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# Decentralized Evaluation

**Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with financial support  
from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
2016 to 2018**

Evaluation Report Volume I

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### List of Acronyms

AECDM	Association for Early Childhood Development in Malawi
ATT	Average Treatment on the Treated
CEM	Coarsened Exact Matching
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Programme
CRECCOM	Creative Centre for Community Social Mobilisation
CSB+	Enriched Corn Soya Blend
CTR	Cost-to-Transfer Ratio
CSI	Coping Strategy Index
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDS	Dietary Diversity Score
DEM	District Education Manager
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DSC	Direct Support Cost
DSMC	District School Meals Coordinator
DSHNC	District School Health Nutrition Coordinator
DEQAS	Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System
DID	Difference in Differences
EB	Executive Board
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ET	Evaluation team
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FY	Financial Year
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEEW	Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
GIZ	German International Development Agency
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HGSM	Home-Grown School Meal
HHS	Household Hunger Scale
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ISC	Indirect Support Cost
IV	Instrumental Variable
JPGE	Joint Partnership for Girls Education
KII	Key Informant Interview
LTSH	Logistic and transport within country
MAD	Minimum Acceptable Diet
MGD	McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program
MoAIWD	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MoG	Ministry of Gender
MoH	Ministry of Health
NAPE	Nutrition and Access to Primary Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NY	New York
NSSP	National Social Support Programme
ODK	Open Data Kit
OEV	Office of Evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ODOC	Other Direct Operational Cost
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares

ORF	Oral Reading Fluency
OSM	On-Site Meals
P4P	Purchase for Progress
PAA	Purchase for Africa by Africans
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
RB	Regional Bureau
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFC	School Feeding Committee
SHN	School Health and Nutrition
SMC	School Management Committee
SMP	School Meals Programme
SO	Strategic Objective
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPR	Standard Project Report
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
TCTR	Total Cost per Transfer Ratio
THR	Take Home Ration
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
UNU-MERIT	United Nations University - Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology
USAID	United States Agency of International Development
USD	United States Dollar
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WV	World Vision

## Executive Summary

1. This evaluation was commissioned by the Malawi Country Office (CO) of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and covers the period 2016-2018. The subject of the evaluation is the USDA McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. The purpose of the evaluation is to understand the extent to which the School Meal Program (SMP) objectives have been achieved and reasons for lack of fulfilment. Moreover, the evaluation aims to understand the relevance and achievements of the SMP in terms of impact and its contribution to improving access to, and quality of, education, its effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and to inform future initiatives.
2. The expected users of this evaluation report are internal and external stakeholders. Namely: the CO, the Malawi government, particularly the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), WFP Regional Bureau (RB), WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV), WFP Headquarters, implementing partners (include World Vision, Save the Children), UNICEF, FAO and USDA and other organisations providing school meals, notably Mary's Meals and GIZ.
3. The SMP is implemented in a context for widespread food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty, climatic disasters, poor education outcomes and gender inequality in schooling especially after standard/grade four. It is implemented in 13 chronically food insecure districts and aims to improve literacy (Strategic Objective 1) and increase use of health and dietary practices (Strategic Objective 2).
4. The SMP provides on-site meals and Take-Home Rations (THR), which are sourced centrally by WFP and its donors and distributed termly to selected schools. On-site meals comprise Super Cereal (CSB+) porridge, provided to all enrolled primary school students and consumed on-site. Girls and orphaned boys in standard 5 to 8 receive THRs of 10kg of maize flour, contingent on the learner attending 80% or more of classes during the lean season (January to March). Due to funding constraints, each child receives 60g of porridge daily instead of the planned amount of 100g (225kcal, and 30% of daily iron intake). In addition to the on-site meals and THRs, the SMP also promotes literacy; provides training on good health and nutrition practices and training on commodity storage and preparation; establishes school gardens and partnerships with farmers organizations; builds capacities at local, district and national level; distributes school supplies and materials; raises awareness on importance of education; provides bursaries and constructs or rehabilitation of kitchen shelters/storerooms and junior secondary schools

## Methodology

5. The McGovern-Dole SMP is assessed using 12 evaluation questions formulated using standard Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW) principles are mainstreamed throughout.
6. A *mixed-methods approach* that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection methods with the review of WFP documents is used for triangulation to ensure the diverse voice of men, women, girls and boys are heard and to increase reliability and validity. The evaluation team (ET) administered quantitative surveys in October 2018 to 128 targeted and 63 non-targeted schools, 996 early grade learners, 922 beneficiary and 476 non-beneficiary households in seven targeted districts: Mangochi, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Phalombe, Chikwawa, Kasungu and Salima. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with parents, learners, school feeding committees, farmers organizations and key informant interviews conducted with WFP, government officials (all levels), implementing partners, USDA and other school meal providers. Quantitative analysis entailed the use of statistical and rigorous impact evaluation techniques. Data is gender disaggregated. Longitudinal school level data was created using baseline data from the previous evaluation (Fiscal Year 2013 or FY13).
7. There are several limitations. A total of 13 non-targeted schools from the baseline sample had transitioned into the SMP or other school meal programmes<sup>1</sup>, while 18 non-targeted schools were unreachable.<sup>2</sup> Still, a balanced longitudinal sample was obtained. Cross-sectional household and pupil data prevent rigorous causal analysis. A matching technique is combined with regression methods to enhance rigour. Information on other social and education programmes in surveyed areas was controlled for in causal analysis to enhance attribution of impact to the SMP. Despite these limitations it was still possible to perform an informative and comprehensive evaluation.

## Key Findings

8. The key findings of the evaluation team are summarised below, structured according to the main evaluation questions and indicating the type and strength of evidence supporting each finding.
9. **Relevance (Evaluation Questions 1-3).** The SMP programme is highly **relevant** to beneficiary needs and to a context where 77% of children do not consume breakfast before school. THRs increases school participation of girls and orphaned boys, reduces transactional sex and other negative coping mechanisms, and benefits the households. The on-site meals are appreciated for being universal and non-discriminatory. The programme is **well aligned** with the

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<sup>1</sup> 3 in Chikwawa, 2 in Phalombe, 1 in Chiradzulu, 3 in Mangochi, 3 in Salima, and 1 in Kasungu

<sup>2</sup> 3 in Chikwawa, 2 in Phalombe, 2 in Chiradzulu, 2 in Mangochi, 7 in Salima, and 2 in Kasungu

policies and priorities of the government, WFP, other UN agencies, USDA and other actors providing school meals. Complaints about bitterness of on-site meals do not diminish consumption. However, though the new early feeding time minimizes lesson disturbance, it introduces a safety risk to volunteer cooks travelling to site in the dark and increases hunger among older students in the afternoon. **Gender.** GEEW activities have been appropriately mainstreamed and THR are gender sensitive by design. However, there is no specific gender and protection strategy for the SMP, GEEW indicators are absent from monitoring processes; gender and protection assessments are irregular and non-confidential mechanisms are mainly used complaints and feedback.

10. **Impact (Evaluation Question 4 and 5).** The magnitude of impact varies from average to high across indicators. The SMP strongly reduces short-term hunger (SO1), especially hunger coping strategies, and increases meal frequency and dietary diversity – both among learners and their households (SO2). Gains in dietary diversity were mostly observed in male-headed households. Impacts on Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) rates among children (SO2) are insignificant overall but positive in MAD in male-headed households, though MAD rates decreased in female-headed households. Despite the THR being delivered in the first three months of the year, residual impacts were observed during the October survey, perhaps indicating they eat well long after the maize has been consumed. Modest impact is observed on literacy (SO1). In Standard 2, the SMP has minimal impact on literacy. Possible reasons include: limited teaching resources, poor quality and crowded classrooms, high student to teacher ratios, delayed and patchy implementation of complementary literacy activities dilute the literacy impacts. However, significant improvements, particularly among girls in Standard 4, were observed in initial letter sound observation, listening and reading comprehension. In targeted schools, 54% more children were reading fluently above the benchmark than non-targeted schools. Relative to non-targeted schools, absenteeism in targeted schools declined by 5 percentage points (about 116%) over the evaluation period, and this reduction was most notable among boys. There is suggestive evidence of reduced dropout rates. Overall, the SMP was effective in keeping children in school but had no impact on new enrolment.
11. Unintended impacts include high under-age enrolment, particularly in early standards, which affects learning capability. Despite FGD participants reporting migration to target schools no impact is found on enrolment. No evidence of meal substitution was observed for learners receiving on-site rations. Overall, gender disparities in impacts are observed. The SMP contributes to unequal gendered division of volunteer labour as women are burdened with laborious and time-consuming school meal preparation tasks. The burden of meal preparation consumes 33% of total working time of female cooks engaged in paid work – likely depressing earnings. Other gendered impacts show better achievement of MAD in male compared to female-headed households and stronger reductions in absenteeism among boys than girls. These gender disparities are likely driven by underlying mediating factors and gender inequalities that the SMP could not overcome or meaningfully address. The gender disparity in the reductions in absenteeism could be linked to reports of bullying and violence against girls in schools and cultural factors such as early marriage and cultural sexual initiation. Gender differences in the achievement of MAD likely emanate from pre-existing gendered socio-economic differences within communities. Survey data shows that female household heads are generally older, poorer and less likely to be educated or employed than male household heads.
12. **Effectiveness (Evaluation Questions 6-9).** Effectiveness is average. Although targets for literacy, hunger reduction, MAD are nearly met, there was underachievement in literacy promotion, bursary provision (2 districts reached out of planned 7) and establishment of school gardens. Additionally, positive gender-specific results are observed in the parity in enrolment and literacy rates, women’s autonomy in decision making over THRs and female leadership of school feeding committees. Strong partnerships have been established and community participation is high. However, effectiveness is diluted by late implementation and the untimely delivery of commodities, uneven implementation of complementary activities, funding constraints, capacity gaps in recordkeeping and SMP management. An array of external factors negatively mediate school participation and the quality of education: poor school infrastructure, congestion, limited teaching resources, cultural/gendered norms (e.g. early marriage, sexual initiation practices), bullying, GBV, lack of sanitary wear and low parental investment.
13. To improve M&E, gender disaggregation should be consistent and quality assurance normalized. Moreover, indicators should be harmonised between the semi-annual reports and the Performance Management Plan (PMP), similar indicators dropped to prevent duplication and to ensure priority is given to indicators for activities with the largest coverage or those that theoretically linked to SOs and impact indicators. Regular gender and protection assessments are necessary. Monitoring processes do not account for GEEW indicators, underage enrolment and migration to target zones. Monitoring capacities within schools and community structures should be strengthened and learner registers provided. District level government officials require adequate resources to lessen the burden on WFP field monitors.
14. **Efficiency Criteria (Evaluation Questions 10 and 11).** The Home-Grown School Meals (HGSM) programme is more cost-efficient than the McGovern-Dole SMP. In 2018, the total cost for delivering USD1.00 to beneficiaries was USD3.13 for the McGovern-Dole SMP compared to USD2.08 for the HGSM. The SMP has higher administrative and

distribution costs than the HGSM, with transportation costs the largest cost driver. Although, the programme reached over 100% of the planned beneficiaries in 2017 and 2018, operational efficiency was diminished by untimely delivery of commodities due to poor roads and an initial pipeline break due to the late arrival of commodities. Costs can be reduced by continuing to exploit economies of scale derived from transporting all the CO's food assistance programme commodities together and from purchasing commodities locally or regionally which could reduce shipping and commodity costs and improve timeliness.

**15. Sustainability criteria (Evaluation Question 12).** Sustainability is low, despite strong political will, community engagement, policy and human resource commitments. Financial readiness is low and donor funding remains vital for large scale school meals provision in the short to medium term. Sustainability can be improved by strengthening community ownership and formalizing a gradual/sequenced handover strategy with a roadmap for transition from external to local funding. Financial readiness can be improved by ring-fencing a portion of the MoEST, National Social Support Programme or local council/ school budgets for school meals. Fiscal space for the SMP can be increased by widening the tax base, introducing sin taxes (alcohol, tobacco) and the reduction of inefficiencies. Resources can also be mobilized from the private sector. Government, with WFP support, should develop a contextually relevant national SMP that accounts for diverse agricultural potential, and is linked with resilience and climate-smart agriculture programmes.

### Overall conclusions

16. Relevance and appropriateness criteria are largely met, though the unintended consequences of the early feeding time should be assessed. A coherent gender strategy would improve M&E of GEEW and protection indicators, despite gender mainstreaming. The SMP has had a positive impact on learner retention, particularly among boys; but literacy impacts are only significant in Standard 4. Gendered disparities are evident as improvements in household hunger, dietary diversity and MAD rates are greater among male-headed households, likely due to underlying gender inequalities in education and wealth that the SMP could not address. In addition, the SMP is reinforcing unequal gender roles as meal preparation has a significant labour cost for women. Internally, late or inconsistent implementation, untimeliness and capacity gaps at local level decreased effectiveness. Externally, the quality of education and cultural/gendered norms are significant constraints to the achievement of literacy. A key lesson is that external mediating factors should not be overlooked by the programme's theory of change/results framework. Strengthening M&E processes by improving capacities, gender responsiveness, and rationalizing indicators would improve utility and decision-making during implementation and ultimately boost effectiveness.
17. The SMP is less cost-efficient than the decentralized Home-Grown School Meals model and lowering transportation and commodity costs could improve efficiency. Operational efficiency is also undermined by untimely delivery of commodities. Despite policy and human resource commitments, current government financial capacity is low which limits sustainability, hence donor funding is vital over the short-medium term. Nevertheless, national SMP funding can be increased through a ring-fenced budget item, taxation, reduced inefficiency and private sector partnerships. A formal handover strategy delineating clearly roles and ownership for a national centralised and decentralised climate and agricultural productivity-smart SMP is essential.

### Recommendations

18. The findings and conclusions of this evaluation led to the ET making the following recommendations *in the table below* (further details are also in table 20 of the main report).

Recommendation and (type), responsible party and timing	Specific actions
<b>Strategic recommendations</b>	
<p><b>R1.</b> Enhance the quality of education by improving access to Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD), school infrastructure and allocation of teachers to lower grades.</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST with support from WFP (SMP coverage in ECDs, classrooms). <b>Timing:</b> High priority- over next 12 months (24 months for infrastructure)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale up coverage of SMP in ECDs to prevent underage enrolment. Government should generally increase the number of ECD and promote community establishment of ECDs for greater access.</li> <li>• Government should continue to allocate more teachers with better experience to congested schools to maintain the decline in student/teacher ratio, especially in the lower grades.</li> <li>• Build classrooms in supported schools through government funds, strategic partnerships with donors and agencies and enlisting the support and contribution of communities</li> </ul>
<p><b>R2.</b> Consult with teachers and review the duration, timing and quantity of in-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult widely with teachers to obtain their input on the duration, quantity and content of the in-service teacher training</li> </ul>

<p>service/continuous teacher training sessions in the literacy promotion activity of the SMP.</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST and WFP. <b>Timing:</b> High priority - over the next 6 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot an initially agreed approach for teacher training and evaluate its outcomes.</li> <li>• Distribute the teaching and learning materials on time</li> <li>• Scale up coverage of the literacy promotion activity to all districts</li> </ul>
<p><b>R3.</b> Improve sustainability by formalizing a handover strategy, strengthening community ownership and developing a contextually relevant and climate smart national SMP</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST, with technical support from WFP. <b>Timing:</b> High priority - over the next 12 months. (24 months for national SMP).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalize a gradual, sequenced, handover strategy via a signed agreement that includes a comprehensive roadmap and plan for transitioning from external to local funding. Sequencing can be done by regions or school terms e.g. start with term overlapping with the lean season.</li> <li>• Sensitise communities on their roles and responsibilities to strengthen their sense of ownership.</li> <li>• Develop agriculturally and climate sensitive, contextually relevant national SMP that is implemented via centralized and decentralized models that has linkages with actors and initiatives in irrigation development, resilience and climate smart agriculture</li> </ul>
<p><b>R4.</b> Improve financial readiness and sustainability by prioritising school feeding in fiscal planning, increasing finding fiscal space for the SMP and establishing public-private partnerships.</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST, with technical support from WFP. <b>Timing:</b> High priority - over the next 24 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government should ring-fence a school feeding line item in the MoEST or National Social Security Programme (NSSP) annual budget. Alternatively, a budget line can be included in the district council budget or primary school grant programme. This would increase accountability and guarantee funding – necessary for national ownership.</li> <li>• Increase fiscal space for the SMP in line with increasing GDP. Options include reducing inefficiency in expenditures, expanding the tax base by widening the higher tax brackets or scaling back tax cuts for the wealthiest, or raising “vice/sin taxes”.</li> <li>• Establishing public-private partnerships that provide funding towards school feeding operations and facilitate affordable access to school materials. Local businesses can be engaged.</li> </ul>
<p><b>R5.</b> Monitor and address the unintended consequences of the early feeding time</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST and WFP. Inputs from Mary’s Meals and other school meal providers. <b>Timing:</b> Medium priority - over the next 12 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage communities to provide enhanced security for volunteers travelling to school in the dark to prepare the meal through provision of lights, a watchman or forming commuting groups.<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Sensitise communities on the importance of gender equality in meal preparation.</li> <li>• Continue efforts to mobilize resources for provision of the planned 100g ration size in order to counter the risk of afternoon hunger among older school children.</li> <li>• Commission a study into the effects of the new meal time on a broad spectrum of unintended results.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational recommendations</b>	
<p><b>R6.</b> Scale up the duration and coverage of partner-managed complementary activities and improve their timing to maximise synergies, increase efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> WFP. <b>Timing:</b> High priority - over the next 12 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale up the geographical coverage and duration of the literacy promotion activity and capacity building in ECDs to accelerate the achievement of SO1</li> <li>• Prevent late implementation by consolidating the commencement and duration of partner-managed complementary activities with that of school meals to increase efficiency e.g. literacy promotion, capacity building for ECD centres and provision of bursaries.</li> <li>• Strengthen ties and maximize synergies between geographically overlapping activities e.g. AECDM and CRECCOM (Creative Centre for Community Social Mobilization) activities.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• The launch or implementation of complementary activities that require community mobilization or sensitization should avoid rainy seasons when communities are too busy farming.</li> </ul>
<p><b>R7.</b> Improve efficiency through the timely delivery of commodities and reduction of transportation costs</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> WFP. <b>Timing:</b> Medium priority - over the next 12 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the practise of consolidated haulage and delivery of all the CO’s commodities to benefit from economies of scale and improve timeliness.</li> <li>• Consider local or regional procurement of commodities, with an initial focus on maize meal (THR)</li> <li>• Continue to prioritize stocks for remote schools with inaccessible roads and deliver them in advance</li> <li>• Conduct regular monitoring and inspection of expenditures to keep track of changes in cost drivers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>R8.</b> Strengthen gender mainstreaming, analysis and protection mechanisms by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulate a specific gender and protection strategy or action plan that defines the scope, purpose and goals of mainstreamed activities.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Though it did not come up during the data collection, one suggestion by WFP Malawi CO is to provide training for school cooks on options to reduce cooking time. This could be a lasting solution.

<sup>4</sup> Noting that AECDM focuses on ECD while CRECCOM focuses broadly for Community Social mobilization and there is room for enhanced synergies

<p>formulating a strategy/action plan, addressing gendered cultural norms, GBV and improving feedback mechanisms.</p> <p><b>Responsible parties:</b> WFP and MoEST (with assistance from MoG). <b>Timing:</b> Medium priority - over the next 6 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-actively address the incidence of GBV in schools. For instance, the Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE) can be scaled up to cover all supported schools in the targeted districts.</li> <li>• Address cultural norms such as early marriage and cultural sexual initiation through community sensitisation</li> <li>• Monitor and address gender balance in meal preparation work, sensitize communities on the importance gender equality and increase incentives e.g. training and certification in cooking.</li> <li>• Scale up access to confidential platforms for reporting complaints and grievances and sensitise communities to ensure that all voices are heard. Examples are toll free hotlines and suggestion boxes.</li> <li>• Improve gender analysis by ensuring monitoring data is gender disaggregated as required, including GEEW and protection indicators such child marriage, volunteer safety, female leadership of SFCs and. GEEW indicators can be guided by a parallel gender action plan and monitored via regular gender and protection assessments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>R9.</b> Strengthen M&amp;E by streamlining indicators, incorporating gender and protection and building capacities at local level.</p> <p><b>Responsible parties:</b> MoEST and WFP <b>Timing:</b> Medium priority - over the next 12 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessen the burden of data collection on M&amp;E staff and local level actors by streamlining indicators. Indicators that duplicate others can be dropped e.g. number of social assistance beneficiaries. Indicators for activities with the largest coverage, or those theoretically linked to SOs and impact indicators can be given top priority e.g. literacy and knowledge in teaching, health and nutrition practices.</li> <li>• Performance indicators in the PMP and semi-annual report need to be harmonized.</li> <li>• Consistently collect gender-disaggregated data in routine monitoring. Monitor gender and protection indicators through regular gender /protection and qualitative assessments.</li> <li>• Future evaluations should account for spill over effects that affect effect size, validity and credibility e.g. younger siblings of learners who also come to eat at schools, migration of learners from non-beneficiary schools.</li> <li>• Provide learner registers and build capacities of schools and community structures to improve record keeping. Engage Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and school management committees to support M&amp;E and prevent gaps created by teacher transfers.</li> <li>• Government should allocate more fuel to district level officials to enable M&amp;E and lessen the burden on WFP field monitors. It should also appoint a permanent national M&amp;E coordinator for SMP.</li> <li>• Develop a quality assurance mechanism for the M&amp;E system</li> </ul>

## 1. Introduction

1. This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the independent evaluation of the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 13 districts in Malawi. This evaluation was commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP) Malawi Country Office (CO) and covers the period from October 2016 to December 2018. It was **commissioned for the following reasons**:
  - a) To understand the contribution of the programme in improving access to quality education in Malawi through the SMP;
  - b) To document the achievements of the SMP in terms of impact, the potential to improve access to and the quality of education through its multidimensional approach, the operational processes, successes and challenges, and the contributions to Government capacity building and its ability to implement similar programmes in the future.
  - c) To inform and strengthen future initiatives, as well as provide inputs to the Government on the best practices regarding how school meals programmes can contribute to other developmental objectives including social protection.
  - d) To assess the impact of the programme against the set objectives. Although, WFP is not directly accountable for improvements in literacy, the evaluation will, to the extent possible, include a literacy assessment.
  - e) To inform the Government of Malawi through Ministry of Education, WFP, USDA and other key stakeholders on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the programme (positive, negative, intended and unintended) at all levels.
2. Overall, the evaluation aims to understand the extent to which programme objectives have been achieved and reasons for the lack of fulfilment. As indicated in the Terms of Reference (ToR, Annex 14), **the specific objectives of the evaluation are**: a) **Accountability** – To assess and report the performance and results of the SMP, guided by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (DAC/OECD) evaluation criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability; b) **Learning** – To determine the reasons why certain results occurred, derive good practices and pointers for learning that can be adopted by key stakeholders including WFP, USDA and Government of Malawi when designing and implementing subsequent programmes; and c) **Deepening understanding** – To deepen knowledge and understanding of the underlying assumptions guiding the design and implementation of the programme and the cultural context in which the programme was implemented.
3. The scope of the evaluation, as defined by the specific objectives, was agreed by parties during the inception period to include creating longitudinal data using data collected during the endline of the previous phase (Phase II or Fiscal Year 2013 was from January 2013 to December 2016). However, subsequent discussions with WFP staff during the inception phase established that while longitudinal school-level data would be collected, household data would be cross-sectional. Additionally, literacy data collected in this survey round would form a standalone cross-sectional database rather than a longitudinal database that adjoins with data previously collected by World Vision. The change from longitudinal to cross-sectional data was due to time and logistics constraints.
4. The **expected users of this evaluation** are stakeholders both inside and outside of WFP. The Malawi Government, WFP Malawi CO and implementing partners (Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM), Association of Early Childhood Development in Malawi (AECDM), World Vision Malawi (WV) and Save the Children) will use the evaluation findings to inform decision-making on design and implementation, country strategy and partnerships. The Malawi Government will also use the evaluation findings to inform the potential transition to a National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme. WFP Regional Bureau (RB), WFP Headquarters and Office of Evaluation will use these findings to provide strategic guidance, programme support, oversight and promote organizational learning and accountability. USDA (the donor) is interested in understanding the extent to which the programme met its objectives, lessons learnt and best practices for decision making and replications in other/future support. Other expected users of the evaluation include NGOs involved in school meal provision (Mary's Meals, GIZ) and UN agencies such as FAO and UNICEF.

### 1.1. Overview of the Evaluation Subject

5. **Intervention Type, Timing and Design**: The SMP under evaluation in this report is an activity that was approved in September 2016 for an implementation period of October 2016 to December 2018. It is implemented by Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) with technical support from WFP Malawi and financial support from USDA

(McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program). The overall aim of the programme is to increase literacy (Strategic Objective 1) and increase use of health and dietary practices (Strategic Objective 2) among school-aged children. Unlike the parallel Home-Grown School Meals (HGSM) programme operating in Salima, Mangochi and Dedza<sup>5</sup> (the former two Districts also participating in the USDA SMP), the USDA supported programme utilises a centralised model whereby food is sourced by WFP and its donor and distributed to schools in the target districts (see Figure A1, Annex 1). Specifically, the programme offers daily on-site meals for all primary and pre-primary children and take-home rations (THRs) for girls and orphaned boys in standards 5-8. On-site meals consist of Super Cereal (CSB+ or “likuni phala” in local language) porridge that is cooked and served every morning. **However, only 60g is provided against WFP’s planned standard requirement of 100g**<sup>6</sup>. The change from original design was caused by funding constraints. WFP sought and obtained funding from USDA to provide 60g of the ration. The Best Practise Guide<sup>7</sup> for school meals in Malawi notes that while 100g is ideal, meal size can be lowered in order to maximise coverage and still meet micronutrient requirements. WFP intended to mobilize complementary resources from other donors to increase the serving size to 100g; however this effort was not successful. Based on the evaluation findings from Phase II, the evaluation team (ET) surmises that these reductions in ration size are also likely to undermine efforts to reduce hunger and inattentiveness among school children.<sup>8</sup> Monthly take-home rations (THRs) – consisting of 10kg of maize meal—are provided to girls and orphaned boys in standards 5-8 conditional on their attendance of at least 80 percent of classes during the lean season (January-March). These rations are aimed at preventing vulnerable students from dropping out of school due to poverty or food insecurity.

