

Assessment Of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes in Jega Local Government Area, Kebbi State

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DOI: [10.56201/jhsp.vol.11.no4.2025.pg24.32](https://doi.org/10.56201/jhsp.vol.11.no4.2025.pg24.32)

Abstract

This study examines the impact of National Homegrown School Feeding Programme (HGSF) on students' participation in primary schools in Jega Local Government Area, Kebbi State. The research aims to examine how the programme encouraged pupils' enrolment and improved pupils' attendance. In this study descriptive survey design will be used. The population for this study comprised of the teachers and the head teachers in the 81 public primary schools in Jega Local Government Area of Kebbi State. Multistage sampling method was used to select teachers 260 out of the 939 in the local government. A validated questionnaire titled School Feeding Programme Questionnaire (SFPQ) with a reliability index of 0.73 was used for data collection. The study used frequency count, table and percentage to analyze the data. The study found that the challenges affecting the school feeding programme included a lack of continuity, insufficient meal quantities, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, poor sensitization and advocacy, and logistical complexities in food distribution. It also found that the strategies adopted by the government to ensure effective implementation the school feeding programme included setting up supervisory committees, involving stakeholders, providing funding and resources, promoting local agriculture, and developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks. There is the need Kebbi state government to increase the budgetary allocation for the programme. In addition to this, the state government should liaise with international organization such as the World Vision International and Joint Aid Management for funding and trainings that would ensure sustainability and domestication of the programmes considering its importance. There is also the need for Kebbi state government to establish a broad based multi-sectorial monitoring and evaluation team to monitor the programme and arrest observed infraction at all levels.

Key Words: *National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, Pupil Enrolment, Pupils' Attendance.*

Introduction

School feeding programme (sometimes referred to as school meal programme) are interventions that regularly provide nutritious foods to children and adolescents attending school (FAO, 2019). Benefits of school feeding on children and adolescents include alleviating hunger, reducing micronutrient deficiency and anemia, preventing overweight and obesity, improving school enrollment and attendance, increasing cognitive and academic performance, and contributing to gender equity in access to education (Drake *et al.*, 2017). Most countries have some forms of school feeding programs in some way and at some scale (WFP, 2013). School feeding programs are widely available in high-income countries but generally have incomplete coverage in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), where the need is greatest in terms of hunger and poverty (Bundy *et al.*, 2009). Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa only have school feeding interventions that are targeted toward the most food-insecure regions instead of being universally available (Bundy *et al.*, 2009). It is imperative to expand the coverage of school feeding programs and to improve the quality of existing programs to maximize their benefits on children and adolescents.

According to Jukes (2016), different countries have one or a combination of the two feeding modalities in place for various objectives. However, they can be grouped into two broad categories: in-school meals and take-home rations where families are given food if their children attend school (Anderson, *et. el.* (2005). Historically, in-school meals have been the most popular modality of school feeding interventions. The school feeding can be in turn grouped into two common categories: programme that provides meals and program that provides high-energy biscuits or snacks to generate greater impacts on school enrolment, retention rates, and reduce gender or social gaps (Anderson, *et. el.* (2005). Anderson, *et. el.* (2005) contended that there are 'indications of a significant swing in thinking about school feeding and many elements of this new thinking are being promoted keenly under the rubric of "home grown school feeding"'.

School feeding programmes constitute critical interventions that have been introduced in many developed and developing countries of the world to address the issue of poverty, stimulate school enrolment and enhance pupils' performance. In developing countries, almost 60million children go to school hungry every day and about 40 percent of them are from Africa. Providing school meals is therefore vital in nourishing children (Wang and Fawzi, 2020). Parents are motivated to send their children to school instead of keeping them at home to work or care for siblings (Ahmed 2004). The introduction of the school feeding is traced to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) initiative and several conferences held thereafter by African leaders which aimed to tackle issues, such as peace, security, good economic, political and corporate governance and to make the continent an attractive destination for foreign investment.

Nigeria happened to be one of twelve (12) pilot countries invited to implement the program. So far, Nigeria, Cote d'ivore, Ghana, Kenya and Mali commenced the implementation of the school feeding programme. As a result, the Federal Government came up with the Universal Basic Education Act in 2004, which provided the enabling legislative backing for the execution of the Home-Grown School Feeding and Health programme. Towards the realization of the objectives of the Universal Basic Education programme and the central role of nutrition, the Federal Ministry of Education launched the Home-Grown School Feeding and Health Programmes in 2005. The overall goal of the School Feeding programme in Nigeria is to reduce hunger and malnutrition among school children and enhance the achievement of Universal Basic Education (Wang and Fawzi, 2020). The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) was re-launched in Nigeria in 2016, eleven years after it was first introduced in the country, with Enugu

