



Targeted School Feeding Towards Improved Enrolment

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Key messages

- Efficient implementation of school feeding programmes contribute towards increased enrolment.
- School feeding programs improve school enrolment if it is targeted to poor households, living in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands(ASALs) and informal urban settlements

The policy context

Access to education is a priority for the Kenyan government reflected in increased budgetary allocation towards the sector, provision of free primary education and implementation of free day secondary school since 2003 and 2008, respectively. These policy decisions have led to an improvement in various education sector indicators including enrolment and dropout rates, higher retention and better transition rates across levels of basic education. The result of these efforts saw a 57 percent increase in primary school enrolment between 2003 and 2020 and secondary school enrolment increased by 79 percent between 2007 and 2020.

The Kenyan government invests billions of shillings in School Feeding Programme (SFP) to encourage school enrollment, attendance, and completion, and to reduce regional and social disparities in education attainment. School feeding programme began in 1979 with a government led school milk program commonly called the “Nyayo Milk.” Subsequently, various school feeding programmes (SFPs) have been implemented by the national and county governments in conjunction with the World Food Programme (WFP), and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).



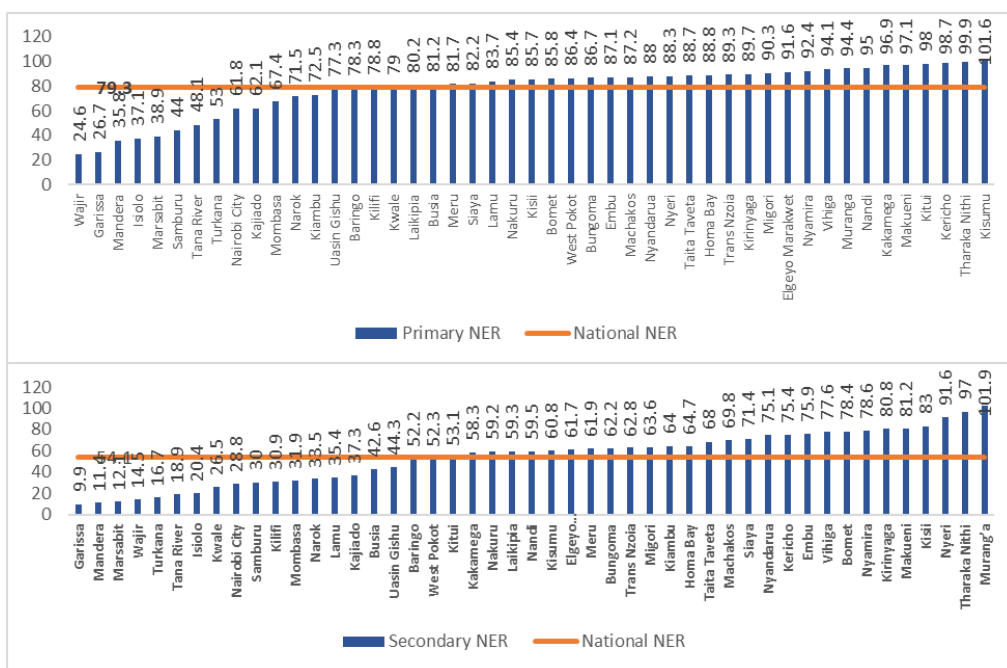
Source: WFP

What is the issue?

Food insecurity affects schooling directly and indirectly, yet education is the foundation of human capital development, which cannot be optimally achieved if schooling is regularly interrupted. Eliminating hunger and achieving quality education are critical towards achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) 2 and 4 respectively.

In 2018, the national pre-primary Net Environment Ratio (NER) was 77.2 percent, an indication that 23 percent of learners were not enrolled in pre-primary centres. Access to pre-primary education remains relatively low in arid and semi-arid areas with the NER being as low as 18 percent in Mandera County. In 2020, the primary Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) stood at 79.3, indicating that approximately 20 per cent of children within the primary school age going are not accessing education. When compared to the national rates, enrollment in ASAL counties was 8 per centage points lower and stood at 71.8 per cent. At the secondary school level, the NER was 54.1 per cent, implying that about 46 per cent of children aged 14-17 were not accessing secondary education in 2020 (Figure 1). The inequalities are also evident in secondary education for which the overall NER is relatively low but lower for the ASALs. Across both levels of basic education, ASAL counties such as Mandera, Garissa, Mandera, Wajir, Marsabit, Turkana, Isiolo and Tana River is lower than the national rates. This is attributed to the high cost of education and indirect costs such as the opportunity cost of being in school.