6. **Geographical Scope:** The SMP is provided in 13 districts: Mangochi, Nsanje, Phalombe, Chikwawa, Mulanje, Zomba, Thyolo and Chiradzulu in southern Malawi; and Dedza, Lilongwe, Salima, Ntcheu and Kasungu in central Malawi. These drought-affected districts were selected to participate in the SMP due to their chronic food insecurity. They were also selected due to their poor education statistics and large gender gaps in education indicators (enrolment, attendance and drop out) (see Maps in Annex 1 i.e. Figures 3 and 4). School meals are provided to a total of 637,473 learners in 456 primary schools and 35 Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDs). ECDs are only covered in Chikwawa and Nsanje, which are two of the most chronically food insecure and vulnerable districts in southern Malawi.<sup>9</sup>
7. **Objectives and Activities:** The SMP aims to achieve the following **10 results**: (1) Increased skills and knowledge of school administrators; (2) Improved quality of literacy instruction and materials; (3) Increased government engagement and capacity to manage and implement school feeding programmes; (4) Better access to school supplies and materials; (5) Increased skills and knowledge of teachers; (6) Increased access to food (school meals); (7) Improved teacher and student attendance; (8) Improved policy and regulatory framework; (9) Increased knowledge of health, hygiene, nutrition and sanitation practices and (10) Increased student enrolment rates. These results are to be achieved through **14 key activities**: (1) Provide school Meals; (2) Develop partnerships with farmer organisations to supply food to schools; (3) Establish school gardens; (4) Provide non-food items (energy saving stoves, cooking pots and eating utensils); (5) Trainings on commodity management, food storage and preparation; (6) Capacity building at local, district and national level; (7) Trainings on good health and nutrition practices; (8) Literacy promotion activities; (9) Distribute school supplies and materials; (10) Raising awareness on importance of education; (11) Provide Take Home Rations; (12) Provide bursaries; (13) Construct/rehabilitate junior secondary schools and (14) Construct/rehabilitate kitchen, storerooms and feeding shelters.
8. **Planned and Actual Beneficiaries:** As shown in the semi-annual monitoring reports, from October 2016 to March 2017, there was no delivery of USDA financed on-site meals (OSM) due to the late arrival of the commodity consignment. However, WFP relied on other funding sources/complementary funding to supply CSB+ to USDA supported schools. From March 2017, the numbers of actual beneficiaries reached have exceeded planned targets (>100%). Complete analysis is provided in Table 18 in section 2.11 (Efficiency criteria). Gender disaggregated data was not always collected in each implementation period.
9. **Planned versus Actual Tonnage Distributed:** Data collected in the semi-annual reports indicates that the CO only received the CSB+ commodity at the end of March 2017 and distribution began in April 2017 (shipped from USA). See section 2.11 (Efficiency criteria) for further analysis and discussion.

<sup>5</sup> <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/JMW10>

<sup>6</sup> Equivalent to 225 kilocalories and or 20% of required daily caloric intake, and 5.6 mg of iron, or 30% of the required daily iron intake

<sup>7</sup> School Meals in Malawi: A Best Practice Guide, 2017. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

<sup>8</sup> WFP & FAO (2018). Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with support from United States Department of Agriculture, and the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom (2013-2015).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

10. **Planned Outputs and Outcomes:** All activities, outputs and outcomes are classified under two Strategic Objectives: SO1 and SO2 (see Annex 2). Further results are classified as Foundational Results and they underpin and contribute to the intermediate and higher-level results (SO1 and So2). Under each Strategic Objective, outputs and outcome indicators are listed, each with a planned target and baseline value. This includes results such as student attendance (MGD 1.4.4), training in commodity management, food storage and preparation (MGD 1.1.5&2.3), textbooks and teaching and learning materials provided as a result of USDA assistance (MGD 1.1.2) among many others. The achievement of each outcome and output is discussed in section 2.6 and presented in Annex 7.
11. **Assessment of the Logical Framework:** The SMP is guided by a results framework which shows the Strategic Objectives (SOs) and the intended wide-ranging results and is based on the McGovern-Dole results framework (see Annex 2, part A). The results framework reflects the McGovern-Dole theory of change, which is derived from the research literature and focuses on various fields/elements that determine the overall SOs and intermediate results.<sup>10</sup> The results framework guided the evaluation. However, the results framework is a diagram with no accompanying explanation. Outputs and outcomes are not distinguished nor clearly labelled. Consultations with the CO, and review of the performance management plan (PMP) and external documents (e.g. McGovern-Dole definitions and Indicators) were instrumental for interpreting indicators. The PMP of the SMP describes the performance indicators but it is not integrated with the results framework (see key indicators in Annex 7 and full PMP in Annex 2, part B). The ET recommends that in future the results framework should include a narrative that clearly describes the outcomes and outputs, references the performance indicators in the PMP and includes them in an Annex. It is also important to consider mediating factors such as household/individual characteristics and supply side educational factors (e.g. school infrastructure, teacher availability, experience etc) in the narrative. The ET has provided a description of the McGovern-Dole theory of change that also includes a discussion of mediating factors and GEEW indicators in Annex 2, part C.
12. **Main partners.**<sup>11</sup> Government partners include the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), Ministry of Gender (MoG) and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD) and Ministry of Health and Population. MoEST is building its capacity to manage its own SMP at national and district levels and is coordinating and monitoring supported schools. The MoG coordinates the provision of childcare services in WFP-assisted primary and pre-primary schools. MoAIWD, FAO and other NGO partners support the establishment of school gardens. Ministry of Health (MoH) implements deworming exercise in USDA supported schools. At the local level WFP works together with district councils, district education managers, school administrators, parent teachers' associations (PTAs) and school feeding committees that manage and monitor the food distribution process. **Implementing partners** are AECDM (training and social mobilization on education in early child hood centres), WV and UNICEF (literacy promotion), Save the Children (bursaries and school construction) and CRECCOM (social mobilization on education and training of PTAs and school feeding committees in education and nutritional practices).
13. **Resource Requirements and Funding Situation:** For the implementation of the two-year SMP 2016-2018), USDA—the single donor— gave financial support amounting to a total of USD 22,016,871.00 (aimed at benefiting 637, 473 learners). Of this amount, USD 6,717,850.00 was allocated to food commodities while USD 17,598,861.00 was assigned for direct operational costs (see ToR in Annex 14).
14. **Other Relevant Preceding/Concurrent Activities/Interventions:** The McGovern-Dole SMP has previously been implemented in the same districts from January 2010 to December 2012 (Phase I, Fiscal Year or FY 10), January 2013 to December 2016 (Phase II, FY13). WFP has also implemented the Purchase for Africa by Africans (PAA), a school meals programme funded by the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom, with the pilot -implemented in 2012 and Phase I and Phase II (from 2014 to 2018, planned to be evaluated). Unlike the McGovern-Dole funded SMP, the PAA procured food from local producers including Farmer Organizations (FOs). This programme operated in Phalombe, Mangochi and Salima, all of which were targeted by the USDA SMP<sup>12</sup>. WFP is also implementing the Home-Grown School Meal model which is supported by the Norwegian Government. This programme provides 169 schools in three districts (Salima, Mangochi, Dezda – the former two are SMP districts) with money to procure diverse food<sup>13</sup> from local producers and provide school meals. There are three other programmes combating threats to female education – such as poverty, hunger, social norms and teaching quality - running concurrently with the SMP: Country Programme (CP) 200287 (2012-

<sup>10</sup>Rassas, B., Ariza-Nino, E and K. Peterson. (2016). The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program School Feeding and Educational Outcomes in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. QED Group, LLC.

<sup>11</sup>SPR (2017). SMP proposal submitted to USDA.

<sup>12</sup> Evaluation of the PAA in Mangochi and Phalombe Districts in Malawi 2014-2016. WFP & FAO.

<sup>13</sup>SPR 2017, <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/JMW10>.

2018), Protracted Relief and Recovery and Operations (PRRO) 200692 (2014-2018), PRRO 200460 (2012-2018) and the Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE) (see paragraph 21 for details).

15. **Previous evaluations related to the subject:** A final evaluation for both the McGovern-Dole SMP (Phase II, FY13) and PAA, found that: both SMPs were relevant for Malawi, addressed the needs of boys, girls, school personnel and farmers; and effectively built the capacity of the MoEST at national, district and school levels and the SMP improved school infrastructure.<sup>14</sup> The evaluation also found that both programmes enhanced women's empowerment, and increased community awareness of the value of education.<sup>15</sup> Phase II or FY13's evaluation found challenges in measuring changes in literacy rates without a specific literacy indicator. This has now been incorporated into FY16 (evaluation period) in the form of an Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA).<sup>16</sup> A baseline report for Phase III was produced in 2016 using qualitative and quantitative data collected as part of the endline evaluation of Phase II. There is no mid-line evaluation for Phase III (FY16).
16. **Gender dimensions of the intervention:** Existing monitoring processes are required to collect gender disaggregated data for several indicators such as access to school feeding, provision of school meals, school attendance (See Annex 7). However, monitoring reports do not regularly or consistently disaggregate data for children by gender, and no gender disaggregation is shown at teacher level. Gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW) indicators are also not in the results framework. The CO has also mainstreamed GEEW and safeguards for protection needs into its programmes and activities encourage female leadership of School Feeding Committees (SFCs), strengthen girls' life skills and Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs) including referral systems for GBV among others<sup>17</sup>. Although gender has been mainstreamed extensively, the gender approach is not adequate as there is no specific gender strategy for the SMP that defines the scope and goals of activities. Further analysis of the gender sensitivity of the design and implementation of the SMP is in section 2.3.

## 1.2. Context

17. **Poverty, food security and nutrition.** Malawi is a landlocked country in Southern Africa with 17.7 million people (51% female). Average annual income is around US\$270<sup>18</sup> per person. About 50.7% of the population are poor (25% extremely poor) and agriculture has been disrupted by frequent weather shocks e.g. 2015 floods and 2016/17 drought<sup>19</sup> Food insecurity is rampant, and 37% of the children are stunted.<sup>20</sup> Over 2017, 43,705 children (51% girls) were treated for severe acute malnutrition<sup>21</sup>. About 3.8 million people suffer from hunger<sup>22</sup>. The McGovern-Dole (USDA) SMP is implemented in 13 chronically food insecure districts; situation remains stressed (FEWSNET data, see map in Annex 1).
18. **Education, Health and Economic Indicators.** Malawi is ranked 170 out of 188 in the Human Development Index<sup>23</sup> and most of the population lives in rural areas. The country has had volatile economic growth.<sup>24</sup> About 80% of the population relies on rain-fed agriculture for their livelihoods.<sup>25</sup> HIV prevalence is 8.8% among individuals aged 15-49; 10.8% of women, 6.4% of men, while Malaria is the leading cause of morbidity, particularly for the under-5 children.<sup>26</sup> Primary education has been free since 1994 and in the past decade the primary net enrolment rate has increased to almost 100%<sup>27</sup>, and primary school net attendance ratio is 94.3% for girls and 93.4% for boys.<sup>28</sup> The pupil teacher ratio is high at 1:75, impeding the delivery of quality education.<sup>29</sup> The national dropout rate is 3.9% (3.8% for boys, 4% for girls), caused by ancillary costs related to schooling, and pregnancies and early marriages for girls (EMIS report, 2016). Among

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<sup>14</sup>WFP & FAO (2018). Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with support from United States Department of Agriculture, and the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom (2013-2015)..

<sup>15</sup>SPR (2016). SMP proposal submitted to USDA

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>SPR 2016, 2017, Innovations from the Field: Gender Mainstreaming from the Ground Up, November-December 2013. Gender Assessment: Exploring Opportunities for Gender Mainstreaming in WFP Construction, May 2016.

<sup>18</sup>The World Bank (2016). Primary Education in Malawi

<sup>19</sup>IMF & The World Bank (2017). Malawi; Economic Development Document, May 2017.

<sup>20</sup>USAID (2018). Agriculture and Food Security in Malawi.

<sup>21</sup>UNICEF (2017). Malawi Year-end Humanitarian Situation Report.

<sup>22</sup>ActAlliance, retrieved at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Malawi-Emergency-Response-to-Drought-and-Army-Worm-Infestation-%E2%80%93-MWI-181-Concept-Note.pdf>

<sup>23</sup><http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MWI>

<sup>24</sup>The World Bank Country Overview, Malawi. Retrieved at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview>

<sup>25</sup> SPR 2017

<sup>26</sup> Malawi Demographic Health Survey, 2015/16

<sup>27</sup> Malawi Education Statistics (2015/16), 2016.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> <https://mw-nation.com/ministry-seeks-reduce-teacher-pupil-ratio/>

children between 5 and 10 years of age, 70 % go to school without having breakfast.<sup>30</sup> WFP has supported the government with the provision of school meals since 1999: currently to over 993,000 pupils in 783 schools and 93 ECD centres in 13 districts.

19. **Government policies relevant to the evaluation:** Various policies promote learning achievement and quality of education including among girls and young children: Education Sector Implementation Plan (2013-2018); National Education Policy; National Girls' Education Strategy (2014-2019); and the National Policy on Early Childhood Development (ECD).<sup>31</sup> The National Social Support Programme II guides the development of a social protection system through school meals and other instruments such as cash transfers. The School Health and Nutrition Policy (2016), enacted with WFP's support, promotes quality education, school health and nutrition. An operational plan for the policy's school feeding strategy is currently under development. Government has fostered partnerships with local, international and non-governmental actors in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17. However, budgetary commitments are low and there is significant policy fragmentation which undermines effectiveness.
20. **Gender dimensions of context:** Malawi ranks 170 out of 188 on the UN's Gender Inequality Index; 16.7% of women and 25.4% of men have some secondary education.<sup>32</sup> Gender Parity Index in school attendance (GPI) is reported at 1.01 in 2016, indicating parity, however, parity disappears from Standard 4, when girls begin to dropout due to early marriage and pregnancy.<sup>33</sup> The national unemployment rates are 9% for women and 6.4% for men<sup>34</sup> while the literacy rate among females aged 15 and above was 55.2% in 2015.<sup>35</sup> The National Gender Policy and National Response to Combat Gender Based Violence promote the mainstreaming of gender in the national development process and fight the economic and cultural determinants of gender-based violence (GBV) and inequality.<sup>36</sup> Transactional sex is reported among adolescent girls and women who were displaced by the 2015 floods in Zomba, Phalombe, Chikwawa and Nsanje districts.<sup>37</sup> In SMP districts, WFP is implementing activities that address GBV and women's empowerment (see paragraph 16).
21. **Humanitarian issues:** In early 2015, floods displaced over 300 000 people and the subsequent 2015/2016 El Niño drought affected 6.5 million people.<sup>38</sup> In 2017, dry spells and an army worm infestation reduced harvests in 28 districts.<sup>39</sup> In response to the 2016/2017 drought, WFP provided Emergency School Meals (10kg maize) over six months, to 274,966 girls and orphaned boys in grades 5-8 in 71 schools (not targeted by SMPs), of which 35 transitioned to the regular SMP in March 2017. Malawi requires substantial improvements in food security and malnutrition to attain SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).
22. **Key external events:** The 2013 "Cashgate" scandal –corruption involving theft of millions of dollars by government officials– and the subsequent foreign aid suspension affected WFP's programmes and operations in Malawi. Foreign aid has gradually returned to the country. The El Niño drought of 2016/2017 resulted in the longest humanitarian operation in Malawi's history.
23. **International assistance:** UN funding requirements between 2012 and 2018 totalled US\$ 602 million, split between 15 major agencies, including long standing agencies: UNDP, UNFPA, WFP, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, FAO, UN Women, WHO. WFP commitments fell into thematic areas 1, 2, and 3.<sup>40</sup> Key donors include DFID, USAID, USDA and the European Commission.
24. **Other WFP Work.** Besides the McGovern-Dole SMP which is implemented within the framework of the country programme WFP's other work in Malawi includes:<sup>41</sup> CP 200287 (2012-2018) which aims to improve primary education, reduce malnutrition and build national capacity in disaster risk reduction; ii) PRRO 200692 (2014-2018) addresses acute food insecurity while building resilience to shocks through the Food Assistance for Assets programme and the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative iii) PRRO 200460 (2012-2018) aims to achieve food security while addressing micronutrient deficiencies in children (under 2) and among asylum-seekers and refugees; iv) Purchase for Progress (P4P) project

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<sup>30</sup>National School Health and Nutrition Survey Baseline, National Statistical Office; 2006.

<sup>31</sup>National Policy on Early Childhood Development, 2003, Malawi Government.

<sup>32</sup>Gender Inequality Index, UNDP. Retrieved at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

<sup>33</sup>Malawi Government (2016). Malawi Education Statistics (2015/16),.

<sup>34</sup>International Labour Organization: Malawi.

<sup>35</sup>World Bank Database, Malawi.

<sup>36</sup>Malawi National Gender Policy, 2015, National Response to Combat Gender Based Violence, 2014

<sup>37</sup>WFP Malawi Country Office (2017). WFP Malawi Action Plan for Gender (2017-2020),.

<sup>38</sup>WFP & FAO (2018). Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with support from United States Department of Agriculture, and the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom (2013-2015).

<sup>39</sup>ActAlliance, retrieved at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Malawi-Emergency-Response-to-Drought-and-Army-Worm-Infestation-%E2%80%93MWI-181-Concept-Note.pdf>

<sup>40</sup>UNDAF for Malawi 2012-2018, Malawi, 2012.

<sup>41</sup>SPR, (2017). WFP 200287.

encourages the national government, WFP, and the private sector to buy food in ways that benefit small-holders, promotes entrepreneurship, and provides training to farmers. Also relevant is the Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE), implemented by the MoEST with the technical support of UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP (providing THR) and financial support from the Norwegian Government. It covers 81 primary schools in three districts that overlap with the SMP and aims to improve access to and the quality of education for girls and boys and addresses GBV and reproductive health issues.<sup>42</sup>

25. **Related work of other humanitarian development actors in the area:** GIZ is leading the Nutrition and Access to Primary Education (NAPE) project to increase quantity and quality of school meals in 150 schools in 7 districts.<sup>43</sup> Mary's Meals (NGO) has been providing school meals in Malawi since 2002 and it provides fortified maize and soya porridge meals to 30% of the country's primary school aged children (937,997 children).<sup>44</sup> In addition to these key actors, there may also be other relevant development actors working in this area in Malawi.

### 1.3. Evaluation Methodology and Limitations

26. **Evaluation approach, criteria, questions.** As elaborated in the Inception Report (IR), the evaluation approach followed the standard Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact and the humanitarian evaluation criteria of Appropriateness, Coverage, Connectedness and Coherence. As stipulated by the guidelines espoused in WFP's Decentralised Evaluation Quality Assurance System (DEQAS) an Evaluation Matrix (see Annex 3) was developed to describe the evaluation criteria, key evaluation questions, and sub-questions. The presentation of findings in section 2 is structured along the 15 evaluation questions in the Evaluation Matrix (Table A4.1, Annex 4). Gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW) principles are mainstreamed throughout the evaluation criteria. The evaluation uses a *mixed-methods approach* that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection tools with the review of WFP documents. The use of such a mixed-approach has the advantage of enhancing the validity and credibility of the evaluation findings through triangulation.
27. **Control groups:** The "targeted/beneficiary" group included the schools benefiting from the SMP, and the associated pupils/learners, households<sup>45</sup> of pupils as well as the surrounding communities. In order to obtain a credible counterfactual, the control/non-targeted group similarly consist of schools (and associated pupils, parents, household and community actors) that are not directly benefiting from the SMP.
28. **Data collection, sampling, ethical issues and timing of activities.** Data were collected on seven of the 13 targeted districts in line with the baseline approach i.e. Mangochi, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Phalombe, Chikwawa, Kasungu, Salima districts (see map in Figure A1, Annex 1). These districts were selected to mirror the processes followed in the Phase II endline evaluation to ensure that, where possible, panel data can be constructed with previous evaluation data to enrich the content of the analysis. However, one limitation is that re-evaluating the representativeness of these districts may potentially yield a different list (e.g. due to changes in food security or population dynamics). However, the ET felt that there was a greater utility in constructing panel data and retaining comparability of datasets across time rather than analyse data from a purely representative sample. Field visits focus on targeted and non-targeted schools. The school population for each selected district allows for the representative sampling of boys and girls in areas that are food insecure. Similar to the baseline approach, a three-stage cluster sampling methodology is used for the survey, which accounts for design effects. The three stages are at district, zone and school level. Sample sizes for schools and linked households mirror the baseline samples. Random sampling is used for each sampling frame, with girls and women given equal opportunity as boys and men throughout the selection process to ensure gender representativeness and equality. Sampling strategy details are presented in Annex 4.
29. The ET began data collection activities in country on the 8th of October 2018 and ended on the 27th of October 2018 (see Annex 10 for itinerary/mission schedule of ET members). A gender balanced team of 49 enumerators (eight qualitative assistants) of Malawian nationality assisted the ET in data collection. Primary quantitative data collection tools include students' EGRA assessment, school/ECD survey and household survey questionnaires. The household questionnaire captured information on child demographic characteristics, parental and learner education and household asset (see Annex 12 for further details). EGRA assessment collected individual information of the most basic skills for literacy acquisition in early grades. It was undertaken using tablets with the Tangerine software along with the EGRA

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<sup>42</sup>SPR2016, SPR2017

<sup>43</sup>GIZ in Malawi, 2017. Retrieved at <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2017-en-malawi.pdf>

<sup>44</sup>Mary's Meal Malawi Country Profile. Retrieved at <https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/what-we-do/where-we-work/malawi/>.

<sup>45</sup> Household are treated if there is a child in the household going to an SMP-supported school and non-targeted households if there is no child going to an SMP-supported school.

questionnaire (see Annex 12 for further details). Qualitative data were collected using Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the aid of a loosely structured interview guides organised around a specific set of themes. Data collection tools were designed to mirror the baseline tools to permit comparability. Tools were written in English and Chichewa and interviews conducted in the same languages. Questionnaires and guides for the different data collection methods are shown in Annex 12. The evaluation followed the *ethical guidelines and principles* set out by the United Nations Evaluation group (UNEG). Informed consent was obtained before each interview. No ethical challenges were encountered during data collection. Quality assurance was integrated throughout, with regular data spot check and daily data cleaning.

30. A total of 191 schools were surveyed, with 128 under SMP, 63 being non-targeted and these include 11 targeted and 6 non-targeted ECDs (i.e. baseline numbers). *Baseline data for the evaluation period is available* –which corresponds to the endline for Phase II/FY13– and enables the longitudinal analysis of school level indicators. After data cleaning, school level analysis was done using a longitudinal sample of 124 schools (92 targeted and 32 non-targeted) that was matched to baseline data. Cross-sectional data were collected for households and learners tested in the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). No baseline data for the EGRA is available as the EGRA was not carried out at the end of Phase II. The EGRA was carried out in 25 schools (14 targeted and 11 non-targeted) in the seven districts. As previously explained in the inception report, due to financial and time constraints, we could not conduct an EGRA in a representative sample of schools but rather intended to survey four schools per district for a total of 28. This was reduced to 25 in the final dataset as three of the surveyed non-targeted schools were verified to be under HGSM or other school meal programmes. A total of 996 learners were randomly sampled within the 25 schools: 500 in standard 2; 496 in standard 4. From targeted schools 52.5% are female and from non-targeted schools 47.5% are female (further details on sample size generation and methodology is detailed in Annex 4). For household data, an average of 7 learners was selected from the 191 surveyed schools and their corresponding households are interviewed. This resulted in a cross-sectional sample of 1398 households: 922 beneficiary households (linked to targeted schools) and 476 non-beneficiary households linked to non-targeted schools (reasoning behind the sample size is given in Annex 4). The term beneficiary is used for households as they were not specifically targeted by the SMP. This is higher than the 1131 households interviewed at baseline (762 beneficiary and 369 non-beneficiary). About 28.6% of beneficiary households and around 25% of non-beneficiary households are female-headed. Table 1 provides the sample distribution by district and targeted.

