

# The Impact Of The School Feeding Project On The Lives Of Primary School Pupils In Kakua Chiefdom, Bo District

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the impact of the school feeding project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua chiefdom, the school feeding project has a significant impact on learners' academic performance, and the findings revealed positive results on pupils' enrolment and improvement of their academic performance at school, and there has been an increased performance of pupils after the commencement of the school feeding project.

A mixed-method approach was used, with ninety-one questionnaires issued and received from education officers, principals, teachers, students, and parents. The data was captured using the Census and Survey Programme (CSPRO) and later exported to SPSS for further descriptive analysis.

Moreover, the school feeding project has greatly helped to reduce the dropout of pupils from the school, and has also helped to increase student interest and regularity in school as a result, parents have been encouraged to send their children to school. Findings show that rice and garri are being served and sometimes the varieties of food change. Despite all these positive impacts of the school feeding projects, there are numerous challenges affecting the sustainability of the project, such as inadequate funds from the government, infrastructural, and ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the project, and the quality and quantity of food served is also another problem.

However, some recommendations were given to help strengthen the sustainability of the project, it was recommended that there should be effective monitoring and evaluation of the project, schools should set a management committee for efficient and effective management of the project, the community should participate positively in any community development programme which will be introduced to their area like school feeding programme, policy makers should make policy that is practical and pupils'-oriented and administrators should ensure that school feeding programme is effective to all regions in which the programme has been introduced.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In many poor households, hunger has been a barrier to school participation. A hunger-stricken child is not only unable to enroll in school at the right age but also cannot attend properly even if enrolled (Mkanyika, 2014). Douben (2006) also stated that children are likely to quit school. After all, they have to deal with their immediate subsistence needs before getting ready for schooling. Thus, low school enrollment, low-class attendance, and high student drop-outs are recurring problems in child education among poor households especially in areas of high food insecurity, and because of these reasons, the level of education attainment has also been low in many developing countries (Adelman, Gilligan & Lehrer, 2009). When children are hungry, chances that they will attend school are limited, and without education, their chances of breaking the poverty barrier are significantly reduced (DoH 2005)

School Feeding Project (SFP) is a crucial ingredient in body growth and cognitive development (Akanbi, 2013). Children need a reliable food supply to meet the metabolic supplies of body growth and brain development which are very essential for their general health (Akanbi, 2013). Setting priority to school feeding project is fundamental involvement in reducing the short-term hunger, providing learner's cognitive function, and enhancing the learning environment (Lawson, 2012). The school feeding programme would enable learners to increase their regular attendance to improve their academic performance. According to the World Food Program, the school feeding programme consists of vital interventions that have been introduced in several countries globally aimed at addressing poverty, stimulating school enrollment, and enhancing the performance of pupils (WFP, 2016).

According to the WFP, the SFPs are associated with pupils' retention globally, making the program common in most education systems across the globe. Nearly, every nation worldwide has a school feeding program aimed at feeding school children, serving about 368 million children across the globe with a cost of up to \$75 billion (World Bank, 2015). As such, implementation of SFP has been carried out in the developing and developed states globally. The school feeding programmes in developing nations are aimed at making sure that there is an improved concentration span of learners by eliminating short-term hunger.

The school feeding programmes in Africa have been initiated to guarantee short-term lessened hunger which would result in increased retention of pupils in school. In Tanzania, the World Food Programme implemented the "Food for Education" programme which has been vital in education promotion in the country. Since its inception, the programme has benefited approximately 200,000 learners from about 400 primary schools in Manyara and Arusha (WFP, 2010).

In Sierra Leone, hunger has been a major barrier to a child's education. The country has historically experienced war, Ebola outbreak, flooding, mudslide etc. Thus, many primary school-age children in food insecure areas remain out of school. On the other hand, even if schooling is free of charge, families in such areas still don't have the means to cover some costs as for books, clothes, shoes or transportation. These constraints do not only keep children from participating in schools but rather force them to stay home and help parents with household chores. The implementation of the school feeding Project aims at providing food to school children with the view of increasing and sustaining enrolment, attendance and minimizing drop-outs in schools. Given such perspective, this study was conducted to investigate the Impact of the school feeding Project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua Chiefdom.

