



Evaluation of National School Feeding Programme in Eswatini 2010- 2018

SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT



1. Introduction

The Eswatini National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) decentralized evaluation was jointly commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and World Food Programme (WFP) Eswatini Country Office (CO). It provides findings of the achievements of the programme, gaps and lessons to inform future design and implementation, covering the period from January 2010 to December 2018.

The evaluation was undertaken in 2019, at the time when the Government of Eswatini has issued a revised Education and Training sector Policy (2018) that has a strong emphasis on school feeding. This policy seeks to introduce school feeding in all public primary and secondary schools in Eswatini including the provision of breakfast and/or at least one other meal in schools where this is not already in place and with close attention being given to children with special dietary needs.



Who carried out the Evaluation?



The evaluation was conducted by a team of independent consultants comprising: -

- Dr Sithabiso Gandure, Team Leader,
- Dr Thabo Sacolo, Team Member and
- Dr Sabina Silaula, Team Member.

It was jointly managed by MOEST and WFP

Why the Evaluation?

The evaluation sought to find out how well the national school feeding programme is being implemented by the Government? How can WFP support to make it better as a national social protection programme?

The evaluation complied with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact (contribution) and sustainability.

2. How evidence was gathered

Used the mixed methods approach which included document review, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion at various levels. A representative sample of 147 out of total of 854 public primary and secondary schools was selected.

STEP 1



Identification and gathering all relevant documents

STEP 2



Qualitative and Quantitative data collection through FGDs, Key informant interviews, observations, data extraction

STEP 3



Thematic and descriptive analysis and data synthesis

Quality Assurance

The evaluation covered all four administrative regions of Eswatini. Multi-stage sampling was used. To select schools to be visited, the evaluation stratified Eswatini by region, constituency, and by rural or urban area within each constituency where applicable. Although simple random sampling was done at a regional level, all constituencies within each region and that both rural and urban areas were represented in the sample. Within the sampled schools, stakeholders (i.e. pupils and parents) were categorised by gender when conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) where appropriate.

3. Key Findings

3.1 Relevance

- The NSFP is fully aligned and coherent with the country's policies that specifically address the needs of boys and girls and which support provision of nutritious and balanced meals to all children in Eswatini
- Provision of nutrition education through the school curricula is fully relevant to the needs of boys and girls.
- Composition of the school meals is less diversified

and therefore not fully aligned to nutritional needs of boys and girls.

The ambitious design around gardens that assumed everyone's involvement in their implementation is not holding true. Other factors such as the limited understanding of the role of school gardens in the programme, shortages of water, lack of inputs and labour constraints surrounding their implementation suggest that more is still required to make them fully functional and relevant to the needs of children.

Key Findings (Continued)

3.1 Relevance (continued)

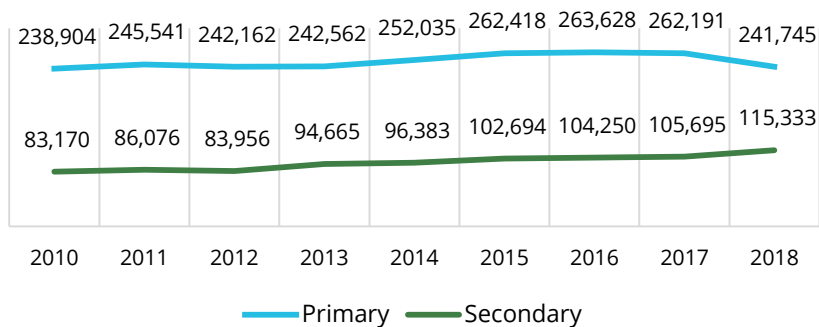
- There is evidence of gender considerations in the programme although these were not explicitly incorporated in the design nor emphasised in the key school feeding frameworks, the Inqaba Manual and the National Framework for Food Security in Schools (NFFSS).