**Table 1. Summary of data collected**

District	Quantitative surveys					
	Schools		Learners (EGRA)		Households	
	Targeted	Non-targeted	Targeted	Non-targeted	Beneficiary	Non-beneficiary
Chikwawa	31	15	80	40	218	109
Chiradzulu	10	6	80	40	77	43
Kasungu	31	14	80	77	227	106
Mangochi	10	4	80	80	61	64
Mulanje	14	11	81	79	104	81
Phalombe	21	9	79	80	154	69
Salima	11	4	80	40	81	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>922</b>	<b>476</b>
Girls/Female	-	-	299	271	28.6%	24.8%
Standard 2	-	-	260	240	-	-
Standard 4	-	-	256	240	-	-

*Source: Evaluation Surveys (2018). 'N' stands for total number. Schools include 11 targeted ECDS and 6 non-targeted ECDS. Treat denotes targeted.*

31. Qualitative interviews totalled 62 FGDs of which 34 (55%) are administered in targeted schools and 28 (45%) are administered in non-targeted schools. FGDs were held with learners (standard 5 to 8), teachers, relevant school committees, mother clubs and parents, farmers organizations, and in separate groups for boys, girls, men and women. The majority were mixed gender groups averaging 8-10 participants, and female participations ranged from 52% in Mangochi district to 87% in Chikwawa. Moreover, 88 KIIs were administered from WFP (CO, RB, New York (NY)), Malawi government ministries, local government officials, World Vision, Save the Children, AECMD, CRECCOM, farmers organizations, School Feeding Committees. Table A4.3 in Annex4 provides the distribution of the FGDs and KIIs conducted at district level. Findings from the quantitative and qualitative surveys are complemented by analysis from

WFP's programme documents such as M&E reports, previous baseline and evaluation reports, gender and protection assessments, partner progress reports, Standard Project Reports (SPRs) etc. A list of the documents reviewed is in Annex 9.

32. **Data Analysis.** To address the evaluation questions, various methods of data analyses were employed to compare the quantitative outcomes of the targeted (SMP) and control (non-SMP) groups at school, learner and household levels. Quantitative analysis describes achievement of performance targets, describe and compare outcome differences between targeted and control groups, and it was carried out in Stata software. The difference-in-differences method is employed to estimate the causal impacts of the SMP on longitudinal school level outcomes such as attendance, attentiveness, dropout rates, skills and knowledge of teachers and administrators, while causal impacts on short-term hunger at household level are estimated using two-stage least squares regressions with school education zone (used in targeting schools) as an instrumental variable (IV) that addresses bias from non-random targeting. The IV predicts "treatment" at household level but is not affected by individual household characteristics. Results obtained with IV method are presented together with ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results. Literacy impacts are estimated using the coarsened exact matching (CEM) method, which matches children in targeted and non-targeted schools on observable pre-targeting school and demographic characteristics and constructs matching weights that are subsequently used in the OLS regressions. To gauge the cost-efficiency of the SMP, the "cost-transfer ratio" (CTR) and "alpha ratio" are computed, analysed and compared with the HGSM. FGDs and KIIs were summarised through notes. Recorded FGDs were first translated from local languages to English and then transcribed. Qualitative data were coded using Nvivo 12<sup>®</sup>, to reflect the thematic groupings of the interview questions and the key issues emerging from the data. A qualitative inductive approach involving thematic examination of the narratives was adopted to interpret the data. Further details and specifications of the data analysis methods are shown in Annex 4.
33. **Limitations:** There were several limitations. *First*, no baseline data is available and only cross-sectional quantitative data are used (as discussed in the inception report) for analysis of household data and EGRA scores. This means that statistical data only capture one point in time and cannot fully account for unobserved factors. The coarsened matching technique is combined with regression methods to enhance rigour. *Second*, there is a possibility of spill-over effects or contamination bias (e.g. knowledge of teaching techniques) as non-targeted schools are within the same districts as the targeted schools. This could understate the impacts observed in targeted groups. *Third*, during data collection, the ET found that since the baseline some targeted schools had transitioned to HGSM. About 13 non-targeted schools had transitioned into the SMP, HGSM or school meal interventions by Mary's Meals<sup>46</sup>, and 18 non-targeted schools were unreachable. These were replaced with new schools, but these have no baseline data. Still, 92 targeted and 32 non-targeted schools created a balanced panel for longitudinal analysis. Selection bias could also arise if the targeted population can manipulate participation in SMP. *Fourth*, the Emergency School Meal Programme was implemented by WFP in non-SMP schools in 2016/2017 which could have raised baseline values for non-targeted schools resulting in understated impacts. *Fifth*, it may be difficult to attribute any changes to the SMP if there are other relevant contemporaneous interventions in the target districts. Examples include the social cash transfers. To tackle this issue, information on the receipt of other social and education programmes was controlled for in causal analysis. Finally, there is no literacy data in the baseline (end-line of FY13 programme). There is literacy data collected in early 2018 by World Vision Malawi. However, due to time and logistical constraints, the evaluation's EGRA was cross sectional and not a follow up to World Vision' sample. The ET was working on a fast timeline where data had to be collected from schools, households and learners within three weeks in November 2018 to enable the required submission of the report before the end of the FY 2018. Yet, there was limited overlap between World Vision's school sample and Phase II's endline evaluation school sample. Since creating a school-level panel dataset with the Phase II's endline evaluation was a priority, the ET and the CO deemed it too onerous to survey both the schools required to construct the panel and those surveyed by World Vision, given the size and remoteness of some districts. While the World Vision sample covered the same districts as those surveyed by the ET, the World Vision sample size of learners was lower than the required sample size calculated by the ET. In addition, creating panel data with World Vision data would not have been as useful as World Vision's EGRA was conducted just 6 months prior and therefore not a baseline. The ET felt that very little would have changed in that time.
34. **Validity and reliability of data.** The ET sought to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings through the triangulation of different data sources and an assessment of the accuracy and comprehensiveness of data sources. There is complete documentation of the process and protocols for primary data collection, data cleaning, and aggregation. The use of a mixed method approach in data collection enables triangulation between and within methods.

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<sup>46</sup> 3 in Chikwawa, 2 in Phalombe, 1 in Chiradzulu, 3 in Mangochi, 3 in Salima, and 1 in Kasungu

The triangulation increased the spectrum of people in the analysis allowing for representation by gender, age and orphanhood status and ensuring the diverse voices of men, women, girls and boys are heard. Qualitative data especially captured diverse voices of beneficiaries, especially those of women, girls and orphans.

35. **Gender responsiveness of data collection tools and analysis.** Data collection activities were carried out in a GEEW sensitive manner. The mixed sources of data allowed for the collection of gender disaggregated data and data for GEEW indicators. The school/ECD based questionnaires were designed to allow the collection of gender-disaggregated data at individual level and school head level. The household questionnaire also permitted the collection of gender-disaggregated data at household head and child level and includes questions on intra-household gender dynamics in decision making. During FGDs, a culturally appropriate and gender sensitive approach was used to ensure the voices of women, girls and vulnerable groups were heard. Vulnerable groups include orphans and their guardians, poorest households and people with disability. The FGDs with learners (standard 5 to 8) were done in separate groups for boys and girls and conducted by local enumerators of the same gender. This was to allow sensitive gender-related issues among adolescents to be discussed in a more comfortable and safer environment. Additional resources were allocated towards recruiting female moderators and note takers to make sure that the qualitative assessment voices the actual and unbiased perceptions of women, girls and any other marginalized groups. Household interviews targeted females within the household, who would be the spouse or head, since women are better placed to answer questions on food security, food consumption, expenditures and gender dynamics within the household. In situations where women were reluctant to participate due to the presence of men, two interviewers were assigned to simultaneously interview both male and female members of the household in different parts of the household. The ET allocated additional time for training enumerators on ensuring the representation of vulnerable groups in FGDs, interviewing women at household level minors/young children in primary schools. Where possible, the evaluation utilized a gender lens in the analysis and reporting of findings. In addition, a summary assessment of gender is discussed in the conclusions. Recommendations also address any strengths and weaknesses the gender mainstreaming in the design and implementation process.
36. **Quality assurance.** This evaluation was and is guided by the WFP's Decentralised Evaluation Quality Assurance System (DEQAS) and the internal quality assurance systems for the ET's organization (United Nations University-MERIT or UNU-MERIT), and both systems are based on the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards. During the evaluation process, ET regularly consulted with the evaluation manager and WFP-CO to ensure expectations were clear and challenges were discussed and resolved. This evaluation report follows the guidelines in WFP's DEQAS templates and Quality Assurance Checklists (QACs). The *independence* of the ET is apparent as they were given full freedom of access to information, none of the ET members were involved in the design of the SMP nor have vested interests in the SMP. Various data collection methods were utilized during the evaluation which ensured *impartiality*. Stakeholder meetings during the inception phase, end of fieldwork debriefing have strengthened the *Utility* of the evaluation, which will be further enhanced by the dissemination workshop that will facilitate feedback and promote buy in from the WFP and its stakeholders. Consequently, the key attributes of "Independence, Impartiality and Utility" are safeguarded in this evaluation.

## 2. Evaluation Findings

37. The evaluation findings and the evidence to substantiate them are presented below. They are structured as a response to each evaluation question in turn.

### Evaluation Criteria 1: Relevance

38. This section assesses the relevance and appropriateness of the SMP to beneficiary needs; targeting relevance, adequacy and acceptability are also reported. Furthermore, the section also examines the SMP's alignment and coherence with other internal and external policies and the gender sensitivity of design and implementation.

#### 2.1. Appropriateness to Needs

39. **Targeting.** The SMP was geographically targeted at chronically food insecure districts that also had poor education statistics. Internal KIIs (with CO staff)<sup>47</sup> reveal that most schools in the SMP were selected during an expansion of school meal programming in 2007/8. According to the CP document (200287, 2012-2018<sup>48</sup>), targeted districts had among the

<sup>47</sup> N.B. in all future instances of "internal KIIs" in the report, this refers to KIIs with CO staff.

<sup>48</sup> Country Programme Malawi 200287 (2012–2018). Initially ended in 2016 but extended to 2018 after Budget Revision no. 6

lowest enrolment rates, highest dropout and repetition rates and largest gender gaps.<sup>49</sup> Food security and nutrition indicators from vulnerability assessments<sup>50</sup> and Demographic Health Surveys were also used by CO staff to target districts. Stunting rates in most targeted districts (data not available for all) were above the national average of 47.5%:<sup>51</sup> Kasungu (56%), Lilongwe (52.3%), Mulanje (50.5%), Salima (49.3%), Mangochi (48.3%) and Thyolo (48.1%). A vulnerability assessment survey in 2012 showed that Nsanje, Chikwawa, Mulanje, Phalombe, Dedza, Salima, Lilongwe districts had 30% or more of households with poor food consumption.<sup>52</sup> Over the past five years, the food security situation has changed from emergency but largely remains stressed in most of the targeted districts with available data (FEWSNET data, see map in Annex 1). The same targeting criteria were applied to select traditional authorities and education zones; the intention was to select all schools in each zone to prevent migration to target schools. Additional targeting indicators at school level focused on community preparedness, namely: accessibility, PTA presence and history of community participation. No written documentation on the priority of these indicators was available to the ET.

40. **Relevance to beneficiary needs.** According to FGDs with school feeding committees and parent teachers associations (PTAs), on-site meals (porridge) at school are relevant to school-age children and younger children at 35 ECD centres – ECDs are not normally prioritised in government education spending and planning (Chikwawa and Nsanje districts). Document review<sup>53</sup> shows that, the provision of meals at ECD level is aimed at helping normalize attendance and enrolment at community based pre-primary school childcare centres, reducing under-age primary school enrolment and enhancing a smooth transition into primary school. In interviews and school surveys, head teachers reported that learners came to school without having eaten breakfast. Survey data shows that approximately 30% of beneficiary households and 77% of non-beneficiary households report that their children do not eat breakfast each day (similar across male-headed and female-headed households and households with orphans). The high prevalence of skipping breakfast in beneficiary households highlights the importance and relevance of providing the on-site school meals. Only 40% of male-headed households and 32% of female-headed households have acceptable food consumption and about 49% of the sample is poor or are in the lowest two quintiles of total expenditures (59% among female headed households). Conversations with school-level personnel in non-targeted schools suggest that learners who do not eat breakfast abscond from class in search of food elsewhere due to hunger and inability to concentrate in class. One respondent expressed the following view:

*“We face a lot of challenges at this school. One of the challenges is high dropout of learners from school due to hunger. Most learners opt to stay home and eat mangoes, while others prefer begging at the market to fill their bellies.” (Female teacher, KII, Mulanje District)*

41. The needs of vulnerable children (girls and orphaned boys in Standard 5-8) were addressed through the Take-Home Ration (THR). FGDs with Mother’s Groups, female learners and teachers reported the contribution of the THR in reducing the risk of intergenerational transactional sex among older girls, including among those who go through a cultural sexual initiation. Such gender-specific barriers to education are exacerbated by food insecurity and poverty. The THRs reduced the risk of orphaned children engaging in begging or piecemeal work for food rather than attending school; previously orphaned children had a disproportionately higher absence and dropout rate. Equitable distribution among all groups of the on-site meals ensures inclusion of marginalised groups,<sup>54</sup> including those marginalised in the distribution of household resources. Although, the THR is intended to benefit girls and orphaned boys, it can also be consumed by other household members. Survey data shows that 93% of beneficiary households reported that the THR benefited more than two household members. Overall, survey and secondary data have demonstrated the vulnerability of the targeted districts and beneficiaries. Together with FGDs and KIIs, all data sources indicate that there is general agreement among the beneficiaries and all stakeholders that the SMP is relevant to the needs of school-age children and associated communities.
42. **Adequacy and acceptability.** Adequacy is a component of appropriateness and both the SMP and THR are assessed in terms of taste, timing, portion size and inflation-adjusted monetary value (when evaluating with cash transfers). On-site meals consist of 60g of CSB+ fortified with >50% of the recommended daily micronutrients. According to internal KIIs and document review, the serving size – less than the planned standard requirement of 100g<sup>55</sup> -is provided as per

<sup>49</sup> Education Management Information System (EMIS) reports 2003, 2005

<sup>50</sup> It is not clear which report was used by staff.

<sup>51</sup> Demographic Health Survey 2004, Malawi

<sup>52</sup> CVFSA, 2012

<sup>53</sup> WFP McGovern-Dole SMP Proposal 2015, Country Programme Malawi 200287 (2012–2018).

<sup>54</sup> FGDs

<sup>55</sup> SPR 2017

the funding sought and obtained from USDA. The Best Practise Guide for school meals in Malawi<sup>56</sup> notes that while 100g is ideal, serving size can be lowered with the aim of maximising programme coverage. According to the guide, 60g will still fulfil micronutrient requirements and contains some calorific value. Still, in order to provide sufficient food for a half-day of school, WFP intended to increase portion size to 100g (27% of daily calorific needs), contingent on mobilising further funding streams. However, the 2017 SPR reveals funding constraints prevented the intended portion increase.

43. During the evaluation period, the serving time for the daily porridge was moved from mid-morning to 7.30 am, before school begins, to prevent disruption to lessons. Key informants were divided on the merits of the change. WFP staff and government officials approve of the pre-lesson meal time and reduction in disruption to lessons. Conversely, qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs indicates that WFP staff, school administrators and School Feeding Committees reported concerns that pre-lesson meals increased the risk of hunger and inattentiveness later, particularly among older learners with longer school days who report hunger in the afternoon. Quantitative data could not be used to corroborate these reports as this information was not captured in the questionnaires. Furthermore, the WFP provided SMP is often the only meal these vulnerable older children eat. Key informants also reported protection issues concerning staff – often female – now being required to arrive at school long before dawn to prepare the meal. This issue was also discussed at the School Meals thematic working group meetings convened by MoEST on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2017 and 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018<sup>57</sup> and the stakeholders agreed there was need for a study that investigates the consequences of the early feeding time.
44. **Acceptability:** Survey data show that nearly 91% of beneficiary school children (learners) ate the entire portion of porridge each day it was provided, regardless of gender and orphan-hood status (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Consumption of on-site school meals by learners**

Among school age children (household sample)	All %	Male %	Female %	Orphans %	Poor %
Eat entire portion of porridge each day	90.8	92	90	90.4	91.6
Do not like the daily porridge	4.5	3.8	4.9	4.9	4.4
Do not have time to eat	1	1.4	0.8	1.4	1.2
Not hungry (and therefore do not eat school meal)	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.7	0.0

*Source: Evaluation survey data. Poor refers to the lowest two quintiles/categories of the expenditure distribution of the sample*

45. Less than 5% of the learners dislike the porridge and less than 1% report the lack of hunger as a reason for not eating the school meal. Key informants and FGDs commonly complained of bitter tasting porridge, suspecting expired or rotten CSB+ flour. Internal KIIs informed the ET that the bitterness is caused by an ingredient. Subsequently, schools were instructed to provide their own sugar or salt to alleviate bitterness. Despite complaints of bitterness, consumption of the porridge is near universal.

### Box 1. Key findings and conclusions – Evaluation Question 1

Overall, the SMP is relevant/ appropriate to the needs of beneficiaries, but appropriateness is threatened by elements such as the early serving/feeding time and alignment of complementary activities with SO1.

1. The on-site daily meals and the THRs are relevant to the needs of beneficiary children and wider community in vulnerable, highly food insecure target districts where daily breakfast is not common. Qualitative data shows the THR improved education metrics for children vulnerable to transactional sex, child marriage and teenage pregnancy and boosts the school attendance of orphaned boys. On-site meals are non-discriminatory ensuring inclusion of marginalized groups.
2. Complaints of bitterness have not diminished consumption of meals, and acceptance of meals is high
3. The serving time change caused controversy. Pre-lesson feeding reduces disruption to learning, though has an adverse protection effect on (often female) volunteer cooks travelling in pre-dawn hours<sup>58</sup> and potentially raises the risk of afternoon hunger among vulnerable older school children for whom the SMP is often their only meal.

<sup>56</sup> School Meals in Malawi: A Best Practice Guide, 2017. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

<sup>57</sup>Minutes of the 7th school meals programme thematic working group meeting held at Ministry of Education mini conference room, Lilongwe, 21st July, 2017. Minutes of the 9th school meals programme sub-technical working group that was held at Golden Peacock Hotel on 19th April 2018

<sup>58</sup> Although no specific security incidence has been cited/reported yet, it is clear from the FGDs that this is a concern to the community members and the WFP should consider proactively addressing it before incidences are reported. In the ET's view, this is a legitimate concern as travelling in the dark does indeed expose women to the safety risks. Survey data also shows that about 3% of female learners reported being afraid of experiencing GBV when travelling to school, which supports the concern for safety (see paragraph 88). WFP Malawi indicated that government is planning to conduct a special study on feeding time which may inform the directive on feeding time.

## 2.2. Alignment and coherence with relevant policies and strategies

- 46. Alignment with WFP corporate policies.** The provision of micronutrient fortified meals and THR is well aligned with Strategic Objective 1 (end of hunger by protecting access to food) and 2 (improving nutrition) of WFP's Strategic Plan (2017-2021) and Objectives 1 (safety net for food insecure households) and 3 (enhance nutrition by reducing micronutrient deficiency) of WFP's School Feeding Policy (2013). Improvements in education metrics, multi-level government capacity and partnerships with Farmer's Organisations align with Objectives 2, 4 and 5 of WFP's School Feeding Policy (2013). The SMP's activities and results are well aligned with WFP's Theory of Change (Annex 10), especially with the service delivery and capacity development role of school feeding. The foundational results are especially coherent with the capacity development role in WFP's theory of change. SO1 and SO2 of the SMP's results framework are consistent with the theory of change's medium-term outcomes on improved school achievement and improved health behaviours.<sup>59</sup>The mainstreaming of gender and protection activities into the SMP's implementation and targeting are well aligned with WFP's Gender Policy (2015-2020) especially Objectives 1 (Food assistance adapted to different needs) and 4 (Gender and Protection). At country level, the SMP is well aligned with Component 1 of the CP (200287, 2012-2018)<sup>60</sup> (Support to Education) which aims to "contribute to increasing the proportion of boys and girls accessing and completing pre-primary and primary education in WFP-assisted schools; and enhance the capacity of the Government to design and implement a sustainable school meals programme".
- 47. Alignment with government policies and priorities.** Malawi's policy environment is favourable to and supportive of school feeding, underlined by the 2007 Presidential Decree supporting universal rollout of school meals programmes. Key informant interviews, along with the review of policy documents, confirm the programme's alignment with various national policies and strategies. The SMP with its focus on equitable service delivery of nutritious food and access to education along with its ancillary activities – such as kitchen and storeroom construction– and notably its coverage of ECD centres is well aligned Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy III (priority II), the National Education Sector Plan (2008-2018), the National Strategic Plan for ECDs (2009) and the National Multi-Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan (2018-2024). Overall, the SMP aligns and is coherent with the objective of increasing the number of school health and nutrition programmes in Malawi stated in the National School Health and Nutrition Policy (2013). The provision of THRs to girls and orphaned boys aligns well with the National Girls' Education Strategy (2014-2019)'s objectives of furthering girls' education and eliminating gender-based barriers to learning. As it provides food transfers, the SMP aligns well with Pillar 1 of the Malawi's National Social Support Programme (NSSP) II which aims to provide coherent social protection coverage to vulnerable populations in conjunction with their changing needs. Interviews with the MoEST indicate that although the government views the HGSM model as more sustainable and connected with local production and economies, the SMP is highly regarded and appreciated for its vital contribution to the education system and nutrition.
- 48. Alignment with donor priorities.** The results framework is derived from USDA's McGovern-Dole results framework/theory of change. The activities of the SMP are well aligned with, and contribute to, the fulfilment of the strategic objectives of the results framework and achievement of USDA's McGovern-Dole's output and outcome indicators. Lack of secondary schools has been identified as a hindrance to completion of primary school; therefore, inclusion of secondary school construction in the results framework is appropriate.
- 49. Coherence with UN priorities and interventions of development partners:** The objectives of the SMP are aligned with and can contribute to the fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): 1 (ending poverty); 2 (zero hunger); 3 (good health and well-being); 4 (quality education) and 5 (gender equality). The SMP is broadly aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Malawi (UNDAF 2012-2018) especially Outcomes 1 (Equitable and sustainable economic growth and food security)) and Outcome 2 (Social protection). KIIs reveal that the SMP is aligned with the priorities and of organizations that also provide school meals e.g. Mary's Meals and GIZ (see paragraph 23). A national Technical Working Group on School Meals has been formed by WFP and these organizations, which helps minimize duplication in geographical targeting and coverage of school meal programmes. Paragraph 12 and 21 describe the partnerships that WFP has created with development partners who share similar priorities e.g. World Vision Malawi, AECDM, CRECCOM, FAO and recently with UNICEF, UNFPA through the Joint Partnership for Girls Education.

### Box 2. Key findings and Conclusions— Evaluation Question 2

<sup>59</sup>In WFP's theory of change, school feeding is viewed as a social protection instrument that potentially contributes to improved school attendance, enrolment, nutrition and health and decreased dropout rates.

<sup>60</sup>Country Programme Malawi 200287 (2012–2018)

1. The SMP is well aligned and can contribute to the fulfilment of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.
2. The SMP is well aligned with the policies and priorities of the government of Malawi and WFP and is coherent with the priorities of the implementing partners, UN development partners and other development actors working in school nutrition and education.
3. The activities of the McGovern-Dole SMP are well aligned with the strategic objectives and corporate performance indicators of USDA's McGovern-Dole Programme.

### 2.3. Design and implementation Gender sensitivity and gender analysis

50. In line with WFP's Gender Policy (2015-2020), especially Objective 4 (Gender and protection), the CO is mainstreaming GEEW principles, activities and safeguards for protection needs into the implementation of the McGovern-Dole SMP. Part of the design incorporates GEEW as the THR are targeted to all girls and orphaned boys in standards five to eight in line with Objective 1 (Food assistance adapted to different needs) of WFP's Gender Policy (2015-2020). Some of the activities that have been implemented for SMP beneficiaries include: i) encouragement of female leadership of School Feeding Committees; ii) training women construction workers into skilled workers; iii) strengthening of girls' life skills through the Every Girl in School Campaign (EGIS) and provision of bursaries to girls and vulnerable boys via the Let Girls Learn project; iv) sensitization of beneficiaries on safety issues when travelling to school or work; v) awareness and community mobilization against gender based violence (GBV); vi) provision of information on protection issues, violence and sexual and reproductive health to learners (in collaboration with UNICEF and UNFPA under the Joint Partnership for Girls Education);<sup>61</sup> and vii) Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs) that include referral systems on Gender-Based Violence. CFMs and complementary programme that sensitize girls on GBV, sexual and reproductive health, were especially set up in response to the previous evaluation's (FY13, Phase 11) recommendation to make the "school environment more appropriate for girls, orphans and vulnerable children".<sup>62</sup> Yet, these mainstreamed activities are not addressed by the results framework and most are not in the SMP's activities but are guided by the CO's action plan for gender.<sup>63</sup> Despite the gender targeting of THR and the extensive mainstreaming of gender responsive activities in the implementation of McGovern-Dole SMP, *the gender approach is not sufficient* as there is no specific gender and protection strategy or action plan for the SMP that defines the scope, purpose and goals of gender-sensitive and protection activities. This is an area that needs to be addressed in future design and implementation (Annex 8 outlines steps the gender approach should take).
51. Despite anonymous Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs) being implemented, the majority of complaints are aired using non-anonymous mechanisms such as face-to-face meetings with headteachers. As headteachers are key members of committees that oversee the SMP, reliance on such meetings can discourage the airing of grievances and complaints, including those about commodity mismanagement and sexual violence. KIIs with the CO staff revealed a lack of awareness of anonymous CFMs including the newly implemented toll-free hotline and suggestion boxes. The use of the hotline among beneficiaries is inhibited by fear of using of technology. CFMs can be strengthened through community sensitisation that enhances the awareness and take up of anonymous mechanisms to ensure all voices are heard.
52. Several gender assessments were carried out in the Phase II (FY13, 2013-2016),<sup>64</sup> which addressed the unintended impacts of the McGovern-Dole SMP on women volunteers who cook and serve meals and the gender needs of women working in school construction. KIIs with CO staff established that follow up actions to these assessments included the provision of overalls and safety gloves to female cooks. In some schools, female cooks received certificates which can be used to get paid jobs in the community. The certificates and protection gear were also intended to entice men into volunteering for meal preparation. However, no gender and protection assessments have been carried out over the evaluation period which could have assessed the impacts of these actions. Evaluation household survey data shows that 94% of individuals involved in meal preparation are women. KIIs with CO staff and local government officials also indicate that the unintended impacts that were observed in previous gender assessments (from FY13, Phase II) remain. Gender roles have been reinforced as meal preparation work –often voluntary–at the schools is mainly done by women

<sup>61</sup>SPR 2016, 2017, Innovations from the Field: Gender Mainstreaming from the Ground Up , November-December 2013.Gender Assessment: Exploring Opportunities for Gender Mainstreaming in WFP Construction, May 2016.