### Key Words

- School feeding programme
- Hunger stricken child
- Dietary preference
- Education
- School feeding Programme

### 1.2 Problem Statement

Education is considered as one of the key determinants in ensuring economic development of a country. Most countries across the world have devised several different strategies aimed at advancing the educational standards of their citizens including introduction of school feeding programme. Most developed and developing countries across the globe, west Africa included, adopted the school feeding programme in their elementary schools, especially targeting the hardship areas with a purpose of persuading parents/guardians to enroll their children to school (WFP, 2016).

When children are hungry, chances that they will attend school are limited, and without education, their chances of breaking the poverty barrier are significantly reduced (DoH 2005, WFP 2006). DoH (2005) also stated that school children are particularly vulnerable to short term hunger, especially where diets of poor-quality meal are consumed. Factors such as the long distances children walk to school, having to complete chores before going to school and poor quality and quantity of meals consumed at home, contribute to hunger in school children. Grantham McGregor (2005) indicated that although a child may be at school, he may not pay attention to a learning task if he is hungry. Even if there is a balance between the quality of teaching and the child's ability to learn, the actual time spent on the task is probably the most critical component of learning. Relieving a child's hunger may improve his ability to concentrate and thereby facilitate learning. According to the United Nations (UN) and World Food Programme, 66 million primary school children go hungry every day, with 23 million hungry children in Africa (World Food Programme, 2009).

In Sierra Leone, hunger has been a major barrier to child education. The country has historically experienced war, Ebola outbreak, flooding, mudslide etc. Thus, many primary school-age children in food insecure areas remain out of school. On the other hand, even if schooling is free of charge, families in such areas still don't have the means to cover some costs as for books, clothes, shoes or transportation. These constraints do not only keep children from participating in school but rather force them to stay home and help parents in household chores. Other than free primary education, school feeding project has been one of the major strategies of preference in ensuring that each child acquired basic quality education, which is in line with

Sustainable Development Goals on education which advocates for free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by the year 2030 regardless of the economic background. School feeding programme strategy was targeted since it was perceived that it will result to an increase in enrollment of pupils to schools, increase on the attendance of the already enrolled, improve on the retention rate of pupils, lower the dropout rate and above all increase on the general performance of pupils in both curricular and extracurricular activities (GoK, 2012).

Despite all these initiatives, most regions across the country still register poor results academically, Kakua Chiefdom included. Most public primary schools, especially in hardship areas still experience low enrollment rates and high dropout rates. Most pupils still miss out on attendance despite being guaranteed free meals prompting the idea that, provision of food alone may not necessarily guarantee high enrollment rates, high attendance rates, low dropout rates and improved performance in both curricular and extracurricular activities (GoK, 2012).

The implementation of school feeding Project aims at providing food to school children with the view of increasing and sustaining enrolment, attendance and minimizing drop-outs in schools. In view of such perspective, this study was conducted to investigate the impact of the school feeding Project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua chiefdom in Bo district.

### 1.3. General Aim and Specific Objectives

The general aim of this study is to investigate the Impact of the school feeding Project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua Chiefdom.

#### 1.3.1 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to

- ✓ Investigate the causes of the school feeding Project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua Chiefdom.
- ✓ Identify the effects of the school feeding Project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua Chiefdom
- ✓ Examine the type of food supply and the actual beneficiaries of the school feeding Project
- ✓ Asses the challenges of the school feeding Project on the lives of primary school pupils
- ✓ Proffer recommendation for the sustainability of the school feeding Project in Kakua Chiefdom.

## 4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Research Design

The study made use of the quantitative research designs respectively. The study attempted to investigate and analyze the variables in a numerical form as well as analyze qualitative responses by the respondents. Moreover, the study was based on empirical evidence and data collected was based on first-hand, analyzed and conclusions drawn from available. This study also make use of table presentations and figures in presenting empirical data. Specifically, the research is a social survey because it investigates the opinion, views and perceptions of people and stakeholders regarding the impact of the school feeding Project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua Chiefdom

## 5. School Feeding Programme in Sierra Leone

There has been continued interest in and recognition of the multifaceted value of school feeding by the government of Sierra Leone. After the 1991-2002 civil conflict, the government provided a resettlement package, which included school feeding to encourage parents to enroll their children in school. It was also to motivate children whose schooling was disrupted by the conflict to return to school.