as one of the beneficiary States. The objectives of the program are to improve the health of school children and aid in the realization of Universal Basic Education (UBE) goals (Agu, *et al.*, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in Jega Local Government Area of Kebbi State, Nigeria, aims to improve students' nutrition, health, and education outcomes. However, despite its potential benefits, the programme's effectiveness and impact in Jega Local Government Area of Kebbi State remain unclear. There is a need to assess the programme's implementation, challenges, and outcomes to identify strategies for improvement similar programme. Hence, this study seeks to assess the NHGSFP in Jega Local Government Area of Kebbi State, examining its challenges and identify strategies for enhancing its effectiveness and sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

This research project aims to following objectives:

1. To identify challenge affecting home grown school feeding programme in primary school in Jega Local Government Authority.
2. To examine the strategies adopted by the government to ensure effective implementation of home-grown school feeding programme in primary school in Jega Local Government Authority.

1.4 Research Questions

The following are research questions for this study:

1. What are challenges affecting home grown school feeding programme in primary school in Jega Local Government Authority?
2. What are the strategies adopted by government to ensure effective implementation of home-grown school feeding programme in primary school in Jega Local Government Authority?

Literature Review

School feeding is defined as the provision of food to school children. The school feeding programmes (SFP) can be classified into two main groups based on their modalities: in-school feeding, where children are fed in school; and take-home rations, where families are given food if their children attend school (Bundy, 2017). In-school feeding can in turn be divided into two common categories: programme that provide meals, and programme that provide high-energy biscuits or snacks (Bundy, 2017). In-school feeding is what is presently implemented in Nigeria.

In order to improve the nutritional status of school children, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Home-Grown School Feeding and Health Programme in September, 2005 under the coordination of the Federal Ministry of Education. The programme aimed to provide pupils with adequate meal during the school day (Alabede, et. el (2020). The scheme, officially known as Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) insisted on buying the foodstuffs from the local farmers. It therefore reduced the rate of malnutrition while it also provides the local farmers the opportunity to sell their products to participating schools. According to the Federal Government's directive, Federal, State and Local Governments were to fund the programme with the State and Local Governments providing the bulk.

The majority of the estimated 7.3 million children out of school in Nigeria are girls. In 2005, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the School Feeding Programme with the assistance of the United Nations' Children Education Fund (UNICEF) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The objective is to provide one meal per school day to all primary school pupils in Nigeria with the objectives of improving the health of school children, increase their enrolment, retention and completion rate. Since then, the enrolment rate had increased while the attendance of pupils in school is stable especially among girls who used to leave school for street trading and house-help jobs NEPAD (2009).

The Administration of the School Feeding Programme in Kebbi State, Nigeria

Kebbi begins free feeding for pupils in April 2018 as part of the government's Social Investment Programme (Agu, et. el. (2023). The State government, flagged off Home-Grown Feeding Programme in primary schools of the state in April 19, 2011. In August 2021, biometric data capture for 339,642 pupils was conducted by the Federal Government in Kebbi State to scale up implementation of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, NHGSFP. This was disclosed by a Principal Administrative Officer in the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Aminu Attahiru-Zagga. The aim of the exercise was to ensure that every child in the country has access to education by providing at least one meal a day to motivate parents to enroll their children. "It is important to note that the implementation of NHGSFP began in 2016 by President Muhammad Buhari's administration with the aim to increase enrolment rates of children from class one to three in public primary schools in the state.

Challenges associated with School Feeding Programme

NHGSFP is crucial if universal education is to be achieved. Although developing countries are working towards improvement of primary school conditions through interventions like NHGSFP, dropout rates are significant and lead to low levels of primary school completion (Sabates, *et al.*, 2010). With NHGSFP in place as one way of making sure children attend school, the beneficiaries are expected to appreciate the intervention by sending children to school and discourage bad practices among children. However, there is a belief that parents' negative attitudes towards education are some of the main reasons for non-participation in primary school. This has not been proved by research and therefore regarded as mere hearsay.

The NHGSFP just like the free education policy overlooked the possibilities of enrolling school children that the government could not maintain. Most children in public schools learn in overcrowded classrooms, school children of different ages are found in one classroom due to retention making it difficult for the young ones to cope. Further to that there are programmed is set. Uduku (2015) opined that NHGSFP would best improve the performance of pupils when coupled with adequate learning materials, physical facilities and teacher motivation. Challenges associated with NHGSFP is high ratio on teacher-students which are significant and lead to low levels of primary school performance (Sabates, *et al.*, 2010).