<sup>62</sup>WFP & FAO (2018). Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with support from United States Department of Agriculture, and the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom (2013-2015).

<sup>63</sup>WFP Malawi Country Office Action Plan for Gender (2017-2020)

<sup>64</sup>Innovations from the Field: Gender Mainstreaming from the Ground Up, November-December 2013.Gender Assessment: Exploring Opportunities for Gender Mainstreaming in WFP Construction, May 2016.

from the communities who engage in laborious chores such as cooking, firewood collection and water collection.<sup>65</sup> Meal preparation can be especially long and taxing in schools with large numbers of children. In Phalombe, one head teacher reported that meal preparation takes a long time because there are insufficient stoves for the volume of food that needs to be cooked in schools with hundreds or thousands of children, and some pots break easily. Hence, the involvement by women in laborious meal preparation work may inadvertently increase the burden of these women who have to balance voluntary work with productive work or household chores and caregiving at home, which contradicts the tenets espoused in Objective 2 of WFP's 2015-2020 Gender Policy (i.e. equal participation of men and women in design and implementation). Section 2.5 analyses survey data on this aspect. Social mobilization campaigns on importance of education should also include the sensitization of community members on the sharing of responsibilities between men and women. As mentioned in section 2.1, during the evaluation period, the feeding time in the schools was changed to early morning around 7.30 am rather than the previous mid-morning feeding time. Stakeholders and school feeding committees and teachers (via KIIs and FGDs) reported that this operational change had adverse effects on volunteer female cooks. They typically have to wake up long before dawn and travel to schools in the darkness to ensure meals are prepared and ready by 7 am, which puts their safety at risk as most travel alone for long distances and likely affects their work at home.

53. Monitoring processes aim to collect gender disaggregated data for several performance indicators of the results framework such as: increased access to school feeding, provision of school meals, improved school attendance (See Annex 7). However, there are several shortcomings. However, monitoring reports do not consistently disaggregate data for children by gender, and no gender disaggregated data is reported at teacher level. For instance, indicators measuring the increased skills and knowledge of teachers and school administrators could also be disaggregated by gender. Gender analysis can be improved by integrating GEEW and protection indicators into monitoring processes. Examples include: female leadership of SFCs, child marriage, time allocated to meal preparation work, volunteer safety, bullying/GBV in schools. 54. Outside of the results framework, WFP is also measuring trends in household decision making by men and women over THRs. However, these measures are absent from the PMP/results framework and therefore do not directly inform implementation. Further recommendations for improving gender and protection in SMP are in Annex 12.

**Box 3. Key findings and conclusions – Evaluation Question 3**

1. The targeting of the THR is gender sensitive, and several activities and protection mechanisms are gender sensitive, though remain absent from the results framework. Without a specific gender and protection strategy or action plan for the SMP, these activities lack defined goals and scope.<sup>66</sup>
2. Gender roles have been reinforced as the labour intensive school meal preparation is primarily the domain of women, increasing their overall domestic labour burden. Community members should be sensitised on the importance of men and women sharing responsibilities in meal preparation. Protection issues surrounding cooks walking to school in darkness arose out of the new early meal time.
3. Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs) for the SMP include tollfree hotline, suggestion boxes and non-confidential channels. However, beneficiaries mainly rely on non-confidential platforms—*in vivo* complaints to head teachers—which discourage sensitive complaints. Take up of anonymous mechanisms should be increased to strengthen CFMs.
4. The PMP has several gender disaggregated performance indicators, but actual monitoring data is not gender disaggregated. However, the results framework overlooks GEEW and protection indicators such as the participation and leadership of women and men in SMP committees, school meal preparation and its protection risks. They can be incorporated into the framework or alternately into a parallel gender action plan. Gender and protection assessments were not carried out during the evaluation period.

**Evaluation Criterion 2: Impact**

54. This section addresses the main evaluation questions related to the impact criterion. The section draws heavily on the quantitative and qualitative data collected during fieldwork, wherever possible triangulated with programme documents and external literature. Various statistical/econometric methods are used for impact assessment: Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM), Differences in Differences and Instrumental variables regressions (further details on

<sup>65</sup> While the ET acknowledges that the observed labour division is cultural in nature, it is their view that the SMP is reinforcing this unequal gender division which can adverse effects on women's earnings.

<sup>66</sup> Even though the CO acknowledged that there are corporate gender and protection policies that are supposed to guide all WFP work in this regard.

methodology are in section A4.7, Annex 4). SMP schools (and associated children and households) will be referred to as “targeted”, while non-supported schools (and associated children, households) will be referred to as “control”.

## 2.4. Impact on outcomes and higher-level results (as per framework)

55. **Impact on literacy of school aged children:** Literacy impacts of the SMP (SO1) are assessed using an EGRA delivered to learners in Standards 2 and 4, conducted in October 2018. The EGRA comprises seven subtasks, both timed and untimed (see Table 3). Based on the scores for Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), the ET identifies the proportion of learners who exceed the benchmark set by the MoEST which is 20 correct words per minute (cwpm).<sup>67</sup> This is the indicator used to determine achievement of SO1 .i.e. percentage of students who by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text.

**Table 3. EGRA subtasks**

<b>Subtask</b>	<b>Stimuli</b>	<b>Score range</b>	<b>Length of subtask</b>
Letter name knowledge	0-100 letters	0-100	1 minute
Initial letter sound identification	0-10 letters	0-10	1 minute
Familiar-word reading	0-50 letters	0-50	1 minute
Unfamiliar-word reading	0-50 words	0-50	1 minute
Oral reading fluency	0-70 words	0-70	1 minute
Reading comprehension	5 questions	0-5	Untimed
Listening comprehension	5 questions	0-5	Untimed
Reading above MOEST benchmark	20 correct words/min	0/1	-

**Notes:** Source (World Vision WFP Literacy Project Baseline Report, 2018)

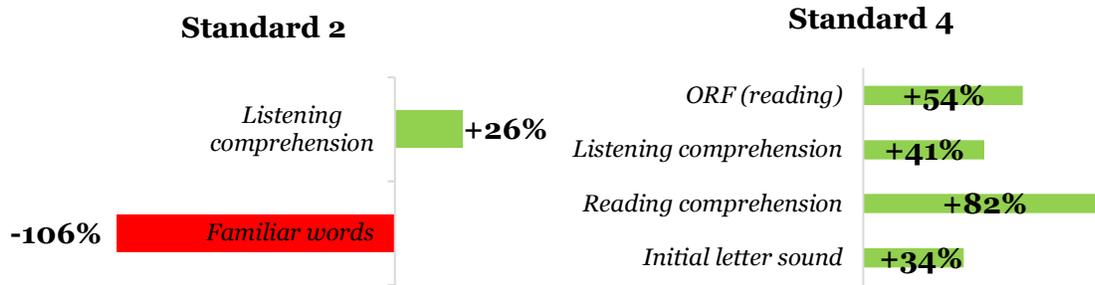
56. **Descriptive statistics.** Descriptive analysis of ORF shows that standard 2 learners can correctly read 7 out of 70 words, and there is no statistically significant difference between targeted (7.3) and non-targeted (6.6) groups. About 73% of the standard 2 learners scored zero in this sub-task (among others). Only 11.9% of the learners in standard 2 (12% for girls, 11.8% for boys) correctly read more than 20 words per minute (no discernible difference between targeted and non-targeted), exceeding the SO1 target for children in standard 2.<sup>68</sup> October’s figure is 5% higher than that found during an EGRA conducted by WV in early 2018.<sup>69</sup> Figures A6.1 and A6.2 in Annex 6 show the average targeted/non-targeted ORF scores by district for standard 2 and standard 4. Among standard 2 learners, the targeted group has higher ORF scores than the non-targeted group only in three districts: Salima, Mangochi and Phalombe. However, among standard 4 learners, the targeted group has higher ORF scores than the non-targeted group in four districts: Chiradzulu, Chikwawa, Mulanje and Salima. Further details for all EGRA subtasks are in Tables A6.2 and A6.3 (Annex 6). A description of the socio-economic characteristics of the learners is provided in Table A6.1, Annex 6. It shows that Standard 2 children from non-targeted groups are poorer and report hunger more often.
57. **Estimated causal impacts.** The estimated impacts are described as the relative change in outcomes for targeted children compared to non-targeted children, obtained from Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) combined with regressions (see explanation in Annex 4.7). The results show that *SMP generally has minimal impact on the literacy of Standard 2 learners* (see Figure 1). Listening comprehension is 26% higher and familiar words reading 106% lower for targeted children than the non-targeted group, but both are only significant at 10% level. There is no significant impact on ORF or other EGRA sub-tasks in standard 2. Conversely, **positive impacts on reading above the benchmark (54% higher for targeted group), listening and reading comprehension and initial letter sound recognition are observed among standard 4 learners.**

<sup>67</sup> 2017 Reading Benchmark, MoEST Malawi

<sup>68</sup> USDA Malawi Semi-Annual Report, April-September 2018.

<sup>69</sup> World Vision Early Grade Reading Assessment (2018). The survey was conducted in 13 districts and with a sample size of 678 children in standard 2.

**Figure 1.** Impacts of SMP on EGRA scores by standard among all children in targeted schools compared to all children in non-targeted schools



58. Table 4 presents the estimated impacts of the SMP for all children and disaggregated by gender and poverty status (derived from asset poverty).<sup>70</sup> Impacts are not disaggregated by age since each age year yields smaller sample sizes with weaker statistical power, but the standards/grades can proxy for age groups. The ET strictly followed the standardized EGRA tools applied in Malawi and they do not identify orphans and children with disability, hence we could not disaggregate by these groups (see tools in Annex 12). Again, the impact of the SMP among standard 2 learners by gender and poverty status is minor. There are positive impacts on listening comprehension among boys and non-poor children in standard 2. Other results on initial letter sound and reading above the benchmark (>=20 cwpm) among standard 2 learners are marginally significant (10% level). Among standard 4 learners, the SMP has positive and significant impacts on listening comprehension in all sub-groups. Among targeted girls, scores for initial letter sound recognition, listening comprehension and reading comprehension are higher than the non-targeted group by 49%, 45% and 111% respectively. The SMP has weakly significant positive impacts on reading comprehension and reading above benchmark (ORF) among non-poor children, an indication of the influence of better resources at home. Detailed results – including those which are statistically insignificant - are reported in Tables A6.7 to A6.10 in Annex 6.

**Table 4.** Impact of SMP on student’s performance in targeted schools compared to non-targeted schools: by gender and poverty status

	Standard 2		Standard 4	
Reading comprehension			Girls	<b>+110.6%</b>
			Non-poor	<b>+74.8%</b>
Listening comprehension	Boys	<b>+44%</b>	Girls	<b>+45.5%</b>
	Non-poor HH	<b>+43.3%</b>	Boys	<b>+34.6%</b>
			Non-poor HH	<b>+36%</b>
Initial letter sound			Poor HH	<b>+52.5%</b>
	Boys	<i>+64.4%</i>	Girls	<b>+48.8%</b>
Reading above benchmark‡	Boys	<i>-222.9%</i>		
			Non-poor HH	<b>+51.1%</b>

**Note:** Relative effect (%) is calculated as the ratio of the ATT (average treatment effect on the treated) and mean of control expressed in percentages. Italicised figures are statistically significant at 10% level., bold figures at 5% level or less. ‡Scoring 20 or more in Oral Reading Fluency. **Source:** End-line Survey (2018).

59. **Reasons for observed impacts on literacy:** The minimal impacts of the SMP on the literacy of Standard 2 learners are consistent with findings from similar research. One systematic review found that impact of school feeding on academic achievement shows consistent positive effects on arithmetic tests, but lower effects on reading, writing, and spelling tests.<sup>71</sup> A recent McGovern-Dole systematic review on school feeding found that the impact of similar SMPs on learning achievement (includes reading tests) was low and one major reason for such minimal impacts is the mediating role of the

<sup>70</sup>Based on Filmer and Pritchett (2001) asset wealth index approach. Last two quintiles of the index define poverty.

<sup>71</sup>Jomaa, L. And McDonnell, E. And Probart, C. (2011). School feeding programs in developing countries: impacts on children's health and educational outcomes, Nutritional Reviews [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49811075\\_School\\_feeding\\_programs\\_in\\_developing\\_countries\\_Impacts\\_on\\_children's\\_health\\_and\\_educational\\_outcomes](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49811075_School_feeding_programs_in_developing_countries_Impacts_on_children's_health_and_educational_outcomes)

quality of education.<sup>72</sup> Although the SMP included a literacy promotion activity that aimed to improve the skills of teachers and provide teaching and learning materials, there were several gaps and several possible reasons for the minimal impact among standard 2 learners.

- **Under-age enrolment:** Analysis shown in Table A6.12 (Annex 6) shows that underage enrolment in standard 2 is higher in targeted schools compared to non-targeted schools (10% in targeted schools and 4% in non-targeted schools, a statistically significant difference). Despite school entry/enrolment age being mandated at six years old in Malawi, results indicate the existence of underage children attending targeted schools.<sup>73</sup> Underage children without any background of ECD might have lower reading skills than their fellow students.<sup>74</sup>
  - **Lack of ECD centres:** Currently, the SMP supports 35 ECD centres in two districts (Chikwawa and Nsanje). During KIIs, district officials reported that ECD centres were few which resulted in underage enrolment in primary schools. They also revealed that un-supported ECD centres tend to close due to funding constraints. During data collection the ET came across many ECD centres that closed in the surveyed district of Chikwawa.
  - **Late implementation of literacy promotion activity:** The literacy promotion activity provides classroom literacy instruction for teachers and is modelled after the government and USAID's National Reading Programme (NRP). SMP schools only recently received and started using teaching and learning materials from the literacy promotion activity in April 2018,<sup>75</sup> which is not ideal for assessing literacy effects which usually take time to emerge.<sup>76</sup> The literacy promotion activity is available in 12 districts to all targeted schools. FGDs with teachers, PTAs and KIIs with head teachers in targeted schools describing the training teachers received on as too short. By May 2018, only teachers in Salima had received two sessions of training in classroom literacy instruction out of the expected nine.<sup>77</sup> Previous studies also found that literacy training was not effectively increasing the acquisition of skills by teachers in Malawi.<sup>78</sup> This is despite the existence of national programmes like NRP which also distributes books to schools.
  - **Class size:** FGDs and KIIs at targeted schools reported that individual/direct teaching is difficult due to large class sizes resulting from the SMP attracting more learners. Survey data show that the student/teacher ratio for standard 2 is 92:1 in targeted schools, compared to the average for all standards of 65:1 (further analysis in section 2.5 and data on student/teacher ratio by standard is in Table B6.4 in Annex 6), which means student's attentiveness and the quality of teaching might be diminished in early grades.
  - **School infrastructure:** Qualitative interviews with teachers, PTAs and other community members found that targeted schools have few classroom buildings or buildings usually have no floors. The ET observed students attending classes under trees in some schools. In essence, the lack of quality infrastructure and learning leads to poor learning results, such as absenteeism, repetition, and dropouts.<sup>79</sup>
  - **Teaching experience:** Analysis of targeted schools shows that trained teachers in standard 2 have 1.5 fewer years of experience compared to teachers in standard 4, on average, further compromising the quality of education provided.
60. **Impact on student attendance and dropout, and attentiveness.** Of the 191 sampled schools, 124 of them (93 targeted, 31 non-targeted) are selected to create a balanced panel with baseline and end-line data and assess the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT) of SMP.<sup>80</sup> Difference in Differences (DiD) analysis was performed on dropout rates, absenteeism, and the number of inattentive children during classes. The characteristics of the sample are in Table A6.1 (Annex 6) and the regression equation (and covariates) and successful validity tests are presented in Table A4.7 (Annex 4). Estimated impacts of the SMP on school attendance, dropout, and attentiveness (MGD 1.3) are reported in Table 5. Impacts refer to the ultimate difference between the targeted and non-targeted schools over the evaluation period. Results are disaggregated by gender. Since this is based on aggregated school data, we cannot explicitly identify individual children by age, grade or whether they are a THR recipient.

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<sup>72</sup>ibid

<sup>73</sup> National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2008-2017, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Malawi

<sup>74</sup> Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (2018). Transition and Linkages.

<sup>75</sup> Distribution of teaching and learning materials began in April 2018. As a result targets for numbers and percentage of materials received by schools did not meet the required targets (see Effectiveness section, paragraph 82).

<sup>76</sup>Rassas, B., Ariza-Nino, E and K. Peterson. (2016). The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program School Feeding and Educational Outcomes in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. QED Group, LLC.

<sup>77</sup>World Vision. (2018). Progress Report, May, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> RTI, (2012). Malawi Reading Intervention EGRA Final Assessment, 2012.

<sup>79</sup>UNICEF Malawi. (2017). Evaluation of UNICEF Malawi's Child-Friendly Schools Construction Component

<sup>80</sup>For an extensive explanation of how the panel has been built with information from baseline and end-line, please see the methodology section in Annex X. This is because 32 sampled non-targeted schools were replacements of the original non-targeted schools that transitioned into the SMP or other school meal programmes or were unreachable.

**Table 4. Impact of SMP on school dropout, attendance and attentiveness: change over the evaluation period**

	<i>All</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
<b>Drop-out rate</b>			
Impact (percent. points)	-2.9	-2.1	-3.7
Change relative to the baseline (%)	-63.04%	-87.5%	-148%
<b>N</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Absenteeism rate (more than 20% of school days, last month)</b>			
Impact (percent. points)	-5	-4.8	-2.7
Change relative to the baseline (%)	-116%	-100%	-142%
<b>N</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Number of inattentive children in classroom</b>			
Impact (No. of children)	-5.25	-2.15	-2.38
Change relative to the baseline (%)	-22.83%	-16.74%	-21.56%
<b>N</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>212</b>

**Source:** Baseline Survey (2016) and Endline Evaluation Survey (2018). **Notes:** Impact refers to the difference between the targeted and non-targeted schools over the evaluation period i.e. baseline to endline. Change relative to the baseline is derived by dividing impact. estimates with the baseline average of the sample. Percent points are percentage points. N is number of schools. Italicised figures are statistically significant at 10% level, bold figures at 5% level or less.

61. Results show that the SMP reduced dropout rates by 2.9 percentage points (significant at 10%). Similar trends are observed by gender but are not statistically significant. A systematic review has also found suggestive evidence that school feeding programmes decrease school-dropout rates.<sup>81</sup> Absenteeism is measured by the number of students absent more than 20% of school days in the previous month over total number of students in school. Results show that, relative to the non-targeted schools, the SMP reduced absenteeism in targeted schools by 5 percentage points<sup>82</sup>; among girls the decline is 4.8 percentage points (weakly significant) compared to the decrease of 2.7 percentage points among boys. This suggests that SMP increases the retention of learners. However, the magnitude of the relative change and statistical significance of impact on absenteeism is stronger among boys than girls. Previous reviews have found that school feeding generally increased attendance, but impacts are more pronounced among girls<sup>83</sup>. FGDs also found that the SMP especially increases the school attendance of orphans and children with disabilities, and ultimately improves their psychosocial health by removing them from possible abuse at home. The contrasting result from our evaluation may signify the mediating role of factors such as child marriage, cultural sexual initiation and bullying of girls (further discussion in section 2.8). Discussion of effectiveness criteria in section 2.8 provides additional reasons. FGDs with parents, school committees and learners also established that there were positive impacts on attendance and decreased dropout rates among learners in targeted schools. One respondent expressed the following view:

*“When we do not have bags of flour at the beginning of the term, the attendance is low but once the bags arrive, the attendance increases. This is where we realize that SMP is key to the attendance of the pupils at Vikwa”.* (Female, Targeted School, SFC member, Kasungu District)

62. The number of inattentive children in classroom was provided by randomly selected teachers in surveyed schools (there are missing values in baseline data). While this measure is imperfect, it was the best available to the evaluation team. The little data available from teachers showed no significant difference in the attentiveness of children in targeted schools compared to non-targeted schools. One caveat is that only 9 non-targeted schools had the required longitudinal data which diminishes the robustness and significance of the analysis. FGDs with parents and SFCs revealed that school meals improved concentration and attentiveness in class. Further sensitivity analysis of absenteeism, dropout rates and attentiveness outcomes are done with regressions adjusted for sampling weights and standard errors clustered at school level and results remain consistent (see Table B6.2 in Annex 6).

63. **Reasons for observed impacts on student attendance:** There are several potential channels through which SMP may generate the positive impacts (see theory of change in Annex 2): i) “magnet effect” where school meals attract or

<sup>81</sup>Lawson, T. M. (2012) Impact of School Feeding Programs on Educational, Nutritional, and Agricultural Development Goals: A Systematic Review of Literature. M Sc thesis, Michigan State University: USA.

<sup>82</sup> 5 percentage points translates to about 116% of the baseline average.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.,Rassas, B., Ariza-Nino, E and K. Peterson. (2016). The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program School Feeding and Educational Outcomes in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. QED Group, LLC. Jomaa, L. And Mcdonnell, E. And Probart, C. 2011 School feeding programs in developing countries: impacts on children's health and educational outcomes, Nutritional Reviews [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49811075\\_School\\_feeding\\_programs\\_in\\_developing\\_countries\\_Impacts\\_on\\_children's\\_health\\_and\\_educational\\_outcomes](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49811075_School_feeding_programs_in_developing_countries_Impacts_on_children's_health_and_educational_outcomes)

incentivize more children to attend school, especially at an early age; ii) economic incentives such as reduction in costs of schooling which increases parental demand for children’s education; iii) better diets (resulted provided later) which would reduce absences due to illness and increase concentration and attentiveness at school (See McGovern-Dole theory of change, Annex 2, part C). The next paragraph shows that the SMP has contributed to better household diets. Survey data shows that share of student absences related to illness in the last school year is 7.6% in targeted schools compared to 8.5% in non-targeted schools, although the difference is not statistically significant. The share of children suffering from diarrhoea in last school year was 1.4% in targeted schools and 2.4% in non-targeted (see Table B6.1, Annex 6).

64. **Impact on short-term hunger and dietary practices:** Impact on short-term hunger is estimated using two-stage least squares method with an instrumental variable (IV) and analysed at household and child levels.<sup>84</sup> General information on household structure is reported in Table C6.1 in Annex 6. To assess short term hunger (SO1, MGD1.2.1), the Household Hunger Scale (HHS), reduced Coping Strategy Index (CSI), number of meals consumed daily by children and adults are assessed in line with the baseline report. To assess increased use of health and dietary practices (SO2), the Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD)<sup>85</sup> for children (in results framework) is used together with the universally used indicators such as household Dietary Diversity Score (DDS), and Food Consumption Score (FCS).
65. Results in Table 6 show that the SMP has a significant positive impact on dietary diversity, and hunger. Results in Table C6.2 (Annex 6) also show that the SMP has a significant positive impact on the food consumption score, number of meals consumed by adults and children, coping strategies (see possible reasons in paragraph 68). The impact on MAD at child level (Strategic Objective 2 indicator) is positive but not statistically significant. However, there is a significant impact on MAD for the entire household (+83% compared to non-beneficiary households). Although beneficiary households still do not achieve the baseline target of three meals per day for adults and children,<sup>86</sup> the SMP has increased dietary diversity and number of meals consumed by adults by 10% and number of meals consumed by children by 13% (compared to non-beneficiary households’ levels). Likewise, it reduces the food insecurity coping strategy index by 23%. Household hunger in beneficiary households is 43% lower than in non-beneficiary households. However, the percentage of households that experience hunger (49%) is still above the planned target of 25%.<sup>87</sup> The food consumption score for beneficiary households is 12% higher than non-beneficiary households. Lower hunger rates can help increase attentiveness and ultimately learning (see theory of change in Annex2, part C). However, as mentioned earlier, the evaluation school sample has fewer observations on inattentiveness which may have generated the statistically insignificant results.

**Table 6. Impact of SMP on various nutrition and food security outcomes: beneficiary households compared to non-beneficiary households.**

	MAD (child)	MAD (HH)	DDS	HHS	N. of Obs.
All households	+58.3%	<b>+83%</b>	+10.3%	<b>-43.5%</b>	<b>1,289</b>
Female-headed households	-85.7%	+45%	+0.9%	-14.5%	356
Male-headed households	<b>+100.0%</b>	<b>+68%</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>-52.3%</b>	<b>933</b>
Poor	+216.7%	<b>+160%</b>	<b>+20.1%</b>	<b>-34.7%</b>	<b>504</b>
Non-poor	+50.0%	<b>+85.3%</b>	+7.5%	-28.7%	<b>785</b>

**Notes:** Analysis has been conducted using household level characteristics as covariates. See Annex 4 for description of regression model. Italicised figures are statistically significant at 10% level, bold figures at 5% level or less. **Source:** Endline Evaluation Survey (2018).