While no comprehensive policy document provides the necessary national direction, the government's understanding of the merit of school feeding programme (SFP) in education is articulated in the Medium Term National Development Programmes (MTNDP), themed, 'Education for Development', and the 2018-2021 ESP, Pillar 6 (Strengthen Social Protection Systems) of the MTNDP asserts that: "Poverty, inequality, and vulnerability are widespread and multidimensional... social protection is an effective mechanism to address childhood poverty and break the intergenerational cycle of poverty within families, reduce inequities that women, girls, and orphaned children without care encounter... promote the quality of life, increase stability and ensure equity... developing human potential." The document identifies malnutrition as a major

factor that retards the learning progress of children, with the consequence of loss of valuable human capital. The Medium Term National Development Programme (MTNDP) strategy for tackling the above challenges utilizes school feeding as part of an integrated social protection measure, thus: provide cash and in-kind transfer packages as appropriate in education, health, nutrition, and shelter for disadvantaged children, women, girls.

The Education Sector Plan 2013-2018 now extended to 2021 asserts that: "School feeding serves to promote access to basic education in primary schools, improve education/quality of services, and provide a social safety net. The school feeding programme enhances enrolment, attendance, and gender parity. It improves pupils' ability to concentrate and their learning abilities in the class. Plans are being formulated for home-grown school feeding using community production supported by agricultural services or programmes." The document emphasizes under its "Next Steps" making school feeding and take-home rations more widespread with an increasing percentage of the food materials being homegrown.

The plan further emphasizes a government-led Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSEF) programme paying cognizance to the following strategic policy framework: (i) Education for All (UNESCO, 1990), (ii) UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education, (iii) SDG 4 and (iv) National Education Policy 2010, section 6, which deals with cross-cutting issues (e.g., rights and protection). The government shall extend a school feeding programme to provide nutritious meals to Pupils from pre-primary and primary schools. The legal basis of this policy is Article 9 (Educational Objectives) of the Constitution, which guarantees every citizen equal rights and adequate educational opportunities. In particular: Article 9(a) ensures that every citizen is allowed to be educated to the best of his/her ability, aptitude, and inclination by providing educational facilities at all levels and aspects of education such as primary, secondary, vocational, technical, college and university, and Article 9(b) safeguards the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children, women, and the disabled in securing educational facilities. Additionally, the Education Act 2004 provides, in Section 3(2) (b) for every citizen of Sierra Leone to: "(a) have the right to basic education which accordingly shall be compulsory and shall be designed to (b) improve the social and health circumstances of the citizen". The Child Rights Act 2007, which sought to enact most of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, provides additional underpinnings for this policy. This Act safeguards fundamental child rights and calls for all children "to have access to education, healthcare, and protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation".

## **6.0 The Causes of the School Feeding Project on the Lives of Primary School Pupils**

### **6.1.1 Parent's Economic Status**

School feeding programme is a visible social safety net used by political leaders in the entire world. Deferent communities which participate in this programme see the tangible benefits to their children, such as their children will be feeding during all school days. This programme is targeted towards populations that are food insecure, especially for the areas which have high concentrations of low socio-economic status families and the area which face poor attendance and enrollment of students. Many students who come from poor families are the one who benefits of the programme, because they will go to school to get food. As we know many families in developing countries face low socioeconomic status. Introducing school meal helps to increase attendance of students in schools.

### **6.1.2 The Impact on Educational Achievements**

Potential impact goal of targeting students through the Food for education programme is to increase their educational achievement so as to improve their potential future productivity. However, improvement in educational achievement due to serving food in SFPs helps to increase students' attendance by lowering the opportunity costs of attending school and providing additional incentives to engage in formal education. This leads them to spend more time in school and toward learning. Also, the programme helps to improve short-term hunger. Kakua Chiefdom is known for academic excellence, but over the years, such accolades has reduced for lack of sufficient food for the children. The introduction of school feeding programmes can help revamp and hence rapid enrolment in schools.

