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## Eradication of Malnutrition in Early Childhood Care Education through School Feeding Programme in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper described school feeding program as a tool for eradicating malnutrition, reducing hunger in children and increasing enrollment of school age-children in various society of the world. The paper further discusses some of process of providing food for school children during school hours in order to enable them meet their nutritional requirement. Furthermore, this paper also discuss some of the challenges faced by this SEPs and make some recommendations for further studies. Some of these recommendations are: to develop targeting criteria, analyze and identify appropriate guidelines for ration composition, and to build a consensus on a policy and objective that focuses on how school feeding can effectively contribute to nutrition, education and health of school age children*

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### INTRODUCTION

Nutritional and health status are powerful influence on a child's learning and on how well a child perform in school. Children who lack certain nutrient in their diet particularly iron and iodine or who suffer from protein-energy malnutrition, hunger, parasitic infections or other diseases do not have the same potential for learning as healthy and well-nourished children. (Castaneda Tarsicio 2010). Weak health and poor nutrition among school-aged children diminish their cognitive development either through physiological changes or by reducing their ability to participate in learning experience (partnership for child development 2009). According to Pollit (2008) stated that poor nutrition and health among school children contribute to the inefficiency of the educational system. Children with diminish cognitive abilities and sensory impairment naturally perform less well and more likely to repeat grades and drop out of school than children who are not impaired, they also enroll in school at a larger age, if at all, and finished fewer years of school. (World Food Programme 2006) the irregular school attendance of malnourished and unhealthy children is one of the key factors in poor performance. Children who are hungry have more difficulty concentrating and performing complex tasks, even if otherwise well nourished. Research and program experience shows that improving nutrition and health can lead to better performance, fewer repeated grades and reduced drop out among children. (Ahmed 2009).

### MALNUTRITION

Malnutrition is a broad term commonly used as an alternative to under nutrition. An individual could be regarded as malnourished if their diet does not provide adequate calories and protein for growth and maintenance or they are unable to fully utilize the food they eat due to illness. According to Blossner and de Onis (2005). Malnutrition is the underweight, or a serious public health problem that has been linked to a substantial increase in the risk of mortality and morbidity. Malnutrition in early childhood has



serious, long term consequences because it impedes motor, sensory, cognitive, social and emotional development. Malnourished children are less likely to perform well in school and more likely to grow into malnourished adults, at greater rate of disease and early death. (Robert Lydia 2011).

### **School Feed Programmes**

School feeding programmes (SFP) are intended to alleviate short-term hunger, improve nutrition and cognition of children and transfer income to families. School feeding programmes is targeted at social safety nets that provide both educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children, thereby increasing enrollment rates, reducing absenteeism and improving food security at the household level. (Partnership for Child Development 2013). Beyond improving access to food, school feeding programme also have a positive impact on nutritional status, gender equity, and educational status, each of which contributes to improving overall levels of country and human development. It is tool which can enable hundreds of millions of poor children worldwide to attend school in developing and developed countries of the world.

### **Types of School Feeding Programmes**

According to Glewwe, Paul and Human Jacob (2007), there are two main ways to distribute food through schools feeding programme.

#### **On-site Meals**

#### **Take-home Rations**

On-site meals are foods that ate distributed to children while at school during morning and afternoon meals and snacks times. Take-home rations are a collection of basic food items, such as a base of rice and a bottle of cooking oil, which may be sent and transferred to families of children that regularly attend school.

### **IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES**

School feeding programme (SFP) are one of several interventions that can address some of the nutrition and health problems of school-age children. SEPs and other school-based nutrition and health programme, can also motivate parents enroll their children in school and to see that they attend regularly, experience show that properly designed and effectively implemented SFPs can:

#### **Address Micro Nutrient Deficiencies and Improved Learning**

Deficiencies of iron and iodine are among the most harmful types of malnutrition in regard to cognition. Iron deficiencies render children listless, inactive and uninterested in learning. The research literature suggest a causal link between iron deficiency anemia and less than optimal behavior for learning (Nokes, Van den Bosch and Bundy, 1998). In South Africa, Soup fortified with iron and vitamin (was provided to 350 schools in an area of low socio-economic development on the Cape Peninsula. Result showed that initially 12% of six to seven years old and 20% of 8 to 12 years old children had low weight-for age, and 49% and 31% had low serum ferritin, a measure of iron deficiency, respectively, at



follow-up, after 15 weeks of intervention, iron status improved significantly; failing from 40% to 28% in 6 to 7 years old children and 31% in 8 to 12 year old children (Krugger and Badenhorst 2004). A relatively new breakfast program in Peru, which include an iron-fortified ratio, was evaluated for its short-term impact on diet, amongst other factors. The programme significantly increased dietary intake of energy by 25%, protein by 28% and iron by 46% (Jacoby and Pollit, 2006).