66. Further analysis shows that the impacts of the SMP are greater in male-headed households than female headed households, an indication of gendered disparities in vulnerability (see Table 6 and Table C6.2, Annex 6). Among female-headed households the SMP improves the number of meals consumed by adults but reduces the attainment of MAD in children (marginally significant). Positive impacts are largely similar across poor and non-poor households with the exception of FCS, MAD and DDS.<sup>88</sup> The SMP reduces hunger and negative coping strategies by greater margins in poor households compared to non-poor households. The reduction in hunger is also observed at child level as highlighted by the qualitative interviews with parents, mother’s clubs and community members.

<sup>84</sup> Students randomly selected at treatment and non-targeted schools were followed home by the interviewees and there a member of the household was interviewed.

<sup>85</sup>The MAD child variable is based on child food consumption. It is a dummy with value 1 for children that consume at least 4 out of 6 food groups daily and have 3 or more meals of solid, semi-solid, or liquid food.

<sup>86</sup>Averages are 2.7 meals for children and 2.3 for adults in treatment households. Baseline Survey Report for the School Meals Programme in Malawi with Financial Support from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2016

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Households with expenditures the bottom first and second quintiles of the sample distribution are considered poor in this evaluation

67. It is difficult to identify the effects of the THRs on short-term hunger/diet at the time of the survey (October) as they were mostly provided during the lean season (January-March). The analysis is therefore viewed as identifying residual effects. Results in Table C6.2 (Annex 6) show that at the time of the survey, the THRs still had a positive impact on the number of meals consumed by children, a possible sign of households ensuring that targeted children are well-fed. The impact is 24.7% higher than that of non-targeted children, nearly twice the impact observed among all children benefitting from the SMP. THRs recipients consume nearly three meals per day (2.88) compared to 2.31 meals for non-targeted individuals. THR recipients have MAD rates that are 133% higher than those among non-recipients.
68. **Reasons for observed impacts on hunger and dietary practices:** The provision of on-site meals and THRs directly increases the number of meals consumed by children. In addition, parents of children in targeted schools may have participated in the training on health and nutrition practices, commodity storage and preparation which may have increased awareness on good nutrition practices. Both rations alleviate financial constraints in the households, and indirectly increase disposable income that can be used to increase food intake, diversify diets and ultimately reduce hunger. FGDs with parents reported that the rations free up space in the household budgets. One respondent expressed the following view:  
*“The porridge has minimized the challenges faced by the community in providing food to the children before going to school. Sometimes they go home from school while hunger free and they only eat at dinner. Economically, the porridge has helped families to reduce food budgets”.* **(Female, Targeted School, PTA member, Mulanje District)**
69. The achievement of MAD in male-headed households, unlike in female headed households could reflect underlying/pre-existing gender inequalities that the SMP could not alleviate. Survey data shows that female heads of both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households are generally older, less likely to be educated or employed and poorer than male household heads (see Tables C6.1.1 -6.1.3 in Annex 6).
70. **Impact on skills and knowledge.** Longitudinal school level data is used for analysis. DID estimates in Table 7 show that the SMP has had no significant impact on the number of teachers and administrators using new techniques or tools. *This may also explain the minimal impact on literacy among children in standard 2.* Data from monitoring reports and KIIs with headteachers shows that teacher training was short, implemented late and did not meet planned targets. Some schools visited by the ET did not receive any teacher training, highlighting the coverage gaps of the literacy promotion activity.

**Table 5. Impact of the SMP on the skills and knowledge of teachers**

	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Number of teachers/administrators using new techniques</b>	
Impact (percentage points)	2.63
Relative change (%)	+39.4%
<b>No. of obs.</b>	<b>235</b>

**Source:** Baseline Survey (2016) and End-line Survey (2018). **Notes:** Number of observations are reported below every indicator. Italicised figures are statistically significant at 10% level, bold figures at 5% level or less.

**Box 4. Key findings and conclusions – Evaluation Question 4**

- Literacy impacts were only significant on Standard 4 learners. Higher EGRA scores are observed among girls in initial letter sound identification, listening and reading comprehension. Reading fluency (above national benchmark) is 54% higher among children in targeted schools than non-targeted schools. Possible reasons for the minimal impact on standard 2 learners include underage enrolment, lack of ECD centres, poor classrooms, late implementation/incomplete coverage of the literacy promotion activity, congestion and fewer years of teaching experience.
- The SMP has unambiguously reduced absenteeism by 5 percentage points (about 116%), with a stronger impact on boys, contrary to previous studies. The impact on absenteeism on girls may be attenuated by the bullying or GBV girls faced in school and cultural factors such as early marriage (see section 2.8). Results are also suggestive of a reduction in dropout rates (marginally significant). There is no significant effect on attentiveness, although this may be due to limited survey data. Qualitative surveys also report positive impacts on attendance in general and on the psychosocial health of orphans and children with disabilities, as schooling removes them from an abusive home environment.
- Gendered vulnerabilities were revealed. In male-headed households, the SMP reduces short-term hunger (including at child-level), negative coping strategies and increases the number of meals. Despite THRs being received earlier in the year, residual impacts were noted on meal intake of children in October, indicating a lasting impact beyond the maize delivery period.

- SMP has no impact on the increased use of improved teaching techniques, undermining fulfilment of SO1. Monitoring data and KIIs show teacher literacy training was short, and untimely.

## 2.5. Unintended (positive or negative) impact of the SMP

71. This section examines the unintended consequences of the SMP on different outcomes. The potential unintended effects of the SMP are assessed at household (and learner) and school level using both quantitative and qualitative data.
72. **Underage enrolment.** The provision of school meals to students may incentivize parents to send under aged children to school, especially in a context with few ECD centres. EGRA data shows that 12.7% of targeted children in standard 2 are underage compared to only 1.7% in non-targeted schools. About 70% of these under age targeted children are girls. Underage children may face difficulties in learning when they do not have ECD/pre-school attendance.
73. **Migration of non-targeted children to targeted schools.** Because school meals are a pull factor for hungry and food insecure children, KIIs and FGDs with school staff and community members revealed incidents of learners from non-targeted schools enrolling in targeted schools in order to receive meals, ultimately decreasing enrolment in non-targeted schools. This is happening despite efforts to target the SMP to an entire school education zone. Border districts like Phalombe experience learner migration from children in neighbouring Mozambique where there are no school meals. The subsequent increased enrolment from learners raises demand for flour and school infrastructure. However, it is difficult to quantify the magnitude (or existence) of migration of non-beneficiary learners as the data is not readily observable in neither the evaluation survey nor secondary sources like EMIS. In the section (below), enrolment rates are analysed and the results do not support the qualitative finding that there is migration of non-targeted children to non-targeted schools.
74. **School congestion.** Previous literature<sup>89,90</sup> suggests that non-universal school meal programmes may result in high enrolment which does not keep pace with classroom construction or teacher employment, resulting in sub-optimal student to teacher ratios. Statistical analysis finds that the SMP had no significant impact on enrolment, student to teacher ratios or students per classroom over the evaluation period<sup>91</sup>. Quantitative data shows that at the time of the evaluation survey, targeted schools had an average of 133 students per classroom against 114 in non-targeted schools (difference not statistically significant). Targeted schools had, on average, four more teachers than non-targeted schools though this difference was statistically insignificant. In both targeted and non-targeted schools, the student to teacher ratio has fallen. In targeted schools the average ratio stands at 66:1 (down from 86:1 two years prior) and at 65:1 in non-targeted schools (down from 74:1 2 years prior). Crowding is evident in Standard 2 classrooms, with 92:1 in targeted schools and 96:1 in non-targeted schools. The decline in the student to teacher ratios is an immediate outcome of MoEST hiring new full-time teachers. While the decline is encouraging, all the ratios are all below both government's 2020 target and UNESCO's target (67:1 and 40:1 respectively). Complete results are reported in Table B6.4 in Appendix 6.
75. **Substitution effect in children's food intake at home.** Theoretically, on-site meals could end up substituting children's food intake at home (*substitution effect*) (Rogers & Coates, 2002).<sup>92</sup> Results obtained from household survey data show that children going to SMP schools have a higher likelihood of consuming breakfast than non-targeted children, as expected. The results also show that there is no decrease in the home consumption of lunch or dinner by targeted children who receive school meals (none by age). Other studies have found that increased food intake from on-site meals negates any decreased intake at home, and breakfast meals like those provided by the SMP have lower substitution effects than lunches.<sup>93</sup> Results are presented in Table C6.3 in Appendix 6.
76. **Work hours of female cooks.** Section 2.3 briefly discussed how the SMP contributes to the burden women bear in laborious school meal preparation. Survey data shows that 31.3% of beneficiary households had members who cooked school meals and 94% were female. This suggests that the SMP contributes to unequal gendered division of labour by reinforcing existing gender norms where men hold positions of relative privilege which implicitly absolves them of meal preparation tasks (despite the tasks being open to all genders). Table C6.4 (in Appendix 6) shows that, on average, women work 6.6 hours per week on school meals cooking on a voluntary basis and 42% of the female cooks also have a salaried job. Among women engaged in paid work, meal preparation constitutes a 33% share of their weekly working time. The

<sup>89</sup>Gelli Aulo (2015). School feeding and girls' enrolment: The Effects of Alternative Implementation Modalities in Low-Income Settings in Sub-Saharan Africa, *Frontiers in Public Health*, Volume 3

<sup>90</sup> Enrolment figures for 2016 and 2017 in the 13 districts covered by SMP are reported in Figure B6.1 in Annex 6

<sup>91</sup>Standard 2 was selected for the student/teacher ratio for students tested with EGRA. Standard 8 enrolment data are a good proxy for school completion.

<sup>92</sup>Rogers, B. L., & Coates, J. (2002). Food-based safety nets and related programs. *Washington, DC: World Bank Social Protection Discussion Paper*, 223.

<sup>93</sup>Jomaa, L. And McDonnell, E. And Probart, C. (2011). School feeding programmes in developing countries: impacts on children's health and education outcomes. *Nutritional Reviewers*.

additional time and effort burden potentially decreases women’s earnings, particularly among those who also hold a salaried job.

77. **Early feeding time and hunger.** Due to logistical constraints, data on hunger were collected at household not individual level. This prevented an accurate analysis of the effects of the early feeding time on late afternoon hunger. Survey data on meal frequency does not include information on spacing or satiation. Further research is required.
78. **Deforestation and environmental degradation.** School level and district level key informants reported that the sourcing of firewood for cooking school meals may be contributing to deforestation and environmental degradation in their communities. Key informants highlighted the work done by Mouawad and other organizations in woodlot creation (e.g. World Vision, Concern Worldwide, *Cooperazione Internazionale* among others). However, the survival rate of new trees is hampered by inadequate tree management expertise due to lack of training, theft of new trees and consumption of seedlings by roaming livestock. Although the SMP has distributed energy-efficient stoves and provided training their use, visits to several targeted schools revealed that not all targeted schools received them e.g. Vikwa F.P. School in Kasungu District, Monjole Community Primary School in Mulanje District. Going forward, deforestation is a concern that needs to be constantly monitored and addressed by the government and WFP through strategic partnerships with actors working in reforestation.

**Box 5. Key findings and conclusions – Evaluation Question 5**

- Qualitative interviews report high enrolment rates in targeted schools and highlighted the migration of non-beneficiary learners to programme schools as a contributing factor. However, quantitative data shows that the SMP had no significant impact on enrolment rates or classroom congestion. The SMP had no impact on student/teacher ratio, and it has declined over the evaluation period. Still, it is very high in lower grades.
- Underage enrolment is high in targeted schools especially in lower standards. This affects learning and could explain low EGRA scores.
- The SMP has not resulted in any meal substitution at home for children receiving school meals. On the contrary, they more likely to consume lunch and/or dinner than non-beneficiary children.
- Meal preparation work constitutes about 33% of total working time for employed women. This suggests that meal preparation work may be decreasing women’s potential earnings.
- There are concerns that firewood used in school meal preparation is increasing deforestation. However, several initiatives are in place to promote the planting of woodlots, although the success rates of these plantations are diminished by inadequate management, theft of seedlings or their consumption by livestock. The CO has distributed energy efficient stoves, but some schools lack them. Deforestation remains a concern that needs constant monitoring.

**Evaluation criterion 3: Effectiveness**

79. In this section effectiveness is assessed by first examining the achievement of results as indicated in the results framework and assessment of gender, protection and partnership results. The section also discusses the external and internal factors affecting achievement of outputs and outcomes and the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation processes.

**2.6. Extent Programme’s objectives were met and anticipated results achieved**

80. The achievement of results is assessed using the indicators in the baseline report<sup>94</sup> and PMP, and guided by the structure of results framework in Annex 2 (parts A and B) i.e. SO1, SO2 and the “Foundational Results”. Monitoring data is used to assess most indicators. Evaluation survey data (school, household and EGRA) is used to assess a few outcomes.

**Strategic Objective 1: Improved Literacy of School-Age Children.**

81. **Attendance, enrolment and beneficiary numbers.** Monitoring<sup>95</sup> data shows that targets for numbers of students enrolled (MGD 1.3.4), students regularly attending classes (MGD 1.3) and social assistance beneficiaries were met (see Table A7.1, Annex 7). The increased attendance is consistent with the reduction in absenteeism observed in causal analysis (section 2.4) and confirmed in school level FGDs and KIIs. Girls represent 49% of the 638,290 students enrolled (Table 8). Table 8

<sup>94</sup>Baseline Survey Report for the School Meals Programme in Malawi with Financial Support from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

<sup>95</sup>Malawi Semi-Annual Report April 2018 to September 2018

also shows that the targets for MGD1.3.5 (community awareness on education) and MGD1.3.1.1 were met or surpassed, while the number of schools<sup>96</sup> who demonstrate SMP management has increased and the target achieved. Construction of educational facilities has not been completed.<sup>97</sup> Direct beneficiary numbers are 99% of the target, and indirect beneficiary numbers are over 950,000 individuals exceeding the target (see Table A7.1 in Annex 7; no gender disaggregated data). However, it is unclear if the indirect beneficiary data accounts for the younger siblings of learners who also consume on-site meals (revealed in KIIs and FGDs at district and school level).

**Table 6. Student attendance, enrolment and beneficiary numbers**

Indicator	Baseline	End-line	Final Target	Achievement of target
<b>MGD1.3:</b> Number of students regularly (80%) attending USDA supported classroom/schools (Total, Male & Female)	0	580,844	573,726	<b>101%</b> Achieved in Oct 2017-Mar 2018
<b>MGD1.3/1.3.5:</b> Percent of communities aware of the importance of education	100%	100%	100%	<b>100%</b> Value from school survey data
<b>MGD 1.3.3:</b> Number of educational facilities rehabilitated/constructed as a result of USDA assistance	0	Ongoing	Schools Class 10 Latrine 10	<b>0%</b> 5 schools and 12 latrines in construction
<b>MGD 1.3.3:</b> Number of schools that demonstrate good SMP management	232	456	456	<b>100%</b> Based on number of administrators trained.
<b>MGD 1.3.4:</b> Number of students enrolled in school receiving USDA assistance (total, female male).	0	638,290	637,473	<b>100%</b> Not achieved in first six months 312,762 boys; 325,528 girls

**Source:** Malawi Semi-Annual Report data for April 2018 to September 2018; Evaluation school survey data. ‡ "Good management" refers to practices such as storing food off the ground, cleaning cooking pots and eating utensils in line with accepted standards and use of a pest management plan for food storage.

82. **Literacy and bursary provision:** EGRA data shows that literacy rates increased from early 2018 (SO1), target was met, and rates are higher among girls (Table 9). Approximately 12% (male and female) of standard 2 learners exceed national oral reading fluency benchmark scores, though minimal causal impacts on Standard 2 learners' literacy were observed (for Standard 4 impacts, see section 2.4). The distribution of literacy promotion materials was delayed and below target (only 23%). Monitoring reports<sup>98</sup> show that the provision of bursaries (MGD1.3.1) and number of recipients were only 2.7% and 31.7% of the targets, respectively (see Annex 7, Table A7.1). The presence of overlapping bursary programmes from other providers led to the reduction of 65 bursaries offered between October 2017-March 2018 and April 2018-September 2018 by WFP.<sup>99, 100</sup>

**Table 7. Literacy promotion**

Indicator	Baseline	End-line	Final Target	Achievement of target
<b>MGD SO1:</b> Percent of students who by the end of two grades of primary schooling demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level test	8%*	11.9%	11%	<b>107%</b> EGRA data Male (11.8%), Female (12%)
<b>MGD 1.1.2:</b> Number of textbooks/other teaching and learning materials provided as a result of USDA assistance	0	40,000	172,051	<b>23%</b> Not achieved. Started April 2018
<b>MGD 1.1.2:</b> Percent of textbooks/other teaching and learning materials provided as a result of USDA assistance	0%	23%	35%	<b>65.7%</b> No. of books provided divided by targeted number

**Source:** Malawi Semi-Annual Report data for April 2018 to September 2018; EGRA survey data. \* World Vision survey March 2018.

83. **Training in teaching techniques and commodity management:** Monitoring data shows that training and knowledge indicators for SO1 largely exceeded targets. Targets for MGD 1.1.5 indicators such as the training of school administrators/officials, their use of new techniques commodity management, food storage and preparation and SMP

<sup>96</sup> Number of schools who demonstrate SMP management is not an indicator in semi-annual reports but in the PMP. The indicator on administrators trained in food management practices is used to as a proxy.

<sup>97</sup> 5 junior secondary schools with 12 latrines each (4 for girls, 4 for boys, and 4 for teachers)

<sup>98</sup> Malawi Semi-Annual Report April 2018 to September 2018

<sup>99</sup> Malawi Semi-Annual Report April 2018 to September 2018

<sup>100</sup> Results do not include 1,320 bursaries disbursed at the mid of 2018/19 academic year. At this point, the data collection phase of this evaluation had been completed.

management, were surpassed (Table 10, details in Table A7.1, Annex 7). But the number of teachers demonstrating use of quality teaching techniques (MGD 1.1.4) is below target (gender disaggregated data unavailable), which may explain the lack of causal impacts on this indicator (see section 2.4). The incomplete achievement is confirmed by KIIs with headteachers who also mentioned that training was brief.<sup>101</sup>

**Table 8. Training and knowledge acquisition**

Indicator	Baseline	End-line	Final Target	Achievement of target
<b>MGD 1.1.5:</b> Number of school administrators and officials in target schools who demonstrate use of new techniques or tools as a result of USDA assistance	0	1,753	456	<b>384%</b> Cumulative total
<b>MGD 1.1.5:</b> Number of school administrators and officials trained or certified due to USDA assistance	0	1,753	1,374	<b>127%</b> Cumulative total
<b>MGD 1.1.5:</b> Number of people trained in commodity management, food storage and preparation	235	5,189	912	<b>569%</b> Cumulative total.
<b>MGD 1.1.4:</b> Number of teachers/ educators/ teaching assistants in target schools who demonstrate use of new and quality teaching techniques or tools as a result of USDA assistance (Total, Female, Male)	0	1,446	1,638	<b>88.3%</b> Cumulative total since 2018.

Source: Malawi Semi-Annual Report data for April 2018 to September 2018.

84. **Access to school feeding and short term-hunger:** MGD 1.2.1.1 indicators on access to school feeding show that the number of beneficiaries receiving daily rations exceeded the planned target. However, due to a pipeline break, the provision of daily school meals fell short of target by 27% (Table 11). Provision of THR only began in January 2018 and only 77% of the planned target was achieved from October 2017-March 2018. From April to September 2018, a further 38,970 THR were provided to 12,990 children (10,912 girls and 2,078 boys) who had not been covered during the lean season due to the late arrival of the commodity and impassable roads.<sup>102</sup> Survey data shows that hunger coping strategies declined within households, exceeding the target set at baseline by 245%. The prevalence of household hunger has declined during the evaluation period, although only 51% of the target was met. The numbers of meals consumed by adults and children are below targets (76% and 85% achieved respectively, see Table A7.1, Annex 7). Analysis of causal impacts shows strong reductions in hunger and increased meal frequency within beneficiary households (see section 2.4).

**Table 9. School meals, daily meals and short term-hunger**

Indicator	Baseline	End-line	Final Target	Achievement of target
<b>MGD1.2.1.1:</b> Number of take-home rations provided to school age children as a result of USDA assistance	0	128,469	167,439	<b>76.7%</b> Oct 2017-March 2018.
<b>MGD1.2.1.1:</b> Number of individuals receiving take-home rations as a result of USDA assistance (total, female, male)	0	42,823	55,813 (girls=48,557, Boys = 7256)	<b>76.7%</b> No gender disaggregation
<b>MGD1.2.1.1:</b> Percent of households' suffering from hunger over a 30-day period	58.9%	49.2%	25%	<b>51%</b> . Household survey data
<b>MGD1.2.1:</b> Percent of households using hunger coping strategies	23%	20.43%	50%	<b>244.7%</b> Household survey data (CSI)
<b>MGD1.2.1.1:</b> Number of daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) provided as a result of USDA assistance	0	157,988,875	215,491,400	<b>73.3%</b> Cumulative total
<b>MGD1.2.1.1:</b> Number of school-aged children receiving daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) as a result of USDA assistance	0	638,290	548,000	<b>116%</b>

Source: Malawi Semi-Annual Report data for April 2018 to September 2018 and Evaluation household survey data (2018). Hunger is calculated based on HHS. Households that suffered from hunger are those with a HHS >1.

85. **Strategic Objective 2: Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices.** Internal KIIs revealed that training of individuals is provided as a package that comprises good health and nutritional practices and food management practices, in order to fulfil SO2. Monitoring data in Table 12 shows that targets for numbers of trained individuals and community members in health and nutrition practices were achieved (gender disaggregated data unavailable). All 456 supported schools have

<sup>101</sup> Monitoring data on the number of administrators trained outside USDA funding is not available

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

improved kitchen and facilities. All 35 ECD centres have established school gardens. Monitoring reports availed to the ET do not have information on gardens established in primary schools and the ET is unaware of any other sources of information. Monitoring reports do not have data on water sources and sanitation facilities and de-worming medications. However, school survey data shows that 85% of supported schools have year-long access to an improved water source and 98% have at least one functioning latrine. Nearly 20% of the school children have attained MAD, about 99% of the planned target.

**Table 10. Knowledge of nutrition and MAD**

Indicator	Baseline	End-line	Final Target	Achievement of target
<b>MGD 2.3:</b> Number of individuals trained in child health and nutrition as a result of USDA assistance (total, female, male)	0	5,189	1,374	<b>377%</b> Cumulative total.
<b>MGD 2.3:</b> Number of government staff members trained in good health and nutritional practices	235	1,446	1,638	<b>88.3%</b> Cumulative total
<b>MGD 2.3:</b> Number of community members trained in good health and nutritional practices	948	5,189	1,374	<b>377%</b> Cumulative total
<b>MGD 2.4:</b> Number of schools with improved kitchen and facilities	300	456	456	<b>100%</b>
<b>MGD 2.4:</b> Number of schools with school gardens established	0	35	456	<b>7.7%</b>
<b>MGD SO2:</b> Percentage of school-age children receiving Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD)	16.4%	19.8%	20%	<b>99%</b> Household survey data.

Source: Malawi Semi-Annual Report data for April 2018 to September 2018, Evaluation household survey data.

86. **Foundational results.** Seven public-private partnerships (MGD 1.4.4) have been formed with an investment of US\$ 358,720<sup>103,104</sup> to facilitate implementation of activities: AECDM, CRECCOM, Foundation for Irrigation and Sustainable Development, Save the Children, World Vision Malawi, CADECOM and WE-EFFECT.<sup>105</sup> Information on the number of partnerships with Farmer’s Organisations is not available in the monitoring reports or any other available programme documents. The target of PTAs supported was met April-September 2017, though just 25% of target April-September 2018 (see Table 13). The number of education policies will be finalised in the forthcoming operational plan of the school feeding strategy of the School Health and Nutrition Policy.<sup>106</sup>

**Table 11. Foundational results**

Indicator	Baseline	End-line	Final Target	Achievement of target
<b>MGD 1.4.4:</b> Number of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) or similar “school” governance structures supported as a result of USDA assistance	0	565	456	<b>124%</b> Apr-Sept 2017. Not achieved in Apr-Sep 2018.
<b>MGD 1.4.4:</b> Number of public-private partnerships formed as a result of USDA assistance	7	7	5	<b>140%</b>
<b>MGD 1.4.3/1.4.4:</b> Value of public and private sector investments leveraged as a result of USDA assistance	US\$ 0	US\$ 358,720	US\$ 300,000	<b>119%</b>
<b>MGD 1.4.4:</b> Number of educational policies, regulations and/or administrative procedures in each of the following stages of development as a result of USDA assistance: Stage 1-5	0	1	6	<b>17%</b> Operational plan for school feeding strategy in School Health and Nutrition Policy at stage 1 <sup>107</sup> .

Source: Malawi Semi-Annual Report data for April 2018 to September 2018.

87. Table A7.1 in Annex 7 presents the combined and detailed assessment of the achievement of results over each six-month period of the evaluation period.

<sup>103</sup> US\$15152,720 from NGOs, US\$206,000 from Government

<sup>104</sup> Malawi Semi-Annual Report April 2018 to September 2018

<sup>105</sup> Malawi Semi-Annual Report April 2018 to September 2018.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Stages 1-5 for MGD 1.4.4: Stage 1: Analyzed; Stage 2: Drafted and presented for public/stakeholder consultation; Stage 3: Presented for legislation/debate; Stage 4: Passed/Approved; Stage 5: Passed for which implementation has begun

## Box 6. Key findings and conclusions – Evaluation Question 6

Achievement of outcomes and outputs for SO1 and SO2 is varied.