### **6.1.3 Influence of School Feeding Programmes on Attendance and Retention**

In general, the Sierra Leone School Feeding Programme has influenced positively on the attendance and retention of pupils in the basic schools. Kedze (2013) states that the School Feeding Programme has gained prominence for its multi-roles in developing countries. What the writer meant was that enrolment alone is not

the only challenge of achieving universal basic education but regular attendance and drop-out rates. The school feeding programme, according to Kedze, motivates children to be present at school as attendance is a necessary condition for access to food. This is true within the Sierra Leone context. Bukari et al (2015) point out that there exists a positive link between the Ghana School Feeding Programme and academic performance. This revelation suggests that the school feeding programme has met its aims. Mohammed (2014) posits that the significant increase in enrolment is due to the fact that the School Feeding Programme motivates the pupils to stay in school and study leading to an improved universal basic education in the country. Mohammed (2014) therefore suggested that though the one hot meal per school days is significant, pupils should be given snacks as supplements. In Sierra Leone, rice and garri are also part of the school feeding programme. This locally produced food has help to sustain the continuation of the programme.

### **7.1.0 Challenges of the School Feeding Project on the Lives of Primary School Pupils**

#### **7.1.1 Poor Government Contribution in funding the program**

Poor government contribution in funding the school feeding programmes has negative consequences on its sustainability. Many households cannot feed their children on three meals square per day. This has resulted in their inability to help the government sustain the school feeding programme. The government in most cases stops the feeding without prior information to the school heads. This communication gap also is a sufficient reason for the low enrolment of pupils in schools. Funding is one of the major challenges facing school feeding programmes. The programme needs a large number of resources to run, including money for purchasing food, funding for infrastructure and equipment, and money for monitoring and evaluation. The initiative is primarily funded by the government, however, financing is frequently insufficient to cater for the needs of all schools as well as pay the caterers recruited. This has resulted in some schools being left out of the programme, while others received inadequate funding to provide sufficient meals for the pupils

#### **7.1.2 Difficulty in serving varieties**

It might be challenging to serve a variety of wholesome meals because local food options are frequently few. Local food items might sometimes be too expensive than imported food items, making it challenging for schools to buy them.

#### **7.1.3 Challenge in the sustainability of the project**

Another issue facing the School Feeding Programme is sustainability. The programme has increased agricultural productivity, encouraged children to access education, and enhanced children's nutritional status. The programme long-term viability is however uncertain due to the fact, the food used to feed the children is driven, which to the greatest extent is unpredictable. There is a need to develop a sustainable financing mechanism for the program to ensure its long-term sustainability. Sierra Leone can only achieve this through the utilization of locally produced food in our schools.

#### **7.1.4 Ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the project**

Good monitoring and evaluation are key components in determining how well the school food program works. Concerns have been raised concerning the caliber and reliability of monitoring in some schools, though monitors are sent but they are normally compromised by brown envelopes, as a result, there have been instances of improper management and misuse of project funding. Monitoring and evaluation are vital tools for the progress of initiatives as it aids the necessary steps and changes after the implementation of an initiative.

## **8. Challenge in Implementation of School Feeding Programme**

Those challenges are based on two levels; school and community. The challenges are associated with parents' economic status, community perception, students themselves and government. The government failed to implement the programmes in many schools and on time which warrants the school authorities to engage in corrupt practices. Some parents also failed to contribute to their children in terms of money or kinds. These lead to the poor quality and quantity of food provided to students. Absence of dining rooms to all schools which can accommodate a big number of students during lunch time is a problem. Poor preparation of students' meals which do not consider students' health in terms of nutritional value and poor storage of food also are the challenge for the program.

### **8.1 Inadequate infrastructure is also a challenge faced by the School Feeding Programme (SFP)**

The inadequate infrastructure and equipment by participating schools is another difficult situation for the school feeding programmes. Many schools lack the requisite equipment and resources needed to carry out the

program efficiently. For instance, it can be challenging to prepare and serve meals at some schools because they lack kitchens, cooking stoves, or storage facilities, hence have to resort to cooking under trees. They are serving low quality meals that lacks essential nutrients even though the school feeding program strive to give pupils nourishing meals.

