrition that led to stunted growth.

These study findings disagree with the study findings of Finan (2010) who reported that the government transfers funds directly to school accounts to cater for the feeding programmes. The study also disagree with a study conducted by Olubayo (2015) in Emuhaya who found out that managerial incompetency, funding, accountability and lack of adequate planning were the major challenges that inhibited the implementation of SFP in the area. The feeding programmes in difficult circumstances in Kenya seem to experience other major challenges. These include shortage of food, scarcity of water, poor infrastructure, insecurity and poverty.

4.2 Strategies that Could Be Put in Place to Overcome the Challenges

The study explored the possible strategies that could be put in place to overcome the challenges. The informants had suggestions on the measures that could be put in place to improve the situation of the feeding programme. Some of the strategies suggested are presented in Table 2 below

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Community and parental involvement	15	75%
Provision of water	20	100%
Alternative financing cost	17	85%
Implementing home grown school feeding programme	20	100%
Maximizing sustainable agricultural production	15	75%
Introduction of conservation methods of farming	15	75%

The results in table 2 show that the major strategies that could be put in place were provision of water with 100%, implementing home grown school feeding programme 100%, alternative financing cost with 85%, community and parental involvement, maximizing, sustainable agricultural production and introduction of conservation methods of farming with 75%.

4.2.1 Provision of Water

Water scarcity was attributed to inadequate rainfalls experienced in the area. Findings showed that 5 out of the 20 schools had clean and safe drinking water. All the respondents suggested that an appeal could be made from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), the NGOs and donor funding to equip schools with water tanks for harvesting rain water. The suggestion was consistent with the report made by one of the headteachers who articulated that:

"In my school we appealed to a church based organization (Catholic Church) which drilled a borehole for the school and also provided tanks to harvest adequate water for use."

It was revealed that the government in collaboration with other stakeholders like the church sponsors could create a plan that could improve the situation on the accessibility of clean and safe drinking water. Therefore, on the strategies that was likely to provide sustainable water project. Some of the schools that had boreholes served as the perfect example. From the above information the researcher opined that, it was possible to appeal to donors, well-wishers and church organizations for the missing provision. The above view concurred with the WFP (2007) who reported that the government could take the initiative to identify the nature of the water problem. This may be achieved in collaboration with partners such as well-wishers and sponsors. The Kenyan government under *"Njaa Marufuku Kenya"* (NMK) established water harvesting for crop production. The main objective was construction of micro-dams and water pans to address food security. These was hoped to help the vulnerable communities to achieve access to quality food. This would go a long way to improve the situation in the school feeding programme.

4.2.2 Implementing Home Grown School Feeding Programme

The home grown school feeding programme, a government policy designed to supply food for the school feeding through purchase of locally produced food. Originally food for the feeding programme came from foreign food aid. The HGSFP specifically was to be linked to locally produced food from small holder farmers. It could go a long way to ensure sustainability of the programme and food security supporting not only the children but also the development actors along the market chain. Due to financial constraints the government was not able to fund SFP. The county programme officer suggested that;

"In order to improve the HGSFP the ministry of finance must be ready to spare some budgetary allocations if the government is committed to replace world food programme."

The above suggestion was closely related to the views of the headteachers who commented that:

"The government must improve the methods of farming technologies and allocate more funds for SFP."

"The government should tap into the administration experience of the local communities in allocation of duties which would be required under the HGSFP. This would create opportunities for community and parental participation in the school activities."

“The government also must improve agricultural capabilities by enhancing irrigational facilities, indigenous Plant knowledge and allocate enough funds for the SFP.”

The researcher observed that, with the introduction of the HGSFP the government could look for ways to better integrate the goals of education, agriculture and rural development through inter-ministerial cooperation and policy changes. Policy implementers ought to scale up the budgetary allocation that could mitigate the regional food scarcity. This is prompted by drought and ever-rising food costs that have threatened the viability of SFP in ASAL. This is in conformity with GoK (2013) which reported that for SFP to be successful, more monetary allocation for; improving the quality, investment in human capital and supporting economic opportunities was inevitable. Additionally, (FAO, 2015) opined that, HGSFP was aimed at enabling the development of nutrition-sensitive and inclusive food value chains which maximize benefits and play an important role in shaping, strengthening sustainable local and national food systems.

4.2.3 Alternative Financing

Feeding programmes in food insecure regions were expensive. Responding to the question how feeding programmes could be made sustainable, most of the parents suggested that the school could initiate income generating activities such as poultry rearing, bee keeping school based gardens. Similarly the headteachers were in agreement with the idea of initiating income generating activities. One headteacher aptly said;

“Even where there is no arable land improvisation of sacks, vehicle tires could be adopted for planting vegetables that would cut on the cost of buying vegetables and increasing nutritional intake.”

Another teacher had this to say;

“We can also invite the local communities and companies for a school harvesting day where they can support the feeding programme in kind and monetary.”

The researcher noted that, for sustainability of the feeding programme, several measures needed to be in place. Funding may require international assistance, but it was necessary that the available resources be exploited first. From the above information it was observed that all schools could use other means to solicit for funds and missing inputs from the local authorities companies and church organizations. This could go a long way in supporting the efforts of the government. This view is in line with Espejo (2009) who posited that beyond the costs of the food, logistics, control and the cost associated with the food management was likely to exert significant financial burden for the government.