- SO1: While direct and indirect beneficiary numbers exceeded targets, pipeline delays meant provision of the SMP did not meet targets. Triangulated data confirms that student attendance, enrolment output targets and Standard 2 literacy rates have been achieved (minimal causal impact in section 2.4). But only 23% of literacy promotion materials have been distributed. School construction is below target, along with bursary provision. Training of school administrators, teachers (techniques) and community members (commodity management) met targets. The targeted number of school administrators is practising new techniques unlike teachers. Teachers reported insufficient training time (no causal impact on teaching skills).
- Reduction of household hunger coping strategies exceeded targets, though household meal consumption targets were not met; positive impacts are confirmed by causal analysis.
- SO2. Targets were broadly met, notably health, nutrition, food management training and MAD (with causal impact in male headed households). While all target schools have kitchens, not all have established gardens. Survey data show a functioning latrine and improved water source in most schools. Foundational results: Achievement of partnerships and local organisation support is strong. Education policies are still in development, though targets on number of education policies is missing.
- Gender disaggregated data is almost ubiquitously unavailable in monitoring reports along with hygiene and water supply information.

### 2.7. Cross-cutting results in areas of gender, protection and partnership

88. **Gender Equality.** Gender equality and protection are not SMP results framework indicators, therefore no measurement or targets are available. To assess gender, the ET relied on monitoring documents, SPRs and survey data to assess results that contribute to gender equality: mainstreaming of gender, gender parity in school and nutrition, gender parity among beneficiaries, gender roles, female leadership of management committees and women’s autonomy in decision making over use of THR.
89. Though absent from the results framework, GEEW processes have extensively been mainstreamed into the SMP (see section 2.3). Data from various sources is used to describe gender parity in school and nutrition indicators in targeted schools/beneficiary households. Table 14 shows that gender parity in meal provision is ensured given the enrolment rates. Standard 2 literacy rates are nearly equal but by Standard 4 girls lead boys. Girls exhibit higher absenteeism and dropout rates (statistically significant). Boys are more likely to consume the MAD, although the difference is not statistically significant. These results indicate that there are gender disparities in school attendance among targeted children. This is likely due to mediating factors such as bullying, violence and early marriage experienced by girls (see paragraph 99 for further explanation).

**Table 12.** Gender parity in school and nutrition indicators among targeted children

Indicator	Girls	Boys
Student enrolment (monitoring data)	51.0%	49.0%
Absent more than 20% of days in past month (survey data)	4.4%	1.9%
Dropout rate (survey data)	5.6%	5.0%
Literacy Standard 2 (oral reading fluency above benchmark, EGRA)	12%	11.8%
Literacy Standard 4 (oral reading fluency above benchmark, EGRA)	57.7%	53.8%
MAD child level (household survey data)	18.0%	22.3%

90. The CO’s gender action plan has targets for committee gender composition and THR decision-making. Survey data shows that 54% of beneficiary households report women as sole decision makers over THR, consistent with monitoring data from 2017SPR: 84.1% in female-headed compared to 35.2 of male headed households (>30% target by CO). This shows that in more than half of the beneficiary households, the THR are helping to empower women in exercising autonomy over a key food resource within the household. Survey data shows joint decision-making at 19% in all households (33.1% in male-headed households), up from 11% in 2017. According to the 2017 SPR, in 2017, women held 49.5% of leadership positions in school feeding committees (target: 50%) and all female committee members received school feeding training (target: 60%). Results reported in section 2.5 show that meal preparation work takes up 33% of the total work hours for women in paid work.

91. **Protection.** Primary and secondary data is triangulated to assess protection issues such as safety and CFMs. Community-wide sensitisation meetings organised by CRECCOM<sup>108</sup> raised awareness of and sought to reduce physical or sexual GBV. District Education Managers manage CFMs in the form of suggestion boxes, helpdesks and anonymous toll-free hotlines with real time information dissemination for school children and their families to air grievances.<sup>109</sup> Awareness of these mechanisms among beneficiaries was low – 11% reported feeling insufficiently informed about the programme and CFMs -, with many relying instead on non-confidential face-to-face meetings, which can discourage complaints on malpractice of headteachers or SFC members and do not ensure all voices are heard. The 2017 SPR shows that about 15% of women – including volunteer cooks affected by the early meal time policy- reported experiencing a safety issue travelling to an SMP site. FGDs with female learners revealed patterns of bullying or abusive behaviour (see Section 2.8 for qualitative evidence). In survey data, 3.3% of female learners reported being afraid of GBV while walking to school.
92. **Partnerships with international actors, local actors and community groups.** Partnerships between WFP, MoEST, other ministries, NGO and community organisations (SDG 17) are highly valued and important mechanisms for preventing overlap and ensuring coherent implementation (see paragraph 12). Section 2.6, Table 13 shows the achievements in public-private investments and support for PTAs.<sup>110</sup> Thematic and Technical Working Groups meet regularly at the behest of government to ensure programmatic coordination:<sup>111</sup> at district level WFP Field Monitoring Assistants (FMAs) conduct similar activities (through Whatsapp)<sup>112</sup> with District Education Managers, District School and Nutrition Coordinators, Primary Education Advisors and District School Meal Coordinators. The Joint Partnership for Girls Education (JPGE), with UNICEF and UNFPA<sup>113</sup> was commissioned to improve access to and quality of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and GBV education for young girls<sup>114</sup> by, in part, building on the lessons learned from the previously implemented three-year UN Joint Programme for Adolescent Girls (JPAG) programme funded by the Norwegian Embassy.

#### **Box 7. Key findings and conclusions-Evaluation Question 7**

- There is gender parity in beneficiary numbers, school enrolment and literacy rates. However, absenteeism and drop-out rates are higher among girls than boys and attainment of a MAD rates is lower among girls. In over half of the beneficiary households, only women make decisions over use of THR, and over half of SFCs are led by women, indications of empowerment. However, meal preparation work appears to be a burden that deprives them of potential earnings.
- Community sensitisation to prevent GBV has taken place. Confidential CFMs are in place, though awareness among beneficiaries is low (10% not versed on CFMs), with many relying on non-anonymous mechanisms which can hinder sensitive complaints and do not ensure all voices are heard. Safety issues while travelling to SMP sites were reported.
- Strong partnerships have been established with the MoEST, other ministries and other agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA). WFP and the government work closely at district and national level. The financial value of public-private investments has increased. The programme has also supported local governance groups like PTAs

## **2.8. Internal and external factors that affected the outputs and outcomes**

### *Internal Factors*

93. **Untimely delivery of commodity.** Administrative delays and late shipments postponed CSB+ flour distribution from October 2016 to March 2017, with the THR provision commencing in January 2018. While the CO confirmed other donor resources covered the shortfall, the delays undermined the effectiveness of the programme. Further transportation delays can occur during the rainy season when certain roads become impassable, with the CO sending commodities to vulnerable schools weeks in advance as mitigation. Transportation of small quantities to various schools is not commercially viable and sometimes few contractors express interest. To prevent further shipment delays, a consolidated WFP transport plan is in place to minimise the number of small, long distance shipments which are unattractive to

<sup>108</sup> CRECCOM Progress reports, 2017

<sup>109</sup> SPR, 2017

<sup>110</sup> US\$152,720 from NGOs and US\$ 206,000 from the Government

<sup>111</sup> Minutes of the 7th school meals programme thematic working group meeting held at Ministry of Education mini conference room, Lilongwe, 21st July, 2017. Minutes of the 9th school meals programme sub-technical working group that was held at Golden Peacock Hotel on 19th April 2018

<sup>112</sup> KIIs conducted with FMAs

<sup>113</sup> JPGE Phase I fund dates are from 1 July 2014 to 31 October 2017; Phase II fund dates are 1 December 2017 to 30 June 2020. Joint Programme Factsheet, Improving Access and Quality of Education for Girls in Malawi

<sup>114</sup> Ibid on SPR 2017

hauliers. To further encourage tenders, differential rates for shipments less than 5 tonnes were introduced. Despite these precautions, dispatch data shows that only 55% of commodity distributions were on time in 2017,<sup>115</sup> rising to 63% by October 2018. School level KIIs reported that disbursement delays increase absenteeism rates, highlighting the draw of the SMP. FGDs and KIIs indicated that some communities were able to meet the shortfall with community harvest contributions, though this is not universally feasible given poverty rates and low agricultural productivity.

94. **Uneven implementation of partner managed activities.** Document review<sup>116</sup> and KIIs with implementing partners also indicates that the coverage, duration, timing and geographic scope of complementary activities is uneven and untimely, diminishing effectiveness and efficiency (see Table 15). Minimal impacts on the literacy rates of Standard 2 learners may be partially explained by literacy promotion starting (delayed) in October 2017, with literacy materials distribution only commencing in April 2018 (only 23% were distributed).<sup>117,118</sup> CRECCOM and AECDM activities were only implemented for 8 months. Bursary provision in new secondary schools and school construction were also delayed. Targets were revised downwards due to overlaps with other actors. Moreover, these complementary activities did not begin in October 2016, the starting month of the evaluation period. Literacy promotion, school construction and bursary provision are not available in all 13 SMP districts. Interviews with head teachers revealed that training was brief conducted sometime prior, while others did not receive any training. This is confirmed by progress reports which show that by May 2018, only teachers in Salima had received two sessions of training in classroom literacy instruction out of the expected nine.<sup>119</sup> When pressed on what assistance or training was received by a school during interviews, most head teachers failed to recall teacher training, a telling indictment. Implementing partners bemoaned during KIIs that projects were slated for implementation during the rainy season, during which farm activities take priority for households, and WFP targets are unrealistic. The piecemeal approach undermines the effectiveness of activities conducted in fulfilment of the Strategic Objectives and reduces potential synergies and efficiencies in implementation. There are no operational ties between geographically and thematically overlapping activities (ECD promotion and social mobilization on education), which minimizes the achievement of synergies that can boost effectiveness. In addition, there is no prioritization of resources for scaling up activities that directly fulfil Strategic Objectives (such as literacy promotion and capacity development in ECDs).

**Table 13. Duration, coverage and timing of complementary activities**

Partner	Activity	Duration	District coverage	School coverage	Beneficiary numbers
<b>CRECCOM</b>	Social mobilization on education	8 months Began 01-May-17	13 districts	748 schools	180,000 community members <sup>a</sup>
<b>AECDM</b>	Capacity development, ECD	8 months Began 01-May-17	2 districts	93 ECD (35 USDA, 58 other donors)	200 caregivers 18,567 children
<b>World Vision/UNICEF</b>	Literacy promotion	15 months Began 1-Oct-17	12 districts	669 schools	419,000 children 1.7 million indirectly
<b>Save the Children</b>	Bursaries and school construction	15 months Began 21-Sept-17	7 districts	38 schools	2,080

**Notes:** Data on coverage and beneficiaries reported as at Jan 2018. Sources: MoUs with Implementing Partners, 2018; implementing partner progress reports (2017-2018). Community member beneficiaries for CRECCOM include leaders, head teachers, SMC/PTA/Mother group members, parents, and girls.

95. **Community participation.** Strong community engagement has assisted in implementation and effectiveness. Triangulated sources<sup>120</sup> inform the ET that community members willingly form the requisite committees to aid implementation (e.g. Mother's Groups, SFCs, PTAs). According to KIIs and FGDs with these groups, cooks are volunteers serving on a rota in the main, with few examples of salary provision from the community; often a storeroom watchman is provided. Auxiliary items such as sugar, salt, bricks, manure, seedlings, roofing tin, and labour are also commonly provided by the community. FGDs reveal that, where conditions allow, shortfalls in porridge is met by community harvest contributions. In many cases, Mother's Groups formed a vanguard against early marriage and sensitised communities against the practise.

<sup>115</sup> Dispatch statistics, 2016-2018

<sup>116</sup>MOUs signed with WFP's partners. Implementing partner progress reports.

<sup>117</sup> Semi-annual monitoring reports, October 2016-September 2018

<sup>118</sup> Though schools also received books from the National Reading Programme of USAID and the government

<sup>119</sup>World Vision. (2018). Progress Report, May 2018.

<sup>120</sup> Including: Implementing partners progress reports, 2016 SPR, 2017 SPR, FGDs, KIIs

96. **Human resources and capacity building.** Monitoring reports<sup>121</sup> and FGDs show that capacity building has been done at national, district and local levels. Government personnel and school level staff and committees have received training in project management, commodity management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. However, KIIs conducted with staff and committees at school level revealed a patchwork approach to training that may undermine effectiveness. SFC members reported that training on a variety of subjects is inconsistently delivered, does not reflect staff turnover, and does not reflect changes in policy made at corporate levels. School Garden Committee members inconsistently receive training and supplies, with many plots of land allocated for gardens lying fallow due to insufficient instruction, hence only 35 gardens were established. Capacity gaps arise when trained teachers are transferred especially in recordkeeping. Internal KIIs revealed challenges with recordkeeping and need for retraining at school level. Monitoring reports show that teacher training in teaching techniques did not meet the planned target and head teachers (KIIs) reported that training sessions were short and only two out of the nine planned training sessions had been completed. KIIs and the ET's observations indicate that WFP's field monitoring assistants (FMAs) are overstretched (see section 2.8 for further discussion).
97. **Gender and protection in design and implementation.** Gender sensitive processes and protection mechanisms have been mainstreamed, assisting the fulfilment of GEEW outcomes, for example the reduced female absenteeism rate, the above-target number of households with female-only decision making on THR use, and SFC female leadership rates. However, the majority of food preparation work is done by women and it consumes a significant share of their paid work. Poor awareness of extant anonymous CFMs undermines accountability.
98. **Partnerships.** The importance of partnerships was stressed by CO staff, and the details of scope and nature of such partnerships can be found in Section 2.6 and 2.7. However, KIIs with partners implementing sensitization activities highlighted concerns about the poor timing of activities (rainy season ), over-optimistic performance targets and poor coordination of geographically and thematically overlapping partner managed activities within districts, a missed opportunity for coordinating and combining efforts for the sensitization of communities on education or ECD by AECDM and CRECCOM

### **External factors**

99. **Early feeding policy.** During the evaluation period the meal time was moved from mid-morning to 07.30 to minimise learning disruption, in line with USAID-sponsored study findings. Positively, qualitative data shows improved preparedness for lessons, punctual lessons and teacher punctuality. Negatively, volunteer cooks (majority women) must now travel in darkness to school, creating potential protection risks. Moreover, hunger in the afternoon is exacerbated for vulnerable older children for whom the SMP is often their only daily meal.
100. **Funding constraints.** The CO intended to provide 100g of the on-site meal ration. They therefore intended to mobilize additional resources from other donors to supplement the ration size financed by USDA (60g) and reach 100g. However, the ration size remained at 60g, as the CO's efforts to mobilize additional resources from other donors were unsuccessful.
101. **Gender, cultural norms and protection challenges.** Consistent with the previous evaluation for FY13, FGDs with Mother's Groups revealed the continuation of the practise of early marriage, which results in female school dropout by girls after pressure from the partner. One female learner expressed the following view:  
*Some [girls fail to enrol in school] because their parents encourage them to get married while young. For example, in my area, a woman forced her daughter to get married to a man from Mozambique and stop going to school because there is no future in school. The girl was chased from her parents' home because she didn't want to get married. (Female, Migowi (Targeted School), Learner, Phalombe District)*
102. While Mothers' Groups are at the forefront in sensitising communities about the importance of educating the girl child, they face community backlash when they intervene in early marriage and when girls dropout. Theoretically, school meals could alleviate economic burden and decrease cultural disincentives like early marriage (see ET's discussion of the theory of change in Annex 2, part C). However, the practice is ingrained in Malawi culture. Data from the Malawi McGovern-Dole Endline survey (2014) shows that the across targeted districts the percentage women (aged 20-49) who married before 18 was above 50% in 11 districts (above 40% in 2), with Phalombe and Mulanje having the highest rates at 68% and 60% respectively. Of girls aged 15-19, about 23.5% and 33% in the Central and Southern regions respectively are married with high prevalence noted in targeted districts like Chikwawa (54%), Phalombe (39%) and Mulanje (38%).<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup>Semi-annual monitoring reports 2017-2018.

<sup>122</sup>Malawi MDG Endline Survey (MES) 2014 Report. [http://www.nsomalawi.mw/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=210&Itemid=98](http://www.nsomalawi.mw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=210&Itemid=98)

Cultural initiation ceremonies, which features unprotected intercourse as a cleansing method, exposes girls to risks which hinder further participation in education (such as pregnancy) and therefore undermines the efficacy of the SMP. Additionally, the lack of sanitary items and gender-segregated latrines leads to “period shaming” from their peers. Parents during FGDs reported the prevalence of bullying and harassment, with teachers vastly outnumbered unable to command the situation. Older girls face abuse and violence from peers, both boys and girls. This was confirmed by both parents and female students themselves in FGDs.

*Sometimes our rights are been abused and boys harasses us if we do well in class. (Female, Treatment School, Learner, Mulanje District)*

*For example, I have a daughter who was born in 1998 and who is in Standard 6. She has a problem which has affected her education. The main problem is that her friends laugh at her and tease her and this has resulted in her not wanting school. (Female, Treatment School, Parent, Phalombe District)*

103. The exposure to bullying and GBV could explain the stronger magnitude of reduction in absenteeism among boys than girls observed in section 2.4. Analysis in section 2.4 also shows clear gender disparities in household nutrition and food security, as the gains in dietary diversity were only observed in male-headed households. Survey data suggests that these disparities between male and female households likely emanate from underlying socio-economic differences between male- and female-headed households. Tables C6.1.1 -6.1.3 (in Annex 6) show female household heads (beneficiary and non-beneficiary households) are generally older, less likely to be educated or employed and poorer in terms of assets. This suggests that there are pre-existing gender inequalities that the SMP is not necessarily responsible for but could not alleviate. Overall, gender/cultural factors mediate the fulfilment of SO1 yet they are conspicuously absent from the results framework.
104. **Lack of parental investment in education** Despite sensitisation activities from WFP, CRECCOM and WV, limited parental investment in education undermines target achievement and impact (see theory of change, Annex 2, part C). Parents do not adequately prepare children for school, insist upon their attendance or take interest in their academic progress.<sup>123</sup> Often parents must travel long distances to their land, and many insist in children contributing to household income through piecemeal work or domestic duties. This is prevalent in districts with labour intensive agriculture such as Mulanje (tea), Phalombe (tobacco) and porous border regions such as Mangochi. While interviews with headteachers revealed that communities were well aware of the importance of education, qualitative interviews with households revealed a more intricate web of socio-economic norms which mediate educational decision-making (see earlier in the paragraph). None of the information gathered indicates the position of education within the household hierarchy of needs or its relational importance to other factors; this information is essential before drawing further conclusions.
105. **School environment challenge.** Consistent with the evaluation in FY13,<sup>124</sup> infrastructure and resource constraints undermine education outcomes. Dimly lit classrooms, overcrowding affect some classes, while classes which must take place outside are susceptible to weather disruption; all classes are affected by inadequate provision of physical teaching materials. FGD participants report CSB+ supplies are exhausted by enrolment increases throughout the term. While community commitment to the programme has been exhibited, a limited sense of ownership in some areas may explain patchiness in willingness to conduct maintenance on commodity/food storage storerooms within schools, with some in various stages of disrepair (e.g. Mulanje). In schools with poor water access, learners walking home to wash their crockery further disrupts lessons. Limited access to secondary schools in some regions reduces educational aspiration, increasing attrition. Although the SMP’s feeding activities address issues related to the “demand” of education and other activities attempt to address literacy and provide school learning materials, it is clear that supply-side structural deficits substantially mediate (negatively) the achievement of SO1.

**Box 8. Key findings and conclusions-Evaluation Question 8**

- Internal factors that adversely affect the achievement of outcomes include: untimely delivery (<65% of deliveries on-time) of the commodities and uneven geographic and temporal implementation of partner-managed complementary activities. This limits potential synergies. Activities directly achieving SOs can be prioritised and scaled up e.g. literacy promotion and capacity building in ECD.
- Internal factors that positively affect results are community participation and partnerships. Community members facilitate the local implementation of the SMP through membership of feeding committees and contributions of labour and inputs (food, bricks), mentorship for girls. Strong partnerships have been established with the MoEST and the value of public-private investments has increased.

<sup>123</sup> FGDs with parents and KIs with teachers

<sup>124</sup> WFP & FAO (2018). Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with support from United States Department of Agriculture, and the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom (2013-2015)..

- Other internal factors have positive and negative effects: early feeding time (learning vs security risks for volunteer cooks), gender and protection mechanisms (GEEW mainstreaming vs non-confidential CFMs and burdened female cooks) and capacity building (provided but deemed inadequate and gaps exist).
- External factors that negatively affect the achievement of the outcomes include early marriage and sexual initiation practices, teenage pregnancy, bullying, GBV and lack of sanitary wear and limited parental investment. School environment challenges like poor class infrastructure, lack of secondary schools, lack of teaching and learning materials and poor teacher accommodation affect the quality of education. Lack of water facilities affects health and poorly maintained SMP shelters threaten safety. School environmental factors, parental involvement and gender/cultural norms and protection challenges are key mediating factors for SO1, currently absent in the theory of change/results framework.

## 2.9. Effectiveness of the M&E processes, strengths and weaknesses

- 106. Effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).** M&E processes for the SMP are established from school level up to national level. With assistance from FMAs, Government, especially at district level, appropriately contribute to the M&E system, which is essential for sustainability.<sup>125</sup> SPRs<sup>126</sup> and KIIs established that the CO has trained district School Health and Nutrition teachers (SHN) and school meal coordinators and provides electronic tablets – equipped with Open Data Kit (ODK) to facilitate real-time monitoring data<sup>127</sup>- and transportation. However, there are several weaknesses in that need to be addressed to help enhance the effectiveness of M&E and improve utility, credibility and reliability. KIIs with FMAs show each district’s FMA is the focal point for all WFP programmes, resulting in case overload. SHN and District School Meal Coordinators (DSMCs) experience regular fuel shortages and depend on FMAs. Internal KIIs and FGDs with PTAs and SFCs revealed less than universal acceptable record keeping, in part due to skilled staff turnover, highlighting the need for regular capacity development trainings for both teachers and community members for greater consistency, reliability and utility of M&E data. During data collection, the ET found that some schools did not have learner registers which are used to monitor enrolment and attendance. WFP’s M&E staff recommended that the government consider appointing a permanent national coordinator for the M&E of SMP.
107. The M&E system is underpinned by a results framework (Annex 2) and a performance management plan (PMP, Annex 2) that describes an elaborate list of indicators monitored every six months. Interviews with M&E staff revealed that there is a general view that performance indicators are too many and there is no prioritization, a view that is shared by the ET. This makes consistent recordkeeping by schools and government a challenge and therefore affects the quality and reliability of the data e.g. data not consistently gender disaggregated as required, water and sanitation data is not readily available. The rationale for performance targets was not provided and indicators tracked in the semi-annual monitoring reports are not described in the same manner as in the PMP e.g. number of people trained in commodity management, food storage and preparation or number of government staff trained in school meals programme management are not used in the semi-annual report. The ET feels that in future, the PMP could be streamlined to either reduce the number of indicators and lessen the workload or clearly prioritize outputs and outcomes to increase the utility of the M&E data. For example, indicators that are too similar in scope and targets with others can be dropped e.g. number of social assistance beneficiaries duplicates student enrolment; staff trained in SMP management is similar to number of school administrators and officials trained or certified as a result of USDA assistance. High priority indicators could be linked to activities that usually have the largest coverage, consistent implementation and/or are essential for the fulfilment of SOs e.g. on-site meals, THR, literacy promotion, capacity building and training in teaching, health/nutrition. M&E reporting could also emphasize results which, are theoretically relevant and denote change in condition/impact e.g. literacy and acquired skills and knowledge in teaching, health and nutrition practices.
108. Monitoring processes do not track GEEW and protection indicators (see examples in section 2.3). Over the evaluation period, no gender and protection assessments were carried out which can help track GEEW indicators. There is complete reliance on quantitative metrics by the M&E system and qualitative assessments are not done to help identify underlying reasons for results. It is also not clear if the indirect beneficiary performance indicators in the PMP account for spill-over effects such as younger non-enrolled siblings of school children who also eat the daily school meals (per KIIs and FGDs at schools), actions that could understate the impact and results of the SMP. Future evaluations should include these indicators. Nor does the PMP distinguish between enrolled learners from the community and those who migrated from non-beneficiary schools, which could inflate enrolment rates, overstate impact and undermine validity and credibility. Although there is an evaluation plan that describes the data collection channels and timing of

<sup>125</sup> Internal KIIs

<sup>126</sup>SPR, 2016. SPR 2017

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

assessments, the lack of a quality assurance strategy for generating robust evidence is a missed opportunity for drawing lessons during implementation. Overall, the M&E processes need to be strengthened.

**Box 9. Key findings and conclusions-Evaluation Question 9**

- Quality, consistency and reliability of M&E data is undermined by too many indicators and disharmony between the semi-annual report and PMP. Indicators that duplicate others can be dropped e.g. number of social assistance beneficiaries. Or top priority can be given to activities with the largest coverage, or indicators that are theoretically linked to SOs and impact indicators e.g. literacy and knowledge in teaching, health and nutrition practices. GEEW and protection indicators – such as pregnancy rates, child marriage and volunteer safety – are not collected and routine monitoring data is not gender disaggregated.
- Spill-over effects – such as underage enrolment and migration to target zones - are not clearly accounted for, affecting validity and credibility of data. Future evaluations should include such indicators.
- There are no qualitative assessments. Gender and protection assessments were also not carried out during the evaluation period.
- WFP’s field level staff are overwhelmed by the monitoring of all WFP programmes in the districts including the SMP and government staff face budget shortfalls. The government has no dedicated SMP M&E staff allocation.
- Capacity at school level is hindered by the lack of materials such as learner registers and the frequent transfer of teachers responsible for data collection, which results in poor recordkeeping.
- WFP and the government have not set up a quality assurance strategy for M&E.