3.2 Effectiveness

- Overall, the NSFP has partially achieved its primary objective of providing each learner with a recommended nutritious food ration each day.
- The attainment of outputs related to nutrition education were fully achieved, evidenced by high numbers of students, teachers and school committees knowledgeable on nutrition issues.
- There are serious shortfalls in quantities of food commodities procured and received by schools as well as the ration size per child.
- The meals are not sufficiently diversified and fall short of addressing the nutritional requirements of all boys and girls of different age groups. Although school gardens provide dietary diversity to food, the amount of produce contributed to the school meals is insignificant.
- The effectiveness of the supply chain is mixed. There are gaps in terms of transportation and distribution which affected timeliness of delivery of food commodities to schools and caused most schools to collect their food.
- There are serious gaps associated with the results framework in terms of the clarity and appropriateness of some performance indicators to measure programme progress and success.
- The programme has not been able to systematically and consistently track performance based on the results framework. The performance indicators also lack baselines and targets to allow assessment of progress over the evaluation period

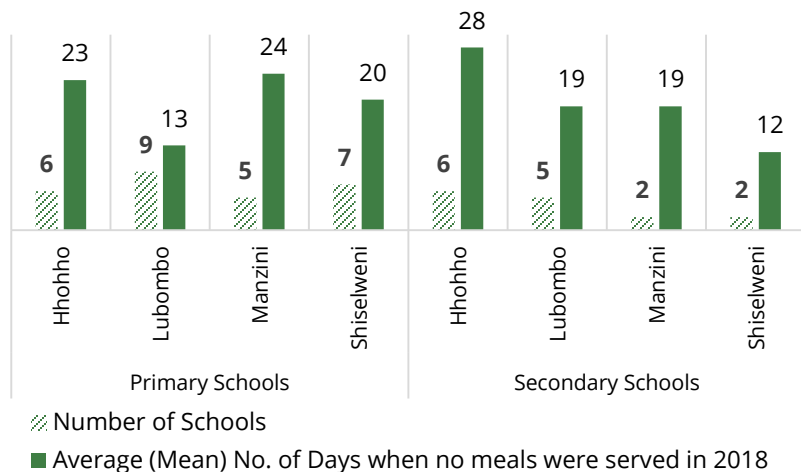
- Data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) shows a relatively stable primary enrolment and upward trend in secondary school enrolment over the evaluation period for both boys and girls. Secondary school beneficiaries steadily increased during the same period, but primary school beneficiaries declined by 8% in 2018 compared to 2017.

Steady increase in number of School Feeding Beneficiaries (2010-2018)



- Over the 8-year period, the programme was not able to procure enough quantities to cover the food requirements of all school children due to funding constraints

Number of days when meals were not served in 2018



3.3 Efficiency

- It is estimated that, it costed Eswatini E269.54 (US\$48.48) in 2018 to feed each child compared to Lesotho (US\$43.91 per child) and Namibia (US\$23.5 per child). Based on the performance of these similar school feeding programmes within the Southern African region, Eswatini's NSFP is the most expensive.
- At E145.21 (US\$26.12) per child per meal annually, commodity costs represent the largest direct cost to government, equivalent to 49 percent of total cost

Eswatini ration has maize grain or rice (150g/child/day), pulses (beans at 40g/child/day), vegetable (sunflower) oil (7.5g/child/day), and peanut butter (no ration size provided). Lesotho has caterers model menu of 150g starch/child/day, 150g/child/day pulses, milk, vegetables; **WFP model has breakfast ration** of 30g maize meal porridge/child/day, 10g sugar and lunch of 120g maize meal/child/day, 30g pulses/child/day, 10g vegetable oil/child/day and 3g iodised salt/child/day and the National Management Agent (NMA) model offers the daily WFP breakfast alongside the caterer's model.