### **8.2 Recommendations for the sustainability of the school feeding project in Kakua chiefdom**

- ✓ Each school should put in place a management committee for efficient and effective management of the school feeding programme.
- ✓ Non-governmental organizations and well-to-do individuals should be allowed to assist the programme financially.
- ✓ A school feeding programme (SFP) committee should be established under the supervision of head teachers.
- ✓ Administrators should ensure that the school feeding programme is effective in all regions in which the programme has been introduced. Also, the administrators should provide all resources needed to implement the programme. The programmes should not depend on parents or the community for implementation. Moreover, the government should make sure that before introducing any programme, it must have enough funds for implementation and should consider infrastructure such as dining rooms and kitchens.
- ✓ Adequate funding must be provided to the school feeding programme by the government to achieve desired goals.
- ✓ Program planners should prioritize dietary preferences to better meet pupils' nutritional needs, ensuring the necessary nutrient content. This will require active involvement from nutritionists for expert guidance.
- ✓ The desired quality of the School Feeding Program can be achieved with timely implementation. Thus, stakeholders must adhere to deadlines for successful execution
- ✓ Programme developers should prioritize nutritional preferences to better meet pupils' dietary needs, ensuring the necessary nutrient content. This will require the active involvement of nutritionists for professional direction.
- ✓ The desired value of the School Feeding Program can be realized with timely implementation. Thus, programme sponsors must adhere to deadlines for successful impacts

### **3.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDING**

#### **Causes of the school feeding project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua Chiefdom**

The data solicited from respondents indicates that 7.6% of respondents identified parental economic status as the primary cause, while 10.9% attributed it to educational policies enacted by the government. Likewise, 59.6% of respondents assumed that the main benefit of the school feeding project was to enhance student enrollment, and 21.9% felt it contributed to increased school attendance. Generally, the research shows that majority of respondents view the primary objective of the school feeding initiative as improving student enrollment.

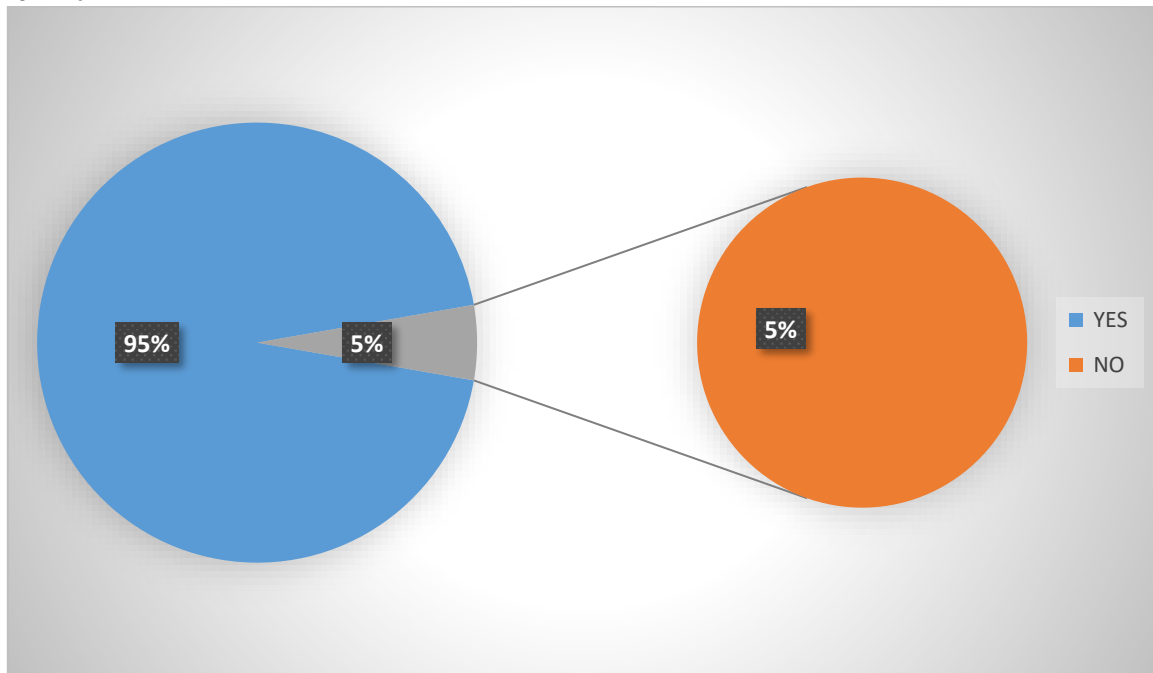
#### **The effects of the school feeding project on the lives of primary school pupils in Kakua chiefdom.**

The outcomes show that 50.8% of respondents believe the program boosts student enrollment, 16.9% think it enhances cognitive and academic skills, 21.9% feel it positively impacts attendance, and 11.4% view it as improving nutrition. Overall, the research shows that most respondents agree the school feeding project primarily contributes to increased student enrollment.