The NHGSFP in Kebbi state, like in other parts of Nigeria, faces several challenges including inadequate funding, rising inflation impacting meal quality, and potential corruption. Other issues include poor coordination between federal and state governments, delays in fund disbursement, and regional insecurity. Additionally, a lack of reliable data hinders effective planning and monitoring, and the reliance on smallholder farmers for food supply creates challenges during off-seasons.

Strategies for Effective Implementation of NHGSFP

The following are the strategies for effective implementation of NHGSFP (Agu, et. el. (2023), Bosah, et. el. (2019), Alabede, et. el. (2020))

1. Equity focused: ensuring equity across regions and the promotion of gender equality. • Direct purchase from local smallholder farmers: procurement will prioritize linkages to smallholder farmer value chains in the locality.
2. Optimal linkages to national food security and agriculture development: food procurement processes, storage and distribution are operationally connected to national food reserves.
3. Culturally-sensitive: promote healthy and balanced meals based on locally available produce.
4. Health and Nutrition Education: health and nutrition education is embedded in school meals initiative.
5. Shared responsibility: school nutrition and meals implementation is a shared responsibility between national government, State Governments and local communities.
6. Sustainability: stable government funding and sustainability plans are required to support the national school nutrition and meals programme.
7. Flexibility: successful HGSF programmes are unique and context specific in design, implementation and management, reflecting the environment within which they are implemented.

Research Methodology

In this study descriptive survey design was employed. The population for this study comprises of the 1020 teachers and head teachers in the 81 primary schools in Jega Local Government Area of Kebbi State. Multi stage sampling procedures was applied in determining the sample of the study. Purposive sample method was used to select five (5) areas in the local government and three (3) primary schools from each of the selected area. The Research Advisors (2006) was used to select 240 out of the 939 teachers. Therefore, a total of 260 comprising 20 teachers and 240 teachers were selected.

The instrument which was used for data collection in this study is questionnaire constructed on five Likert's scales titled School Feeding Programme Questionnaire (SFPQ). The instrument was validated by experts from the Department of Education, Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero and Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The instrument was administered two times within an interval of three weeks, in order to measure the stability of response over time. A reliability index of 0.73 was obtained from the test-retest making the instrument reliable for data collection in this study. Frequency count, table and percentage were used to analyze the data collected.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected is presented and analyzed in this section.

Research Question One

RQ1: What are challenges affecting home grown school feeding programme in primary school in Jega Local Government Authority?

This question is answered and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Challenges Affecting Home Grown School Feeding Programme in Primary School

S/No	Item Statement	Response							
		SA		A		D		SD	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	The lack of continuity of the programmes.	154	59.2	43	16.5	37	14.2	26	10.0
2.	The students out-number the quantity of the meals provided.	129	49.6	84	32.3	34	13.1	13	5.0
3.	Inadequate monitoring and evaluation.	126	48.5	75	28.8	38	14.6	21	8.1
4.	Inadequate sensitization and advocacy.	119	45.8	80	30.8	39	15.0	22	8.5
5.	Logical complexities in food distribution.	110	42.3	64	24.6	26	10.0	60	23.1

In Table 1, item 1 indicates 26 respondents (10.0%) strongly disagree; 37 respondents (14.2%) disagree; 43 respondents (16.5%) agree and 154 respondents (59.2%) strongly agree. In item 2, thirteen respondents (5.0%) strongly disagree, 34 respondents (13.1%) disagreed, 84 respondents (32.3%) agree, 129 respondents (49.6%) strongly agree. Item 3 shows 21 respondents (8.1%) strongly disagree, 38 respondents (14.6%) disagree, 75 respondents (28.8%) agree, and 126 respondents (48.5%) strongly agree. Under item 4, twenty-two respondents (8.5%) strongly disagree; 39 respondents (15.0%) disagree; 80 respondents (30.8%) agree; and 119 respondents (45.8%) strongly agree. Item 5 indicates 60 respondents (23.1%) strongly disagree; 26 respondents (10.0%) disagree; 64 respondents (24.6%) agree; and 110 respondents (42.3%) strongly agree.

In Table 1, there is a mixed level of agreement with challenge affecting home grown school feeding programme in primary school in Jega Local Government. While there is a significant proportion of strong agreement, there are notable levels of disagreement, indicating varied perceptions or experiences regarding challenges affecting home grown school feeding programme in primary school in Jega Local Government.

Research Question Two

RQ2: What are the Strategies adopted by government to ensure effective implementation of home-grown school feeding programme in primary school in Jega Local Government Authority?