4.2.4 Community and Parental Involvement

In schools where the stakeholders were involved in organization and implementations of the feeding programme, offered a number of advantages. Such advantages include; strengthened teacher and parent collaboration, strong link between school and the community and ownership of the programme by the community. In reference to the report by the headteachers, the level of parental and community participation was very low. One of the headteachers suggested that, in order to improve parental and community participation, there was need to bring them on board in the whole process of planning and implementation of the programme. He had these to say:

“Parents and the entire community play a vital role and ultimately assume responsibly services such as cooking fetching water, ensuring security and ensuring clean and hygienic school environment.”

The above quote was in conformity with the suggestions made by the teachers who argued that;

“To achieve parental and community involvement, all the stakeholders should be allowed to participate in the whole process of providing the feeding programme.”

The researcher opines that parental and community involvement is vital to the realization of the benefits of the SFP. It was therefore imperative that parental participation was likely to provide an avenue to assume ownership of the programme. It followed that, feeding programme without community support was a weak intervention and was likely not to yield the expected outcomes. Parental and community coordination was thought to significantly increase the value of food in schools in terms of the desired outcomes. These views were in line with Espejo (2009) who posited that, involving parents in what goes on at school is critical to raising the level of education for the whole community. This would go a long way in increasing the potential base of the community. USDASP (2013), reported that creating dependable safety nets was inevitable as it ensured accessibility to food for the entire community. This went a long way to enable communities to move away from free food aid distribution. These safety nets further strengthen community-based systems for protecting vulnerable populations.

4.2.5 Maximizing Sustainable Agricultural Production

To improve the livelihood of the agro pastoralists and pastoralists was a challenge. Therefore the local people through training could be introduced to conservation methods of farming where they were encouraged to use drought resistant varieties of crops. These means that, the agro pastoralists are likely to; improve the reliability of cropping for consumption in the areas of erratic and unreliable rainfall, short rainy season and marginal lands. The report from the headteachers highlights that; pastoralists have, for a long time been left behind in terms of public investments among

all the vulnerable populations. They have therefore the poorest access to the essential services such as access to quality food and nutrition. Improving their subsistence production is likely to improve on the nutritional intake and community participation in the feeding programme.

Diversification of the economic base among the local people is key to reducing food insecurity. The programme officer suggested that, this could be achieved by expanding the utilization of short cycle livestock such as sheep, poultry, pigs and goats. Processing of animal products such as milk, meat, hides and skins may play an important role in providing opportunities for supplementary income which could be used to boost the FP. In support of the view, one parent suggested that;

“It is important to create employment opportunities. This is likely to be done by improving accessibility to education, easier access to markets, improved transport and communication and improved financial services.”

The excerpt above indicates that, through domestic processing create opportunities for employment and improved social services. This is likely to contribute to increased income which in turn ensures accessibility to the available food. Improving the livelihoods of people, will enable them to become resilient to shocks and be able to provide for the needs of the feeding programme without entirely depending on the government. FAO (2015) identified erratic performance of rain and protracted communal conflicts as the major cause of food insecurity. The view is in agreement with FAO (2006) who asserted that, agricultural policies formulated should focus on strategies to increase productivity in rural setups. It therefore implies that, ASAL areas in Kenya still need external assistance for food, and more importantly where conflicts are the primary cause of food insecurity.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made; though notable gains have been attained throughout the country in terms of educational accessibility the ASAL Kenyans continue to lag behind. The feeding programme for decades experienced challenges that hinder the full effect of the programme. Among them are water scarcity inadequate infrastructure, harsh climatic conditions, food insecurity and poverty. These challenges are later escalated by frequent communal conflicts over limited resources. It was also observed that if the following strategies are put in place, they could help overcome the challenges. The strategies identified were; community and parental involvement, provision of water, alternative financing cost, implementing home grown school feeding programme and maximizing sustainable agricultural production.

6. Recommendations

Recommendations were based on the study findings for policy practices, improvement and future research as follows:

6.1 Recommendation to Headteachers

In order to encourage parental participation, school managers should create opportunities for capacity building where the parents are involved. This is hoped to bring the parents on board by sensitizing them on their responsibility in the feeding programmes and to encourage them to practice kitchen gardening. The results revealed minimal parental participation and lack of integration of kitchen garden.

6.2 Recommendation to Pre-Primary Teachers

In order to retain children in schools, teachers should organize for forums to educate parents on the importance of participating in school activities especially on the importance of sending their children to school with or without the feeding programme. This is hoped to help the parents to understand their responsibility in the feeding programme.

6.3 Recommendation to the NGOs

In order to supplement for the limited resources and to support the government in prioritizing the feeding programmes, it is recommended that the NGOs should provide for the missing inputs such as drilling boreholes where there are no reliable sources of water. The efforts of the organizations is hoped to contribute enormously in the children's access to safe and clean drinking water. Similarly the NGOs may help in the rehabilitation of boreholes, in some schools in order to ensure water quality surveillance and appropriate treating of water. They should also purchase and distribute plastic water tanks that could be used to harvest water during the raining seasons

6.4 Further Research

This study focused on the challenges facing feeding programmes in pre-primary schools in Isiolo County. There is need to replicate the study as the findings are not generalisable to the divergent regions of the country. Additionally, there is need to conduct a research on the quality of the food provided in the feeding programmes.

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