**Evaluation Criterion 4: Efficiency**

This section assesses the cost efficiency of the SMP and compares it with the HGSM that is also being implemented the CO. Operational efficiency is also examined through the assessment of timeliness of delivery and numbers of beneficiaries reached against planned targets. Financial and beneficiary data received from the CO are used.

**2.10. Efficiency compared to alternative School Meals models?**

109. **Cost to Transfer Ratio.** Cost-efficiency is measured by two indicators: (i) Total Cost to Transfer Ratio (TCTR) measures the total cost (including transfer) of delivering \$1USD of benefit. Cost-efficiency is lower the more the TCTR exceeds 1; (ii) The alpha ratio ( $\alpha$ ) which is the inverse of the TCTR (i.e. ratio of total transfers to total costs). As  $\alpha$  falls below one, the cost-efficiency of the programme falls. CO financial data was used to compute these ratios for the McGovern-Dole and HGSM programmes.<sup>128</sup> (Table 16)

**Table 14. Budget, benefits and cost-efficiency ratios for the transfer modalities (in USD)**

	Commodity costs/cash transfers	Direct operational costs	Support cost (DSC & ISC)	Total costs	Cost/beneficiary	Total cost-transfer ratio (TCTR)	The alpha ratio ( $\alpha$ )
<b>McGovern-Dole SMP</b>							
2017	2.849.278	4.194.366	1.873.834	8.917.478	13,97	3,13	0,32
2018*	3.868.572	5.694.846	2.544.175	12.107.593	18,97	3,13	0,32
<b>Home Grown School Meal Programme</b>							
2017	1.801.286	719.678	661.338	3.182.302	33,92	1,77	0,57
2018*	611.155	344.630	316.692	1.272.477	11,85	2,08	0,48

**Source:** ET Calculation using financial data from WFP Malawi. **Note:** 1. Direct operational costs contain the logistic and transport from outside and within country, other direct operational cost (ODOC) and Capacity Development and Augmentation. Support costs contain direct support and administrative cost and indirect support cost. 2. The information about the year 2018 is till 27 November.

110. Table 16 shows a stable TCTR for the McGovern-Dole SMP between 2017 and 2018,<sup>129</sup> while the TCTR of the HGSM programme increased over the same period. The cost of delivering USD1 under the McGovern-Dole SMP in 2018 was USD 3.13 compared to USD2.08 for the HGSM. The alpha ratios show that 32% of SMP budget was spent on transfers compared to 48% under HGSM; the remaining budget was spent on administration and delivery costs.<sup>130</sup> *The TCTR and alpha ratio show that the HGSM programme is currently more cost-efficient than the SMP.* However, in 2018, the cost-

<sup>128</sup>HGSM programme is a joint initiative of FAO, WFP, local governments, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID). The HGSM differs from the McGovern-Dole SMP in that it procures food from local traders – Farmer Organizations (FOs) - for the provision of school meals. Schools receive cash transfers from WFP. The HGSM started as a pilot in 2012 and during the second phase (2014-2018) supported 4,798 farmers and 10,350 students in 10 schools in Mangochi, Dedza, Salima and Phalombe districts.

<sup>129</sup> 2018 data does not include the month of December

<sup>130</sup>The comparison between McGovern-Dole and HGSM programmes is based on the last year in which the data were available till the end of November.

efficiency of the HGSM decreased as the cost of delivering USD1 of benefits increased by 18%. Per child in 2017, the HGSM model appears to be more expensive than the SMP (triangulated with monitoring reports).<sup>131</sup> However, while the cost per beneficiary under the SMP has risen by 36% over the last two years, the cost per beneficiary under the HGSM has fallen by 65%. Benefits for the HGSM and McGovern-Dole SMP have not been factored into the costing of the programme. The McGovern-Dole SMP contributes to human capital accumulation (see section 2.4 for education outcomes), which may translate into more productive adults and hence a more agile economy, while the HGSM provides a more nutritious meal, supports human capital accumulation, along with economic multiplier effects among local farmers. A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis is required to make a true comparison of the two programmes.

111. Financial data obtained from the CO had several limitations: (i) school-level costs, which are necessary for calculating real cost per beneficiary, are absent from the data, (ii) community contributions to local implementation are not included<sup>132</sup>, (iii) actual expenditure data for 2018 was not readily available, and financial information is comprised of estimates based on tonnages of commodities distributed. The ET strongly recommends implementation of a budgeting and bookkeeping system which separates financial expenses, including direct support costs for all programmes under the CO, and for all donor contributions, to enable more accurate cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness estimations. The CO should ensure expenditure data is routinely collected and collated to identify cost drivers and ensure data availability.
112. **The key cost drivers and attainment of outcomes.** Direct Operational Costs, including all transport costs, training, kitchen supplies, capacity development and augmentation in Government though excluding commodity costs, are the largest cost driver for the SMP 2017-2018 (Table 16). Over the evaluation period, storage, logistic and transport costs constituted 70% of direct operational costs for the SMP compared to 16% under the HGSM. Storage and handling costs alone equalled 31% of the logistic and transport costs for both SMP and HGSM. They constituted 14% and 11% of the direct operational costs for the SMP in 2017 and 2018, while for the HGSM they have remained constant to 5% in both years. The largest cost drivers under the HGSM were the combined value of commodity costs and transfers at 56.6% and 48% of total programmes costs in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Under the SMP commodity costs (for both SMP and THR) amounted to 32% of total programme costs over the two years. Funding constraints (Section 2.1) reduced the portion size from 100g to 60g, and delayed HGSM expansion. It is not clear whether funding constraints also affected other cost drivers. Teacher training and capacity building costs totalled 18% and 19% of the direct operational costs for the SMP in 2017 and 2018 respectively: however, they were much lower for the HGSM programme constituting just 2% of the direct operational costs in both years.
113. Costs reduction strategies which do not undermine outcome achievement have been identified using literature<sup>133,134</sup> and qualitative data. Transportation of small quantities to various schools is not commercially viable and sometimes few contractors expressed interest which delays shipment. To prevent further shipment delays, a consolidated WFP transport plan is in place to minimise the number of small, long distance shipments which are unattractive to hauliers. Should this practise become the norm, significant savings can be achieved in logistics cost. Costs could further be reduced by the purchase of locally produced commodities, reducing shipping costs from abroad, stimulating local markets and reducing shipment delays.<sup>135,136</sup> Local or regional sourcing may reduce commodity price, with nearby South Africa often having the lowest grain prices in Southern Africa.<sup>137</sup>
114. **Why the HGSM is more cost-efficient.** The cost-efficiency of the SMP is hindered by its geographical targeting of the most vulnerable and remote areas where roads become impassable during the rainy season. Consequently, WFP employs a fleet of 25 off-road lorries to access the most remote schools.<sup>138,139,140</sup> A sharp rise in the number of contracted hauliers (39 in 2016 to 68 in 2017) has increased costs to USD 10.7m. While a welcome injection to the local economy the associated cost increases necessarily decrease efficiency. Transport costs for the SMP are incurred during

<sup>131</sup>SPR (2017). Semi-annual monitoring reports October 2016-September 2018.

<sup>132</sup> Gelli A, Cavallero A, Minervini L, Mirabile M, Molinas L, de la Mothe MR. (2011). New Benchmarks for Costs and Cost-Efficiency of School-Based Feeding Programs in Food-Insecure Areas. Food and Nutrition Bulletin; Volume: 32 issue: 4, page(s): 324-332

<sup>133</sup>Bundy, D., Burbano, C., Gelli, A., Risley, C., & Neeser, K. (2011). On the transition to sustainability: An analysis of the costs of school feeding compared with the costs of primary education. Food and nutrition bulletin, 32(3), 201-205.

<sup>134</sup>Galloway R, Kristjansson E, Gelli A, Meir U, Espejo F, and Bundy D. (2009). School Feeding: Outcomes and Costs. Food and Nutrition Bulletin; Volume: 30 issue: 2, page(s): 171-182.

<sup>135</sup>ibid

<sup>136</sup>FAO and WFP.(2009). Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework. Technical Document.

<sup>137</sup><http://www.fao.org/giews/food-prices/regional-roundups/detail/en/c/1106113/>

<sup>138</sup>National Market Analysis to Inform the 2016/17 MVAC Food Security Response Options – July 2016.

<sup>139</sup>SPR PRRO 200287 – Year 2016

<sup>140</sup>SPR PRRO 200287 – Year 2017

bulk delivery of CSB+ while under HGSM these costs are incurred for transportation of the THR, which is less than 4% of programme costs over the evaluation period.

115. Under both the SMP and HGSM programme there are significant discrepancies between budget and actual expenditure; in 2017, SMP expenditures exceeded budget by 20% and HGSM expenditures by 40%. The most significant overruns in 2017 were capacity development and other direct operational costs (ODOC). This may be partially attributed to an above-target number of school administrators and community members trained (see Table A7.1, Annex 7). The source of the funding stopgaps was not disclosed to the ET. Most line items come in under budget in 2018. Notably, with one month of 2018 remaining, just 50% of the HGSM budget has been spent.

**Table 15. The actual expenditures versus the Budget for both McGovern-Dole and HGSM programmes.**

SMP - Budget items	McGovern-Dole Programme		Home Grown School Meal Programme	
	Actual vs Bud. for	Actual vs Bud. for	Actual vs Bud. for	Actual vs Bud. for
	2017	2018	2017	for 2018
Total Commodity (Soya buy by WFP)	0,1	-0,1	0,0	0,0
Cash and Voucher (money provided to the schools) CBT	-	-	0,6	-0,8
Total External Transport.-no Cargo Pref.	-0,3	-0,2	-	-
Storage, Logistic and transport within country (LTSH)	0,3	-0,1	-0,2	3,9
Other direct operational cost (ODOC)	0,7	-0,2	2,1	0,0
Capacity Development and Augmentation	6,4	-0,4	-1,0	-1,0
Direct support cost and administrative cost (DSC)	0,1	-0,1	-0,1	-0,1
Indirect support cost (ISC)	0,3	-0,1	0,7	-0,5
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>0,2</b>	<b>-0,2</b>	<b>0,4</b>	<b>-0,5</b>

**Source:** ET Calculation using financial data from WFP Malawi. **Note:** 1. Direct operational costs contain the logistic and transport from outside and within country, other direct operational cost (ODOC) and Capacity Development and Augmentation. Support costs contain direct support and administrative cost and indirect support cost. 2. The information about the year 2018 is till 27 November.

#### Box 10. Key findings and conclusions – Evaluation Question 10

- Multiple cost-efficiency indicators show that the HGSM programme is more cost-efficient than the McGovern-Dole programme. In 2018, the total cost of delivering one USD to the beneficiaries was USD3.13 for the McGovern-Dole compared with 2.08 USD for the HGSM programme. The alpha ratio showed that the HGSM programme delivered greater resources directly to beneficiaries.
- Per child, the HGSM was more expensive than SMP in 2017. However, while HGSM costs per child declined rapidly in 2018, they rose for the SMP. Both the HGSM and SMP have benefits which are not accounted for in costing, warranting a full cost-benefit analysis.
- The main cost driver for the McGovern-Dole programme are transport costs which constitute 70% of Direct Operational Costs, compared to 16% for the HGSM programme.
- Domestic transport costs for the SMP can be reduced by continued use of large volume pooled transportation. Sourcing commodities locally or regionally can reduce global shipping costs and commodity costs.

### 2.11. Right beneficiaries, right quantity and quality of assistance, at the right time

116. **The Realisation Rate.** Operational efficiency is measured by the realisation rate – *the ratio of actual beneficiaries receiving assistance over the number of planned beneficiaries*. There was no SMP delivery in 2016 (Table 18) because of delayed consignments from abroad (CSB+ and THR). The realisation rate for on-site meals in 2017 and 2018 is 100.1% and 145.2% respectively. This indicates all planned transfers were delivered, increasing operational efficiency. Provision of THRs began late (January 2018) and finished in May 2018 instead of March 2018 largely due to late commodity shipments and impassable roads. THRs reached 100% of planned children. Meanwhile, HGSM beneficiaries in 2017 rose by 14% and by 1.5% in 2018.

**Table 16. Planned versus Actual Number of Beneficiaries**

School Meal Programmes	Planned/ Target			Male	Actual		% of Actual vs Planned			
	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Year 2016</b>										
MC-Govern Dole Programme										
On site meal	312,362	325,111	637,473	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	

	THR*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
HGSM Programme		45,975	47,852	93,827	47,441	49,378	96,819	103%	103%	103%
<b>Year 2017</b>										
MC-Govern Dole programme										
On site meal		312,362	325,111	637,473	312,757	325,522	638,279	100.1%	100.1%	100.1%
THR**		4,019	26,893	30,912	4,019	26,893	30,912	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
HGSM Programme		51,778	53,892	105,670	52,623	54,772	107,395	101.6%	101.6%	101.6%
<b>Year 2018</b>										
MC-Govern Dole Programme										
On site meal		215,347	224,137	439,484	312,362	325,528	638,290	145.2%	145.2%	145.2%
THR		7,256	48,557	55,813	7,256	48,557	55,813	100%	100%	100%
HGSM Programme		52,623	54,772	107,395	53,418	55,599	109,017	101.5%	101.5%	101.5%

**Note:** \*) There was no McGovern-Dole funded THR programme in 2016; \*\*) This caseload was for emergency school meals and THR was provided as CSB.  
**Sources:** Malawi Semi-Annual Reports from April 2017 to September 2018.

117. **Timeliness of commodity delivery: planned versus actual tonnage.** Semi-annual reports note the first CSB+ shipment from the USA arrived in March 2017, with distribution of on-site rations following in April 2017, and delivery of THR commencing in January 2018. Actual CSB+ distribution from April-July 2017 was 55.8% of the planned 4,316.10mt. Distribution of THRs began in January 2018. In the six months from October 2017, 3,264mt of CSB+ and 938mt of maize meal (THR) were distributed; in the six months from April 2018, 2,145.77mt of CSB+ and 712.12mt of maize meal (THR).<sup>141</sup> However, no targets are reported in the data. Just 55.56% and 63.5% of commodities were distributed on-time in 2017 and 2018 respectively. These delays decrease operational efficiency. School level KIIs demonstrate a pattern of delays at the beginning of the new term. Staff at the CO attribute these delays (during KIIs) to pipeline breaks, impassable roads and logistics issues (Section 2.8).

**Box 11. Key findings and conclusions – Evaluation Question 11**

1. The realisation rate for on-site meals (ratio of the number of actual transfers over the number of the planned transfers) was low in the first year because of pipeline breaks. However, it has reached to 100.1% and 145.2% in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Realisation rate for THRs was 100% in 2018.
2. Timeliness has modestly increased to 63.5% in 2018 compared to 55.6% in 2017. Untimely delivery is most often caused by the delayed late arrival of commodities, roads rendered impassable by rain and logistics delays.

**Evaluation Criterion 5: Sustainability**

118. This section describes steps the government has taken address sustainability of the SMP. It also discusses and identifies the steps that are needed to improve sustainability.

**2.12. Steps taken to address sustainability and what is needed to improve**

119. **Government financial and personnel contributions to the SMP.** *Personnel:* Internal and government KIIs and programme documents<sup>142</sup> demonstrate strong Government staff commitment to the SMP. The SHN department within MoEST is responsible for five SMP activities: provision of school meals; capacity building at all government levels; establishment of school gardens; training in good health and nutrition practices; sensitising communities on the importance of education. Responsible MoEST staff are: The Chief Director for Basic Education and national level staff responsible for school health and nutrition ensure coherence across Districts at national level and District Education Managers, District School Meals Coordinators, District School Health and Nutrition coordinators and Coordinating Primary Education Advisors who coordinate to ensure effective implementation of the programme. District level personnel work with zone level Primary Education Advisors and head teachers, School Health and Nutrition designated teachers (SHN) to ensure that implementation from national policy to the child is a consistent, coherent and coordinated process. At school level, head teachers and SHN teachers play a significant role in the delivery and management of

<sup>141</sup> Malawi Semi-Annual Report April 2018 to September 2018

<sup>142</sup> SPR 2017; SPR 2016; Minutes of the 7th school meals programme thematic working group meeting held at Ministry of Education mini conference room, Lilongwe, 21st July, 2017. Minutes of the 9th school meals programme sub-technical working group that was held at Golden Peacock Hotel on 19th April 2018

school meals. Support from WFP has enhanced capacity of government staff at all levels in project management, commodity management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (see section 2.6).

- 120. Financial contribution:** KIIs with government officials revealed that the government currently commits about USD125,000— about 0.05% of total education budget<sup>143</sup>— towards a Home-Grown School Feeding programme (mainly anchored on school gardens) to 600 schools in 26 districts (about 11% of all public primary schools nationally<sup>144</sup>). However, this is a decrease from the USD 306,619 contribution in 2014.<sup>145</sup> Throughout the evaluation period, school meal coordinators were provided with a motorcycle and fuel to provide mobility. Internal KIIS revealed that financial support was intended as a matched fund against government contributions, however that the government contribution had not been forthcoming.
- 121. Changes in policy or regulatory framework.** A 2007 Presidential Decree supported MoEST’s roll-out of universal school meals; subsequent legislation demonstrates commitment to high standards of education and nutrition. Malawi’s National Social Support Programme (2018-2023) demonstrates national commitment to providing direct income transfers like school meals. The National School Health and Nutrition Policy (2016, developed and approved with WFP’s support) seeks to improve school feeding. During the evaluation period, government, with support from WFP, began preparing an operational plan on the school feeding strategy of the National School Health and Nutrition Policy.<sup>146</sup> Government and WFP are collaboratively developing a sustainable HGSM model.
- 122. National readiness and capacity of government to independently implement SMP.** *Government readiness.* The National Capacity Index – a measure of government’s policy design and implementation capacity – was 15 in 2016 and 2017, though below the target of more than 15. Despite the strong legislative commitment and capacity support from WFP, budgetary allocations towards the SMP are still low. All school feeding programmes in Malawi are mainly donor funded.<sup>147</sup> As stated in the CP document (200287), over 2012-2018 the government was meant to take over 15% of USDA supported schools, which did not happen due to lack of financial capacity: this reflected that *the government lacked the financial readiness to independently implement a national SMP*. At the end of Phase II, 89 schools had been transitioned from McGovern-Dole schools to HGSM by WFP in preparation for future handover to government, and in line with Stage 3 of WFP’s School Feeding Policy (2013). However, due to funding constraints, only an additional 24 McGovern-Dole schools were transitioned to HGSM by WFP over the evaluation period.<sup>148</sup> Coverage of HGSM by other actors is small. The government has committed 0.05% of total education budget to the establishment of HGSM (mainly school gardens) in 600 separate schools (11% of national total). External funding remains, and in the medium-short term will remain, pivotal for continued large-scale school meal provision in Malawi.
- 123. Readiness of parents and communities:** Document review,<sup>149</sup> FGDs with community members and KIIs with stakeholders show that since the 2010, when the McGovern-Dole SMP began, communities and government personnel have increasingly taken an integral role in the local management and delivery of school meals. Food preparation, storage and distribution training of community-based SFCs by WFP contributes to the SMP’s sustainability. Although community engagement is generally high, contextual factors such as poverty and low agricultural productivity significantly affects communities’ ability to contribute; while most communities willingly provide labour (cooking and security) and auxiliary inputs (firewood, sugar, bricks), further contribution willingness varies. FGD respondents in Chikwawa reported willingness to donate labour and construction materials. While Chikwawa and Salima respondents were willing to donate surplus harvests, those in Mulanje and Phalombe were neither willing nor able to provide due to poverty.
- 124. Steps needed to improve sustainability:** A sustainable national ownership plan was a priority for stakeholders throughout the programme, sentiments echoed by government informants. The Best Practice Study notes that a sustainable SMP should be “achievable in both cost and capacity in a Malawian economy that is meeting basic positive rights”.<sup>150</sup> While government policy implementation capacity has increased, financial commitments to school meals remain low. In the long run, the National School Meals programme should be sustainable using national financial and human resources and involvement of communities in local management and implementation.
- 125. Improving the sustainability of the SMP could take the following steps:**

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<sup>143</sup> Malawi budget statement 2017/2018. Total education budget is K166 billion (approximately USD 228250000).

<sup>144</sup> Malawi Education Statistics 2017

<sup>145</sup> Towards a Social Protection Floor in Malawi, ILO

<sup>146</sup> Semi-annual report April-September 2018

<sup>147</sup> Towards a Social Protection Floor in Malawi, ILO

<sup>148</sup> SPR 2018

<sup>149</sup> WFP & FAO (2018)..Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with support from United States Department of Agriculture, and the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom (2013-2015); SPR 2016, 2017.

<sup>150</sup>School Meals in Malawi: A Best Practice Guide, 2017. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

1. **Formalize a handover strategy that maps the transition from external to local funding:** Cognisant of the dependence of the SMP on donor funding and the adverse consequences school meal provision of funding withdrawal by donors, a pragmatic transition to local funding using best practises and guided by a formal and phased handover strategy/document is required. Stakeholders from WFP, government and supported schools, are universally concerned about the adverse consequences of any funding constraints or cessation in funding to the SMP. The continued implementation of the SMP requires donor support (e.g. USDA) for the short to medium term, and it can be done in conjunction with increasing government contributions. KIIs with USDA revealed that Burkina Faso has committed USD36million to the McGovern-Dole SMP for the 2018/2019 school year. Another example is Gambia which has contributed 14% of the resources required for the national school feeding programme since 2012, and at USD 3 million, the Gambian government's contribution is the third largest.<sup>151</sup>

**Any handover strategy should be formalized via a signed agreement that includes a comprehensive roadmap and oversight by a multi-stakeholder committee.** This was one of the key factors of a successful transition to national ownership in Cape Verde in 2007. A gradual/phased *handover to the government can be sequenced by regions* depending on existing government financial support, institutional capacity and caseload. This approach has been utilized in Gambia.<sup>152</sup> Alternatively, the *government can take over responsibilities for one term (e.g. lean season)* with the aim of eventually covering all school terms. Burkina Faso has committed to this approach (source: KIIs with USDA). KIIs with government officials and FGDs with communities established that this strategy has been discussed by WFP and the stakeholders.

2. **Finding fiscal space for the SMP.** Although, the government faces significant financial and economic constraints and it operates in a context beset with recurrent climatic shocks and emergencies, there are opportunities for increasing the fiscal allocations to school feeding. The government can adopt the following strategies for increasing fiscal space for school feeding:

- **Prioritised and ring-fenced budget line for school feeding:** Government should prioritise the budget line for school feeding in the MoEST or National Social Support Programme (NSSP) annual budget, to ensure consistent funding even when resources shrink. This practice was used in Cape Verde's successful transition experience in 2007, after a failed first effort.<sup>153</sup> Alternatively a budget line can be included in local government/district council annual budget and/or in the positively reviewed primary school grant programme which directly funds school management committees, which would not only guarantee funding but also increase accountability.<sup>154</sup>
- **Expanding the tax base and eliminating illicit flows:** Malawi has progressive taxation. However, it is one of 34 countries which lowered the income tax rate on top-bracket earners.<sup>155</sup> The government can expand the income tax base and increase fiscal space in the short run by decreasing the minimum income qualification for the top tax brackets or by scaling back the tax cut for the wealthiest. Malawi also lost 15% of GDP between 2009 and 2012 to illicit financial capital flows, among the top 20 countries in the developing world (Ortiz, 2015). Gains in fiscal space can be obtained from eliminating tax evasion, corruption, and trade mispricing (prices of declared goods misaligned with international benchmark prices).
- **Linking specific taxes with school feeding:** Any new taxes proposed by the government can be linked to school feeding. An example is Ghana which has a levy (2.5% of value added tax, VAT) for social health insurance (Ortiz, 2015). Potential options for Malawi include alcohol and tobacco levies.
- **Macroeconomic prospects.** With Malawi's GDP projected to rise between 5% and 6% in FY2018/19 and FY2019/20 respectively,<sup>156</sup> there is an opportunity for increasing government funding to school feeding. The country benefits from reduced inflation rates generated by a stable exchange rate, steady food prices and prudent monetary policies.<sup>157</sup> A recent study of low- and middle-income countries with national SMPs suggests that while per child investment in overall education rises with GDP, school feeding investment stays constant, becoming a smaller proportion of total education investment.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>WFP Gambia. Establishing the Foundation for a Nationally-owned Sustainable School Feeding Programme (2012-2017),200327 Development Project.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid

<sup>153</sup>Mirabile, M. (2012). Cape Verde: The transition to a national school feeding programme. Case study commissioned by the Government of Cape Verde, United Nations Joint Programme in Cape Verde and World Food Programme.

<sup>154</sup>Hall, N and M. Mambo. (2015). Financing Education in Malawi. Opportunities for Action. Country Case Study for the Oslo Summit on Education for Development. 6 -7 July 2015.

<sup>155</sup>Ortiz, I., Cummins, M., &Karunanethy, K. (2015). Fiscal space for social protection and the SDGs: Options to expand social investments in 187 countries.