3. Key Findings (continued)

3.3 Efficiency (Continued)

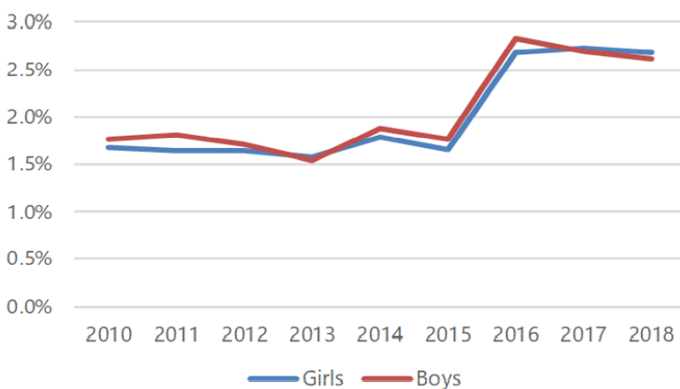
- If the recommended ration size (as per Inqaba manual and NFFSS) was to be provided, the cost per child would rise to E303 (US\$55). Against the NSFP budgetary constraints, it may be necessary to consider targeting the most vulnerable children with the right quantities and ration per child rather than the current universal model of school feeding. In addition, since most of the commodities are sourced from outside the country, in the long run there are possible efficiency gains from building local capacity to supply commodities.

3.4 Impact contribution

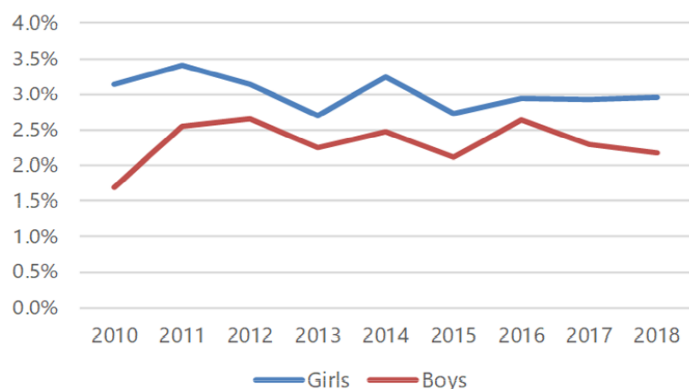
- The quantitative and qualitative data generated suggest that school feeding has contributed positively to the children's education outcomes and general livelihoods.
- The primary school dropout rates displayed a slightly downward trend from 2010 to 2015 and then a sharp increase was observed from 2016 to 2018, with dropouts for boys slightly higher than that for girls.
- In secondary schools, dropout rates have fluctuated over the 8-year period and generally displayed a downward trend for both genders.
- Unlike at primary school levels, dropouts for girls have been consistently higher than that for boys.

Several reasons put forward for dropping out at all school levels include transfers, absconding, sickness, pregnancy, death and other family reasons such as poverty. The qualitative data generated from key informants suggests that school feeding plays an important role in reducing dropouts amongst school children. However, the evaluation team found no conclusive evidence to that effect due to other factors causing dropouts, such as family reasons and absconding which have also repeatedly been identified in the Annual Education Census reports. In Eswatini, the School feeding Programme demonstrated positive achievements as a safety net for children especially those from poor households, and/or households impacted by HIV and AIDS.

Primary school dropout rates



Secondary school dropout rates



- Teachers underscored the importance of school feeding in improving health, the ability of children to learn and concentrate, promoting attendance, ensuring concentration and contributing to improvements in children's performance in examinations. Most children that met the evaluation team affirmed that the school meals helped them focus and concentrate in class.

3.5 Sustainability

- The NSFP has clear institutional arrangements that define roles and responsibilities for stakeholders for managing the programme. The NFFSS and Inqaba Manual give clear guidance on integration and collaboration across different sectors and stakeholders at various levels.
- However, these strong institutional frameworks have not been adequately operationalised to enhance sustainability of the programme. School feeding activities at the regional level exhibit less integration and cohesion due to a less defined and effective coordination mechanism. The ET observed that, having a strong and committed school head is a major determinant of success and sustainability of the programme and therefore an element of good practice that needs reinforcement going forward.
- The government's decision to move ahead with

implementation of the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGFSF) model has received overwhelming support across all stakeholders consulted.