Figure 1: Primary and Secondary NER across counties, 2020



Source: Data Source: Basic Education Statistical Booklet, 2020

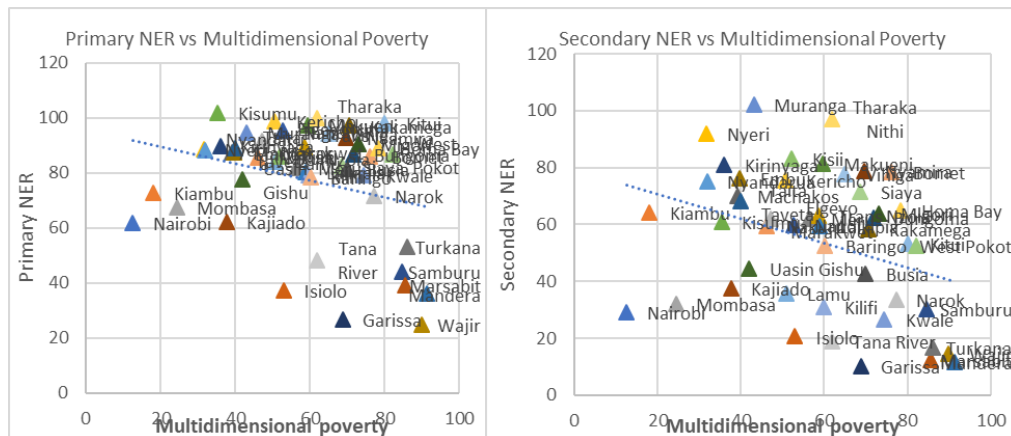
Increasing enrolment and educational attainment requires concerted and deliberate efforts, especially in food insecure regions. Currently 32 percent of the population in Kenya is facing high levels of acute food insecurity, the majority being in ASAL counties. This has disrupted school attendance, participation, and retention. School feeding programmes (SFPs) can be used to incentivize families to send their children to school, thereby enhancing human capital development. However, if not well

implemented or targeted, SFPs may not achieve the desired policy objectives. Delayed disbursements of funding to SFP leads to disruptions of the programme and subsequently undesirable policy outcomes.

Why do school feeding programmes matter?

SFPs at all levels of basic education have immense human capital development benefits including motivating chronically hungry children from low-income households and marginalized regions to enroll in school and attend classes. School feeding programmes not only confer educational benefits but reduces hunger and promotes equity. SFPs differ in terms of targeting, where some target the overall population while others are implemented in severely malnourished and chronically hungry populations. Considering limited budgets, implementation of SFP on intended populations results in desirable policy outcomes. On one hand, targeting relies on geographical locations while on the other hand, poverty indicators are used. It is important that implementation of SFP is anchored on regional disparities in enrolment and poverty rates. Coincidentally, counties with the lowest enrolment rates present chronic poverty and historical marginalization in access to educational resources (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The correlation between NER and Multidimensional poverty across counties, 2020



Data source: KNBS, 2020 (Comprehensive Poverty Reports); Basic Education Statistical Booklet, 2020.

Implementation of SFPs is anchored on holistic and efficient utilization of financial resources, including timely disbursement. Delays in disbursement inadvertently hinder seamless implementation of SFP while discouraging supply of goods by the local communities. Moreover, provision of funds to schools does not capture logistical and other implementation costs. Thus, cost and cash flow are a major consideration

when implementing sustainable SFPs. To mitigate the risk of insufficient funding for SFPs, head teachers and parents compensate by overstretching existing limited resources and out of pocket contribution from parents (School Nutrition and Meals Strategy for Kenya, 2016).

In conclusion, efficient and sustainable implementation of SFPs can only be achieved through the Government ensuring allocations are commensurate with requirements, increasing year on year to keep up with market prices and increasing student numbers. In addition, SFPs should be targeted to poor households and efficiency improved through prompt and timely disbursement of funds to ensure continuous and sustainable implementation.

References

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