



# DECENTRALIZED EVALUATION

## OF THE RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME IN LESOTHO



### OBJECTIVES

- 1 Assess the contributions of school feeding to other developmental objectives including social protection, nutrition, employment creation and poverty reduction;
- 2 The cost incurred by Government and communities in implementing the school feeding programme through the three different models and the main cost drivers;
- 3 The design adjustments that the Government with support from its partners including WFP needs to make to appropriately integrate school feeding into its social protection programming ;
- 4 The most appropriate approach that WFP and the Government should take to develop a transition strategy towards a fully Government funded and implemented national school feeding programme;
- 5 The most appropriate and efficient institutional arrangements for managing and implementing an efficient national school feeding programme that contributes to Government's development priorities as outlined in the National School Feeding Policy and other policy frameworks such as the Lesotho social protection strategy.

2007

2017

### LESOTHO

Lesotho is a small landlocked country and constitutional monarchy with a population of 2.2 million and classified as a lower middle-income country. Since 2012, the country has seen three consecutive coalition governments within five years, which has caused political instability, uncertainty and a challenging operating environment. This political risk has been a key determinant of economic performance in the country and gross national income per capita has fallen from US\$1,610 in 2012 to US\$1,280 in 2015, and Lesotho's Gini coefficient of 54.2 is the 7th most unequal in the world. Almost 59.7 percent of the population currently live below the World Bank poverty line of US\$1.9 per day, and its Human Development Index is ranked 160 out of 188 countries assessed in 2016. Lesotho is generally a food deficient country due to successive and increasingly frequent climatic shocks such as recurrent droughts, dry spells and floods with consequences on food security. Agriculture as the pillar of the rural economy has suffered in this regard. In the context of widespread poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, school feeding has been an important safety net in Lesotho for over 50 years. Currently the School feeding programme is implemented through three different models: Caterers model, the National Managing Agents model and the WFP. The Government is funding all the models with WFP implementing the programme on a full cost recovery basis as per the agreement with government until 2019.

### METHODOLOGY

The evaluation took place between April 2017 and June 2018. The analysis applied to all of Lesotho's primary schools and Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres between 2007 and 2017. The evaluation methodology was designed to meet the five main objectives stipulated above and the underlying evaluation criteria of Effectiveness, Impact, Efficiency, Relevance and Sustainability. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) was mainstreamed throughout. To respond to these questions, the evaluation team conducted a three-part methodology: a National Cost Assessment (NCA) that cross-referenced national, district and local level data on the costs of implementing the three delivery models; Quantitative analysis of perspectives among 660 parent households and staff (teachers, Cooks and Caterers) from 44 schools representing 15,528 children; and a Qualitative survey of national, district and local government officials, UN and NGO staff, teachers and principals, school cooks and caterers, parents, learners and community members. Thematic analysis of qualitative and secondary data was also undertaken.





# KEY FINDINGS

## 1. EFFECTIVENESS

teachers, children and parents consider school feeding to be a major reason why children attend school with rates of enrolment, attendance and transition consistently higher for girls than for boys. However, the SFP results framework had no nutrition outcomes and the programme was not integrated among interventions for the prevention of malnutrition. Furthermore, WASH remain a challenge with 95 percent of toilets in an unfit condition. Communities also benefited through direct employment as cooks and caterers although static payments led to a 40 percent decline in their relative value and risk of debt.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Recommendation 1:

Activate national governance and management arrangements and extend resource mobilisation efforts. By the end of 2018, MOET, with WFP support, should begin to strengthen the capacity of the SSRFU to function as a Secretariat (SFS) and activate the Multi-Sector Advisory Board (AB) to expand resource mobilisation, efficiency and institutional harmonisation measures as envisioned in the national school feeding policy

#### Recommendations 2:

Design and expand NMA services on a district-by-district basis reaching national coverage in 2023. To increase NMA efficiency, and beginning in the 2018-19 academic year, the SFS, with WFP and MSBD support, should introduce competitive district-level tendering and award district level contracts to registered NMAs in line with a sequential district-by-district roll-out plan.

#### Recommendation 3:

Reduce menu costs while maintaining nutrition standards. During the 2018-19 academic year, the SFS, with WFP, FNCO and MAFS support, should simplify the menu to a daily breakfast and lunch involving a combination of fortified cereals, pulses, oil and iodised salt (WFP menu) with agreed minimum levels of locally purchased seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables to ensure dietary diversity in line with local preferences.

#### Recommendation 4:

Realign the role of Cooks and Caterers and their payment arrangements. In line with the rollout of district NMAs over the period 2019-23, MOET, with WFP, NMA and MSBD support should move from a centralised to decentralised payment model overseen by schools in rural areas and the contracting of catering businesses by NMAs or the MOET to service multiple urban schools.

#### Recommendation 5

Strengthen the capacity of SFS and District Nutrition Team staff to oversee and monitor decentralised school feeding. During the 2018-19 academic year, MOET should agree plans with WFP and AB members for the capacity strengthening of SFS officers at national and district levels to ensure the future programme is given effective planning, oversight and support. Implementation of each component of the plan should commence on a district-by-district basis during 2019-20 in line with NMA roll-out.

## 2. IMPACT

following the 2012 drought; caterers in highland areas were replaced with WFP which led to an 80 percent drop in Caterers numbers. WFP menu relied on imported commodities and that led to further reductions in local purchases. Recent local purchase initiatives through NMA have, however, provided farmers with a more stable market though institutional support to use school feeding as a platform for integration in national agendas for social protection, smallholder farmer, or nutrition and health support is yet to be enhanced.

## 3. EFFICIENCY

Between the three delivery models, the WFP delivery model is the most expensive as it includes technical assistance, monitoring; training services and breakfast that are not provided under the other models. Three main cost drivers are commodity costs due to caterer reliance on local traders and inability to buy in larger quantities. Management and Admin costs represent the second highest cost driver at 28 percent capital cost at 19 percent

## 4. RELEVANCE

School feeding managed to support education outcomes and continued to operate as a universal social protection instrument. Cross-institutional coordination has been limited by an absence of joint implementation protocols for national or district staff operating across different ministries

## 5. SUSTAINABILITY

There is significant progress in ensuring the policy and budgetary preconditions of a sustainable national school feeding programme. However, strong policy alignment across ministries has yet to be translated into a systematic strategy for institutional harmonisation and oversight.