Informants strongly suggested that government's implementation of the HGFSF needs to proceed with caution. The inherent development challenges which include shortages of arable land, poor farming methods, lack of access to finance amongst others encountered by smallholder farmers particularly amongst women and the youth needed to be addressed.

Gender mainstreaming is recognised in theory to be an important part of the programme. In practice, there is an admission among stakeholders that mainstreaming gender or aligning roles and responsibilities based on gender has been a challenge.

Key Conclusions/Overall Assessment

1. Based on quantitative data and discussions with children, school committees and cooks, and when viewed as a whole, the School Feeding Programme did not fully achieve its objectives over the evaluation period.
2. Assessing each component of the programme separately reveals a mixed picture:
 - **Nutrition education** outputs were fully achieved evidenced by a high level of knowledge of nutrition issues among children, cooks and committees.
 - **School meals** underperformed due to inadequate quantities of food commodities procured and delivered in schools largely as a result of funding gaps. The ration is less diversified and its size per child is seriously inadequate and falls short of the recommended standard prescribed in the NFFSS and Inqaba Manual.
3. **School gardens** achieved the least results due to limited understanding of their role in the programme as well as challenges with water, inputs including labour constraints. There is generally a limited understanding of gardens within the food security concept amongst school staff members, school committee members and the cooks. There are serious gaps in the monitoring and evaluation of the NSFP. The programme has not been able to assess progress based on the results framework. The performance indicators lack baselines and targets to allow assessment of progress over the evaluation period.

5. Call to action: Key Recommendations

1. Develop and institutionalize Monitoring and Evaluation of the NSFP within the MOET.

Some of the actions are:

- Reviewing the results framework including theory of change, assumptions, assessing if indicators are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and are Time-bound (SMART)- this should be done in a consultative way involving diverse stakeholders.
- To strengthen the data generation of NSFP indicators (especially anthropometrics in schools, documenting and reporting on food losses), establishing baselines and setting targets including sources of verification and frequency of data collection.
- the establishment and promotion of 'joint' monitoring of activities involving different units within the MoET, other sector Ministries and partners.

3. Enhance the nutritional value of meals through greater diversity of foods.

Some actions are:

- The piloting of the HGSM model provides an opportunity for improving the nutritional value of the ration. Hence, its piloting should ensure smallholder farmers produce diverse foods including vegetables for the school meals.
- supporting schools (through capacity building) in conceptualizing gardens within the food security framework and developing nutrition/school feeding gardens that produce food for the meals.

6. Strengthen the capacity of the MoET and cooperating partners in order to effectively implement gender mainstreaming and targeted actions in the NSFP:

This should involve delivering capacity building interventions to all those involved in the implementation of the school feeding programme

2. Strengthen management and the institutional coordination of the NSFP at all levels.

It is important that the government reviews the budgeting and financing of the programme, taking into consideration the prevailing serious procurement gaps in the food commodities as well as the NSFP costs identified by this evaluation. If additional funding cannot be provided, in the short to medium term, the Government of Eswatini and partners should consider targeting children most in need.

4. Strengthen the efficiency of the NSFP by introducing measures for minimising costs and maximising potential benefits.

This hinges on exploring the potential of Home-Grown School Feeding Model in improving efficiencies in procurement through possible commodity and logistics cost savings

5. Develop and implement a capacity building strategy for the NSFP for all stakeholders involved in planning, management and implementation of the programme:

- Conduct a detailed capacity gap analysis to identify the capacity gaps of all those involved in the implementation of the programme which should form basis for developing capacity in the programme.
- In addition, develop training resources (including gender mainstreaming) and create a repository of training initiatives that will be used for delivering the training.

Reference:

The full evaluation report is available on the WFP website on the following links:

[Final Evaluation Report](#)

[Final Evaluation Report Volume II: Additional Annexes](#)

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Disclaimer: This is a presentation of the executive summary of the full evaluation report. To understand the evidence base for evaluation conclusions and recommendations, one would need to read full evaluation report.