<sup>156</sup>Nico Asset Managers (2018).Mid-Year Economic Report 2018: Malawi

<sup>157</sup>IMF, 2018

<sup>158</sup>Gelli, A. and Daryanani, R. (2013). Are school feeding programmes in low-income settings sustainable? Insights on the costs of school feeding compared to investments in primary education. Food and Nutrition Bulletin; Gelli, A., Cavallero, A., Minervini, L., Mirabile, M., Molinas, L. andRegnault de la Mothe, M. 2011, New benchmarks for costs and cost-efficiency for food provision in schools in food-insecure areas, Food and Nutrition Bulletin

- **Reprioritising expenditures and reducing inefficiencies in the national budget:** Development expenditures make up only 1.8% of the MoEST’s budget, while wages consume 74%.<sup>159</sup> Inefficiencies can be minimized by verifying that the wage bill and its related outlays does not have ghost workers and adhering to expected procedures for payments and allowances and procurements as laid down by central government.<sup>160</sup> Education services (e.g. school ownership and management) can be outsourced to grant aided NGOs and not for profit organizations that are regularly audited. Instead of recruiting new teachers en-masse, the Government could better target disadvantaged districts and reallocate teachers between and within schools to address over-burdened lower grades and better-faring higher grades. Since there is significant variation in the pupil teacher ratio across schools in Malawi (70:1 in 33% of schools and less than 50:1 in 40% of all schools), MoEST could selectively deploy trained teachers to schools that need them to increase efficiency in teacher allocation.<sup>161</sup> This would free up space for provision of school meals including complementary activities *such as the* construction of primary classrooms, latrines and water points to address the high enrolments associated with school feeding.
3. **Develop a contextually relevant national school meal programme:** Interviews with government officials, CO staff, USDA and document review<sup>162</sup> revealed that the HGSM is seen as the eventual lynchpin for national school meals model as it can promote community participation and boost local economies. KIIs revealed that the USDA,<sup>163</sup> is concerned that the McGovern-Dole SMP only provides CSB+ which may limit the success of a sustainable handover. USDA is generally supportive of HGSM, especially the provision of diverse and nutritious foods in school meals. Still, the operational plan for School Meals, that is currently being developed, should account for the diverse agro-climatic characteristics and productivity of districts.<sup>164</sup> Not all regions will be able to sustain HGSM, therefore evidence-based risk analysis for each district is imperative. As such, a national school meals programme will likely include a centralized model, HGSM (locally grown food), HGSM (locally procured food). In Salima district, all three models are currently provided. The centralized (McGovern-Dole) and WFP’s HGSM programmes (procurement from farmers organizations) are in 54 schools. The government’s HGSM programme is operational in 14 schools which are given inputs (seed and fertilizer) for the cultivation of maize and soya (by schools) to produce CSB porridge for the lean season (December –March). A contextually relevant national SMP should foster greater coherence with agricultural policies, resilience programmes and climate-smart agricultural practices (e.g. conservation agriculture and drought resistant varieties). Robust partnerships with actors promoting irrigation, and climate smart agriculture would be helpful. Linkages can be established in both HGSM models and centralized models (school garden activity). Training and support of communities and schools in climate smart agriculture in areas with potential, could strengthen community contributions of food.
  4. **Strengthen sense of ownership among communities:** KIIs with government staff in Mulanje district established that communities view the programme as belonging to WFP. This view was also reported in Salima where respondents noted that while the school could provide resources, the government had a duty to do so. A government official in Phalombe also noted a poor sense of community ownership of both the SMP and HGSM in his District. This inhibits local provision of auxiliary items or minor repairs. Sensitisation and communication on the SMP may increase a sense of ownership and increase local provision of harvest surpluses and supplementary items.
  5. **Establish private sector partnerships:** Private sector companies can also finance school feeding operations. For example, in Cape Verde, schools partner with local hotels which contribute funding for cooking facilities.<sup>165</sup> The government could court private companies to join public-private partnerships that supply textbooks and learning materials. Private companies can include local businesses. By providing these private enterprises with new local markets, schools would purchase the books at competitive prices and help relieve the school material deficit.<sup>166</sup>

**Box 12. Key findings and conclusions – Evaluation Question 12**

<sup>159</sup> UNICEF, 2017

<sup>160</sup> Ibid on footnote 141.

<sup>161</sup> World Bank, 2015. Malawi Economic Monitor. Adjusting in Turbulent Times. October 2015. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/427721468190759173/pdf/100316-ESW-Economic-updates-and-modelling-P153806-Box3932288-PUBLIC-Malawi-Economic-Monitor-2-final-published-October-2015.pdf>

<sup>162</sup> WFP & FAO(2018). SMP Proposal submitted to USDA by WFP Malawi. Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with support from United States Department of Agriculture, and the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom (2013-2015). ,.

<sup>163</sup> KII with International Program Specialist, Andi Thomas

<sup>164</sup> Best practice study on school meals in Malawi. 2016.

<sup>165</sup> Drake, Lesley; Woolnough, Alice; Burbano, Carmen; Bundy, Donald. (2016). Global School Feeding Sourcebook: Lessons from 14 Countries. London: Imperial College Press.

<sup>166</sup> World Bank, 2016

- At a legislative level, the Government of Malawi and MoEST have demonstrated the political will for establishing a universal school meal programme. Government has dedicated human resources for the SMP and capacity support has been received from WFP.
- Financially, the government’s readiness for a nationally-supported programme is low. Donor funded SMP remains vital for the large-scale provision of school meals in Malawi in the short-medium term. Sudden cessation of donor funds would have adverse effects on coverage. Community engagement is generally high though dependent on local conditions.
- Steps for improving sustainability include: the formalization of a comprehensive gradual/phased handover strategy with a comprehensive roadmap for a transition from external to local funding; finding fiscal space for the SMP (taxation, ring-fenced budget line and reducing inefficiencies) and developing a contextually relevant national SMP that accounts for diverse agricultural potential and establishes linkages with irrigation development and climate-smart agricultural practices. In addition, communities’ sense of ownership should be strengthened via sensitization. Public private partnerships can provide resources to the SMP.

### 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

126. Based on the findings presented in the previous section, an overall assessment that responds to the evaluation criteria and questions is provided below. The assessment is mainly structured according to the evaluation criteria (as shown in the evaluation matrix in Annex 3). Nine recommendations are presented to MoEST and WFP.

#### 3.1. Overall Assessment/Conclusions

127. Table 19 summarises how the ET ranks each component in terms of the DAC evaluation criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact and Sustainability.

**Table 17. Overall assessment of the SMP against the evaluation criteria**

Relevance/Appropriateness	Impact	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability
High	Medium to High	Medium	Low	Low

128. **Relevance criteria (Evaluation Questions 1-3).** Both components of the SMP programme are **relevant** to chronically poor and vulnerable beneficiaries in food insecure districts. Consumption of breakfast before school is not common in this context. Among non-beneficiary households, 77% reported not providing daily breakfast to children. Beneficiaries report that THRs benefit households, increases school participation among girls and orphaned boys and reduces transactional sex by girls and other negative coping mechanism. The cash value of the THRs has benefited from falling inflation. On-site meals do not discriminate against children from marginalized groups. The programme is **well aligned** with the policies and priorities of the government, WFP UN, USDA and other actors providing school meals. **Appropriateness** is at times undermined by complaints of the bitter taste of on-site meals, though this does not diminish consumption. Although, the early feeding time minimizes disruption to learning, it has reportedly increased the security risks of (often female) volunteer cooks travelling in pre-dawn hours and potentially raises the risk of afternoon hunger among vulnerable older children with long school days and for whom the SMP is often their only meal. **Gender.** GEEW activities have been mainstreamed and THRs are gender sensitive by design. However, there is no guiding gender and protection strategy or action plan. GEEW indicators are not included in routine monitoring processes and regular gender and protection assessments are lacking. Meal preparation work is dominated by women and has increased the labour burden for women, entrenching gender roles further; communities should be sensitised on the importance of men and women sharing responsibilities. Beneficiaries mainly use non-confidential CFMs (face to face) to air grievances as awareness and use of toll-free hotlines and suggestion boxes is low. Communities should be sensitised on confidential platforms to increase their use and ensure all voices are heard.

129. **Impact Criteria (Evaluation Questions 4 and 5).** Impact is moderate to high for different outcomes. The magnitude of impact varies between indicators. The modest impacts on MAD (SO2) are insignificant overall but increases in MAD in male-headed households were significant, though MAD rates decreased in female-headed households. The *SMP contributed to significant reductions in short-term hunger (SO1) and improvements in dietary diversity* – both among learners and their household (SO2). Gains in dietary diversity were mostly observed in male-headed households. These results might be due to pre-existing socio-economic differences between male- and female-headed households (see Tables C6.1.1, C.6.1.2 and C.6.1.3 in Appendix 6). Modest impact is observed on literacy (SO1). There are minimal impacts on the literacy of children in standard 2. Limited teaching resources, ill-equipped teachers, poor quality and crowded

classrooms, high student to teacher ratios, delayed and patchy implementation of complementary literacy activities dilute the literacy impacts. No significant impacts were detected on use of improved teaching methods promoted during training delivered through literacy activities, which was described in qualitative data as inadequate in length and depth. However, significant improvements, particularly among girls in Standard 4, were observed in initial letter sound observation, listening and reading comprehension. In targeted schools, 54% more children in standard 4 were reading fluently above the benchmark than in non-targeted schools. *Increases in school attendance are unambiguously attributed to the SMP*; relative to the non-targeted schools, absenteeism declined by 5 percentage points (about 116%), most notably among boys, which opposes previous findings. The evidence also suggests that the dropout rate decreased. Qualitative interviews highlighted the psychosocial impact of increased school attendance on orphans and children with disabilities, by virtue of removing the child from an abusive home environment.

130. Spill-over effects were observed in learner households; households with children receiving the SMP had lower hunger rates, better coping strategies, and consumed more meals than non-beneficiary households. Despite the THR being delivered in the first three months of the year, residual impacts were observed during the October survey, perhaps indicating they eat well after long after the maize has been consumed. Unintended impacts include increase under-age enrolment, particularly in lower years, which affects learning capability. Qualitative data indicates that learners migrate to targeted schools. Quantitative data shows no increase in enrolment, and while the student to teacher ratio has decreased over the evaluation period, it remains high. No evidence of meal substitution was observed, and learners receiving on-site rations were more likely than non-targeted students to eat both lunch and dinner. Collecting firewood is increasing deforestation in communities, a phenomenon which should be monitored. Overall, there are clear gender disparities in impacts. The evaluation finds that the SMP contributes to unequal gendered division of volunteer labour as women are burdened by laborious and time-consuming school meal preparation tasks. The burden of meal preparation consumes 33% of total working time of female cooks engaged in paid work – likely depressing earnings. Other gendered impacts show better achievement of MAD in male-headed households compared to female-headed counterparts and stronger reductions in absenteeism among boys than girls. These disparities are likely due to mediating factors and pre-existing gender inequalities that the SMP could not overcome or meaningfully address. Potential mediating factors adversely affecting girls in school attendance include cultural factors such as early marriage, cultural sexual initiation and GBV such as bullying, violence or intimidating behaviour exhibited towards girls in schools. Gender disparities in MAD likely emanate from pre-existing/underlying gendered socio-economic differences in the communities rather than from the. Survey data shows that female household heads are generally older, poorer and less likely to be educated or employed than male household heads.
131. **Effectiveness Criteria (Evaluation Questions 6-9).** Overall, effectiveness is medium/average. Achievement of outcomes and outputs for SO1 and SO2 is varied. Targets for SO2 indicators in health, hygiene, nutrition, food management training and MAD have mostly been achieved. For SO1, beneficiaries were reached but pipeline breaks affected the provision of the requisite amount of school meals and THRs. Targets for school attendance, literacy outcomes, training of administrators and community members (commodity management) have been met but fell short in literacy promotion, school construction, bursary provision and school garden activities. Targets for household hunger are largely unmet although positive causal impacts are observed. Foundational results on partnership, value of public-private investments and support to local organisation support were achieved. Cross-cutting results in gender and protection are positive in school enrolment and literacy rates, increased sole decision making by women over THRs and female management of SFCs. However, gender disparities in MAD, school retention, burden of SMP preparation and safety travelling to SMP sites undermine effectiveness. Poor awareness and uptake of anonymous CFMs prevents sensitive complaints. Internally, community participation and partnerships increase effectiveness. However, untimely commodity delivery (<65% on-time) and uneven implementation of partner-managed complementary activities undermines effectiveness. Activities directly achieving SOs should be prioritized and scaled up e.g. literacy promotion and capacity building in ECDs.
132. **Other internal factors have mixed effects:** early feeding time increases learning time but introduces security risks for cooks; gender and protection has been mainstreamed, though non-confidential CFMs remain dominant; capacity building has been provided though it has been deemed inadequate and patchy. Funding constraints prevented the provision of the planned 100g meal size. External factors such as early marriage, sexual initiation rituals, bullying, GBV, poor access to sanitary products decrease school participation and the lack of secondary schools, poor quality of school infrastructure and teaching materials diminish the quality of education. To improve M&E, gender disaggregation should be consistent. Moreover, indicators should be harmonised between semi-annual reports and PMP to prevent duplication and to ensure priority is given to indicators theoretically linked to SOs or impact indicators. Absent from monitoring processes are GEEW and protection indicators (such as child marriage, volunteer safety and bullying/GBV in

schools), underage enrolment and migration to target areas. Monitoring capacities within schools and community structures should be strengthened and learner registers provided. District level officials require adequate resources to lessen the burden on WFP field monitors.

133. **Efficiency Criteria (Evaluation Questions 10 and 11).** Overall, cost-efficiency is low. The HGSM programme is more cost-efficient than the SMP. In 2018, the total cost for delivering USD1.00 to beneficiaries was USD2.08 for the HGSM as compared to the USD3.13 for the McGovern-Dole SMP. Under the SMP more financial resources are spent on administrative and distribution costs rather than delivered directly to the beneficiaries. Transportation costs are the largest cost driver for the SMP. Although, planned targets of beneficiaries were exceeded in 2017 and 2018, operational efficiency was diminished by untimely delivery of commodities due to the rainy season and an initial pipeline break. Transport costs can be contained or reduced by exploiting economies of scale from consolidated commodity transportation. Purchasing commodities locally or regionally can reduce shipping costs and reduce commodity costs.
134. **Sustainability criteria (Evaluation Question 12).** Sustainability is low. Despite evident political will, extensive policy commitment to school feeding, and high community engagement, financial readiness is low and donor funding remains vital for large scale provision of school meals in the short to medium term. In the short term, withdrawal of donor funding would predictably have severe consequences. Steps for improving sustainability include the formalization of a gradual/phased handover strategy with a comprehensive roadmap for transition from external to local funding. Ring-fencing a portion of the MoEST, NSPP or local council/ school budgets for school meals, along with meeting and increasing current funding commitments is a welcome step for increasing national ownership of the SMP. Government can also increase fiscal space for the SMP through taxation and the reduction of inefficiencies. Government, with WFP’s support should develop a contextually relevant and climate-smart national SMP that accounts for diverse agricultural potential and established linkages with irrigation development, resilience programmes and climate-smart agriculture. Public private partnerships can provide resources to the SMP. Communities’ sense of ownership should be strengthened to ensure local sustainability.

### 3.2. Lessons Learned and Good Practices

135. **Best practices:** Community participation is strong as communities not only take responsibility for local delivery but also provide contributions of labour, materials and food items. Existing community participation lays the foundation for strong community ownership.
136. **Lessons learned:** Community participation is high and has created conditions for local sustainability. School meals and their economic incentives increased retention. However, impact on literacy in standard 2 learners is minimal. This can be attributed to internal factors such as the untimely and uneven implementation of school meals and literacy promotion. But more importantly, the fulfilment of SO1 is influenced by external factors influencing the quality of education such as student/teacher ratio, lack of ECD centres, teacher experience and school infrastructure. Increased government support and strong partnerships are required to fully address these factors. Cultural norms such as early marriage and cultural sexual initiation also compromise results. These mediating factors should be mentioned in a theory of change/results framework to help contextualize and inform decision making.

### 3.3. Recommendations

137. Based on the findings and conclusions of this evaluation, the recommendations of the ET are outlined in Table 20 with target group, priority and type clearly identified.
138. **Contextual factors and limitations.** Contextual factors and limitations may hinder the implementation of the recommendations. Funding constraints may hinder the implementation of R1 (enhancing quality of education) and R9 (scaling up duration of key activities like literacy promotion). Some recommendations aid the implementation of others: suggested gender and protection measures (R7) address the gendered consequences of early feeding time (R5) and M&E gaps (R8). Factors such as droughts and poor road infrastructure are threats to the implementations of R4/5 (sustainability), R9 (scaling up duration of activities) and R10 (efficiency).

**Table 18. Recommendations**

Recommendation and (type), responsible party and timing	Specifications	Rationale
<i>Strategic recommendations</i>		

<p><b>R1.</b> Enhance the quality of education by improving access to Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD), school infrastructure and allocation of teachers to lower grades.</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST with support from WFP (SMP coverage in ECDs, classrooms). <b>Timing:</b> High priority- over next 12 months (24 months for infrastructure)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale up coverage of SMP in ECDs to prevent underage enrolment. Government should generally increase the number of ECD and promote community establishment of ECDs for greater access.</li> <li>• Government should continue to allocate more teachers with better experience to congested schools to maintain the decline in student/teacher ratio, especially in the lower grades.</li> <li>• Build classrooms in supported schools through government funds, strategic partnerships with donors and agencies and enlisting the support and contribution of communities</li> </ul>	<p>Sections 2.4, 2.5, 2.8, highlight how supply side factors like poor school infrastructure, student/teacher ratios and lack of ECDs negatively influence the achievement of SO1.</p>
<p><b>R2.</b> Consult with teachers and review the duration, timing and quantity of in-service/continuous teacher training sessions in the literacy promotion activity of the SMP.</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST and WFP. <b>Timing:</b> High priority - over the next 6 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult widely with teachers to obtain their input on the duration, quantity and content of the in-service teacher training</li> <li>• Pilot an initially agreed approach for teacher training and evaluate its outcomes.</li> <li>• Distribute the teaching and learning materials on time</li> <li>• Scale up coverage of the literacy promotion activity to all districts</li> </ul>	<p>Sections 2.4, 2.5 and 2.8 discuss the shortcomings of teacher training and limited distribution of learning materials in the literacy promotion activity and minimal impact on teaching skills</p>
<p><b>R3.</b> Improve sustainability by formalizing a handover strategy, strengthening community ownership and developing a contextually relevant and climate smart national SMP</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST, with technical support from WFP. <b>Timing:</b> High priority - over the next 12months. (24 months for national SMP).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalize a gradual, sequenced, handover strategy via a signed agreement that includes a comprehensive roadmap and plan for transitioning from external to local funding. Sequencing can be done by regions or school terms e.g. start with term overlapping with the lean season</li> <li>• Sensitise communities on their roles and responsibilities to strengthen their sense of ownership.</li> <li>• Develop agriculturally and climate sensitive, contextually relevant national SMP that is implemented via centralized and decentralized models that has linkages with actors and initiatives in irrigation development, resilience and climate smart agriculture</li> </ul> <p><i>See Paragraph 121 in main report for further details on recommendations</i></p>	<p>Section 2.12 finds that despite the strong political will and human resource commitment by government, sustainability is low and recommends a formal handover strategy and other steps to ensure transition to national ownership.</p>
<p><b>R4</b> Improve financial readiness and sustainability by prioritising school feeding in fiscal planning, increasing finding fiscal space for the SMP and establishing public-private partnerships.</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST, with technical support from WFP. <b>Timing:</b> High priority - over the next 24 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government should ring-fence a school feeding line item in the MoEST or National Social Security Programme (NSSP) annual budget. Alternatively, a budget line can be included in the district council budget or primary school grant programme. This would increase accountability and guarantee funding – necessary for national ownership.</li> <li>• Increase fiscal space for the SMP in line with increasing GDP. Options include reducing inefficiency in expenditures, expanding the tax base by widening the higher tax brackets or scaling back tax cuts for the wealthiest, or raising “vice/sin taxes”.</li> <li>• Establishing public-private partnerships that provide funding towards school feeding operations and facilitate affordable access to school materials. Local businesses can be engaged.</li> </ul> <p><i>See Paragraph 121 in main report for further details on recommendations</i></p>	<p>Section 2.12 finds financial readiness is low and recommends steps for increasing the fiscal space for the SMP and resource mobilization via partnerships with private actors.</p>
<p><b>R5.</b> Monitor and address the unintended consequences of the early feeding time</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> MoEST and WFP. Inputs from Mary’s Meals and other school meal providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage communities to provide enhanced security for volunteers travelling to school in the dark to prepare the</li> </ul>	<p>Sections 2.3, 2.7 and 2.8 discuss the unintended negative consequences of early feeding on female cooks and older primary school children.</p>

<p><b>Timing:</b> Medium priority - over the next 12 months.</p>	<p>meal through provision of lights, a watchman or forming commuting groups.<sup>167</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitise communities on the importance of gender equality in meal preparation.</li> <li>• Continue efforts to mobilize resources for provision of the planned 100g ration size in order to counter the risk of afternoon hunger among older school children.</li> <li>• Commission a study into the effects of the new meal time on a broad spectrum of unintended results.</li> </ul>	
<b>Operational recommendations</b>		
<p><b>R6.</b> Scale up the duration and coverage of partner-managed complementary activities and improve their timing to maximise synergies, increase efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> WFP. <b>Timing:</b> High priority - over the next 12 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale up the geographical coverage and duration of the literacy promotion activity and capacity building in ECDs to accelerate the achievement of SO1</li> <li>• Prevent late implementation by consolidating the commencement and duration of partner-managed complementary activities with that of school meals to increase efficiency e.g. literacy promotion, capacity building for ECD centres and provision of bursaries.</li> <li>• Strengthen ties and maximize synergies between geographically overlapping activities e.g. AECDM and CRECCOM (Creative Centre for Community Social Mobilization) activities.</li> <li>• The launch or implementation of complementary activities that require community mobilization or sensitization should avoid rainy seasons when communities are too busy farming.</li> </ul>	<p>Sections 2.6 and 2.8 find that there is uneven implementation and coverage of partner-managed complementary activities.</p>
<p><b>R7.</b> Improve efficiency through the timely delivery of commodities and reduction of transportation costs</p> <p><b>Responsible party:</b> WFP. <b>Timing:</b> Medium priority - over the next 12 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the practise of consolidated haulage and delivery of all the CO's commodities to benefit from economies of scale and improve timeliness.</li> <li>• Consider local or regional procurement of commodities, with an initial focus on maize meal (THR)</li> <li>• Continue to prioritize stocks for remote schools with inaccessible roads and deliver them in advance</li> <li>• Conduct regular monitoring and inspection of expenditures to keep track of changes in cost drivers.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>R8.</b> Strengthen gender mainstreaming, analysis and protection mechanisms by formulating a strategy/action plan, addressing gendered cultural norms, GBV and improving feedback mechanisms.</p> <p><b>Responsible parties:</b> WFP and MoEST (with assistance from MoG). <b>Timing:</b> Medium priority - over the next 6 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulate a specific gender and protection strategy or action plan that defines the scope, purpose and goals of mainstreamed activities.</li> <li>• Pro-actively address the incidence of GBV in schools. For instance, the Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE) can be scaled up to cover all supported schools in the targeted districts.</li> <li>• Address cultural norms such as early marriage and cultural sexual initiation through community sensitisation</li> <li>• Monitor and address gender balance in meal preparation work, sensitize communities on the importance gender equality and increase incentives e.g. training and certification in cooking.</li> <li>• Scale up access to confidential platforms for reporting complaints and grievances and sensitise communities to ensure that all voices are heard. Examples are toll free hotlines and suggestion boxes.</li> <li>• Improve gender analysis by ensuring monitoring data is gender disaggregated as required, including GEEW and protection indicators such child marriage, volunteer</li> </ul>	<p>Sections 2.3, 2.7 and 2.8 report on some of the shortcomings in gender and protection that can be addressed.</p>

<sup>167</sup> Though it did not come up during the data collection, one suggestion by WFP Malawi CO is to provide training for school cooks on options to reduce cooking time. This could be a lasting solution

	<p>safety, female leadership of SFCs and. GEEW indicators can be guided by a parallel gender action plan and monitored via regular gender and protection assessments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annex 8 has detailed recommendations for next steps.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>R9.</b> Strengthen M&amp;E by streamlining indicators, incorporating gender and protection and building capacities at local level.</p> <p><b>Responsible parties:</b> MoEST and WFP  <b>Timing:</b> Medium priority - over the next 12 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lessen the burden of data collection on M&amp;E staff and local level actors by streamlining indicators. Indicators that duplicate others can be dropped e.g. number of social assistance beneficiaries. Indicators for activities with the largest coverage, or those theoretically linked to SOs and impact indicators can be given top priority e.g. literacy and knowledge in teaching, health and nutrition practices.</li> <li>Performance indicators in the PMP and semi-annual report need to be harmonized.</li> <li>Consistently collect gender-disaggregated data in routine monitoring. Monitor gender and protection indicators through regular gender /protection and qualitative assessments.</li> <li>Future evaluations should account for spill-over effects that affect effect size, validity and credibility e.g. younger siblings of learners who also come to eat at schools, migration of learners from non-beneficiary schools.</li> <li>Provide learner registers and build capacities of schools and community structures to improve record keeping. Engage Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and school management committees to support M&amp;E and prevent gaps created by teacher transfers.</li> <li>Government should allocate more fuel to district level officials to enable M&amp;E and lessen the burden on WFP field monitors. It should also appoint a permanent national M&amp;E coordinator for SMP.</li> <li>Develop a quality assurance mechanism for the M&amp;E system</li> </ul>	<p>Section 2.6, 2.9, 2.8 and 2.3 discuss various weaknesses in M&amp;E indicators, analysis and capacities.</p>

**Annexes (Volume 2)**