This question is answered and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Strategies Adopted by Government to Ensure Effective Implementation of Home-Grown School Feeding Programme

S/No	Item Statement	Response							
		SA		A		D		SD	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	The government set up supervisory committee.	166	63.8	62	23.8	19	7.3	13	5.0
2.	The stakeholders are involved in the feeding programmes.	136	52.3	90	34.6	22	8.5	12	4.6
3.	The government provides funding and other resources.	161	61.9	53	20.4	29	11.2	17	6.5
4.	It promotes local agriculture for stable food supply to schools.	113	43.5	59	22.7	53	20.4	35	13.5
5.	It develops new monitoring and evaluation frameworks.	160	61.5	42	16.2	33	12.7	25	9.6

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

In Table 2, item 1 indicates 13 respondents (5.0%) strongly disagree; 19 respondents (7.3%) disagree; 60 respondents (23.1%) agree and 181 respondents (69.5%) strongly agree. In item 2, twelve respondents (4.6%) strongly disagree, 22 respondents (8.5%) disagreed, 90 respondents (34.6%) Agreed, 136 respondents (52.3%) strongly agreed. Item 3 shows 17 respondents (6.5%) Strongly Disagree, 29 respondents (11.2%) disagree, 53 respondents (20.4%) agree, and 161 respondents (61.9%) strongly agree. Item 4 indicates 25 respondents (13.5%) strongly disagree; 53 respondents (20.4%) disagree; 59 respondents (22.7%) agree; and 113 respondents (43.5%) strongly agree. Under item 5, twenty-five respondents (9.6%) strongly disagree; 33 respondents (12.7%) disagree; 42 respondents (16.5%) agree; and 160 respondents (61.5%) strongly agree.

In Table 6, most respondents strongly agree with the strategies adopted by government to ensure effective implementation of home-grown school feeding programme, indicating strong approval with these strategies. These insights can help in understanding the overall satisfaction levels on among the surveyed population, guiding future actions and improvements in targeted areas.

4.8 Summary of Major Findings

From the data presented and analyzed, it was found that:

1. Challenges affecting the school feeding programme included a lack of continuity, insufficient meal quantities, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, poor sensitization and advocacy, and logistical complexities in food distribution.
2. The strategies adopted by the government to ensure effective implementation the school feeding programme included setting up supervisory committees, involving stakeholders, providing funding and resources, promoting local agriculture, and developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Discussions of Findings

The result in Table 1 shows that the challenges affecting the school feeding programme included a lack of continuity, insufficient meal quantities, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, poor sensitization and advocacy, and logistical complexities in food distribution. The challenges identified, such as lack of continuity and inadequate monitoring, are common in large-scale programmes. Addressing these issues will require sustained effort and resources. Effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks are crucial for identifying problems early and making necessary adjustments.

More so, research finding indicated that the faced challenges of lack of sustainability, inadequate monitoring and poor sensitization. Uduku (2015) opined that NHGSFP would best improve the performance of pupils when coupled with adequate learning materials, physical facilities and teacher motivation. Sabates *et al.*, (2010) opined that challenges associated with NHGSFP is high ratio on teacher-students which are significant and lead to low levels of primary school performance.

The result in Table 2 shows that the strategies adopted by the government to ensure effective implementation the school feeding programme included setting up supervisory committees, involving stakeholders, providing funding and resources, promoting local agriculture, and developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This is supported by Agu, *et. el.* (2023), Bosah, *et. el.* (2019), Alabede, *et. el.* (2020) researches that identify equity focused, direct purchase from local smallholder farmers, optimal linkages to national food security, culturally-sensitivity, health and nutrition education, shared responsibility, sustainability, and flexibility as the best strategies applied world over.

5.3 Conclusions

The implementation of the programme seemed successful in Jega LGA, however, the programme is not implemented in all primary schools in the areas. This can be taken as challenges to the implementation process. Other challenges include the lack of legal framework to support the implementation and continuity of the programme, lack of effective monitoring of the programme, inaccurate data management, budget deficit which sometimes leads to overstretching the food vendors in respect to the number of pupils to be served, improper synergy among stakeholder, unnecessary political interference and corruption among others.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. There is the need to increase the budgetary allocation for the programme. In addition to this, the state government should liaise with international organization such as the World Vision International and Joint Aid Management for funding and trainings that would ensure sustainability and domestication of the programmes considering its importance.
2. There is also the need for Kebbi state government to establish a broad based multi-sectorial monitoring and evaluation team to monitor the programme and arrest observed infraction at all levels.
3. The State government should liaise with National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and National Population Commission (NPC) for Strategic insight on how such data bank could be easily develop, maintained and updated from time to time with utmost precision.

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