### **Alleviate Short-Term Hunger and Improve Cognition**

The number of hungry school-age children is high, but it is a significant problem in various circumstances. Many factor contribute to hunger in school children, the long distances children travel to school. Cultural meal practices that includes no or small breakfast or a lack of family time or resources to provide adequate meals to children to children before and during the school day. Simply alleviating this hunger in school children helps them to perform better in school (Simeon and Gratham-MC Greg. 2005). In Jamaica providing breakfast to school child at the elementary level significantly increase attendance and arithmetic scores. The children who benefited most were those who were wasted, stunted, or previously malnourished (Moock, Peter and Joanne Leslie 1998). A us study showed the benefits of providing breakfast to disadvantage school children. Before low-income children scored significantly lower on achievement testes than those not eligible. Once in programme, however, the test scores of the children participating in the programme improved more than the score of non-participants. The attendance of participant children also improved (Meyers 2013).

### **Increase Enrollment and Improved Attendance Children in Poor Health Start School**

Later in life or not at all. A study in Nepal found that the probability of attending school was 5% for stunted children versus 27% for children entered school at a later age and completed fewer years of school than better nourished children (Glewwe and Jacoby, 2006). A recent evaluation of an on-going school feeding programme in burkina Faso found that school canteens were associated with increased school enrollment, regular attendance, consistently lower repeated rates, lower dropout rates in disadvantaged provinces and higher success rates on national exams, especially among girls (Moore, 2000). A small pilot's school feeding programme in Malawi was evaluated for its effect on enrollment and attendance. Over a three month period there was 5% increase in enrollment and up to 36% improvement in attendance/absenteeism compared to control schools over the same period (WFP, 2006).

### **Promote Community Participation**

Schools that depend on the community to organize and implement schools feeding programmes offer certain advantages. These advantage include: increasing the content, and enhanced communication between parents and teachers, officials and others, giving parents the opportunity to become more aware of what goes on at school, and serving to raise the value of education or the school for parents and the whole community. School Feeding Provides a Value Transfer. By providing school meals, school snacks and takes home ration (THRs), school feeding free up household income that would otherwise be



used for food consumption. The financial value saved from food expenditure is equal to the monetary value of the food transferred, and households can invest part of these savings in productive assets. According to Banerjee and Duflo (2004), evidence from developing countries shows that the poorest households consume an average of 85.5 percent of this added income, spending the remaining 14.5 percent on productive assets. In other words, of every US \$100 of value transferred through school feeding, US \$14.5 investment in developing countries is estimated to be 54 percent per year (Banerjee and Duflo, 2004).

### **Better Education Cognition and Health**

These lead to higher productivity: academic evidence shows that every additional year of primary schooling lead to a 5 percent increase in future wages. When children are well nourished during primary school age, they will be healthier and more productive during their future working years. This, together with the wage impact arising from increased learning skills adds up to longer life expectancy. High income also lead to increased life expectancy, and each additional year of schooling decrease HIV/AIDS prevalence by 6.7percent (Jukes, Drake and Sunday 2008). Challenges to school feeding programmes According to world food programme (2009), posited that, while school feeding programme have a variety of positive impacts, there are some possible negative impact these programme can cause, amongst which are: School feeding programme may increase that cost of schooling by requiring the communities provides firewood for cooking as well as other item such as fresh fruit, vegetable and condiments. Communities are also expected to provide people who will cook these meals and maintain stores of all of the required food products, as well as kitchen and other fundamentals of meal provision. By causing a variety of meal and requirements to increase in a given community, the net benefit from school feeding programmes may be reduced. School feeding programme are very content-specific, that it's dependent on environment/community and each community's program has to be altered based on the demographics, geography and other patterns within and outside of school. For this reason, there are varieties of challenges that emerge in the creation and implementation of school feeding programmes. Food taboolism in other challenges to the implementation of school programmes in every community in Nigeria. For example foods that are edible in some community are not consumed in other areas due to ethnicity and cultural diversity. Partnership for child development (2009) states the followings as other challenges which affect the full implementation of school feeding program in every counties of the world as:

### **Programmes in Order to Meet Some of These Potentials**

#### **These Recommendations Include**

To build a consensus on a policy and objectives that focuses on how school feeding can effectively contribute to improving education and to meet the nutrient and health needs of school age-children. Develop targeting criteria and mechanisms that concentrate programme resources on high risk children and communities Analyze and identify alternative financing and cost option for school feeding programmes. Financing may include international assistance, but in all cases available public resources or the potential to draw on them are required. Elaborate appropriate guidance for ration composition and



the time of school meals. To establish appropriate ration guideline, program managers and policy makers need to analyze the nutrition and health needs of school age children. Identify and address any potential bottle necks in implementation: such as the available or availability of suppliers and other resources, the appropriateness of cooking practices and the management of private sector inputs. Develop monitoring systems that focus on program processes, that is how a programs is functioning and institute an evaluation system to assess the impact of the program on specific out comes. Integrate feeding programs with other interventions that address the primary nutrition and health problems of the school-age population and health problems of the school-age population (Del Rosso and Marek, 2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

The tenets of children's right are subsumed into three, right to protection, survival. Participation and development in practical term among the ways by which the rights of the child to survival and is feeding. Schools have become natural and convenient setting for the implementation of health and education interventions. School feeding is just one facet of school health initiatives, are others programs may include de-worming HIV/AIDS prevention and education, and life and health skills education. Thus, the need to reduced hunger while increasing school enrolment in these children is evident and school feeding programs have been developed to target this multifaceted problem. Overall, school feeding programs have been shown to directly increase the education and nutritional statues of recipient children, and indirectly impact the economic and social lives of themselves and their family.

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