#### **Respondent's views on whether the school feeding program helps in reducing students' dropout**

The data portrays that (69.2%) of the respondents said it exceptionally contributed to reducing school dropout, whilst (16.5%) said on average, whilst (10.2%) of identified that it does not contribute to reducing dropout, (4.1%) of them said they are not sure. This research finding has ascertained that majority of the respondents revealed that the school feeding programme extremely contributes in reducing dropouts from school in the study area.

### Distribution of respondents on whether parents whose children are under the school feeding program benefit from it



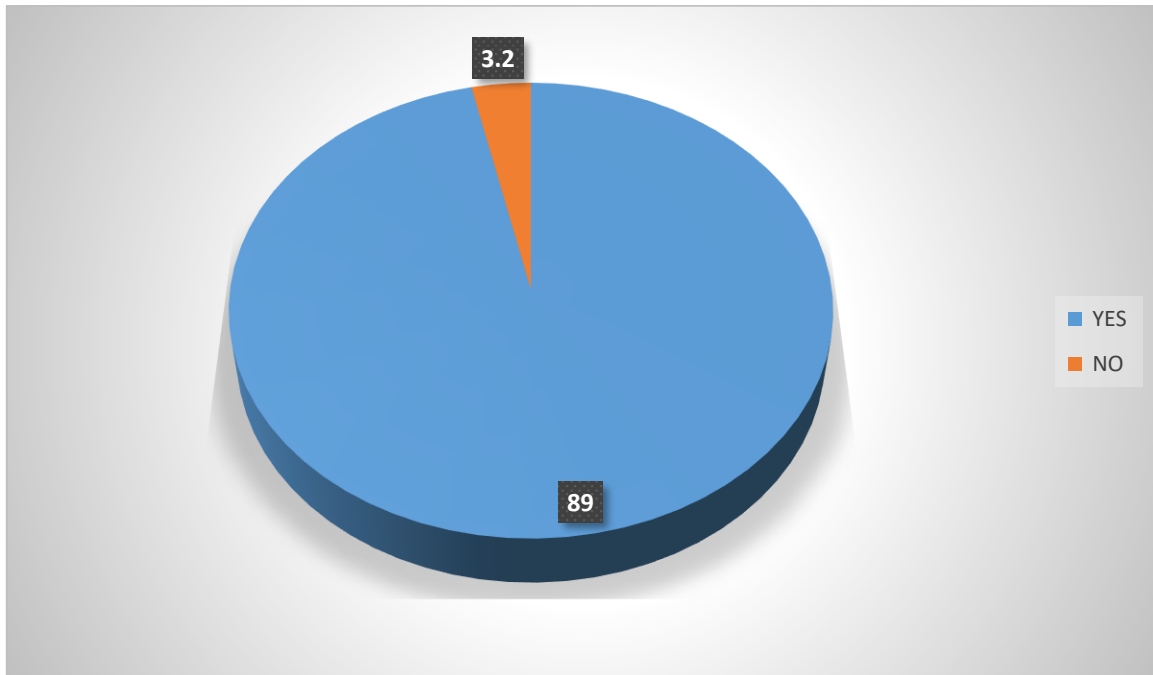
The data shows that 95% of the respondents said the parents benefit from the school feeding project, while 5% of them disagreed. The finding revealed that a good number of respondents confirmed that parents benefited from the school feeding project.

### Distribution of respondents on whether the school feeding project will encourage parent to enroll their children in school

Responses	AF	RF (%)
Yes	80	87.9
No	3	3.5
Not sure	2	2.1
I can't tell	6	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It was investigated that (87.9%) of the respondents agreed that the school feeding project will encourage parent to enroll their children in school, whereas (3.5%) said it does not, whilst (2.1%) of the respondents said they are not sure, and (6.5%) of them stated that they can't tell. Thus indicating that majority of the respondents targeted confirmed that it does encourage parents to enroll their children to school.

**Distribution of respondents on whether there have been any changes in their children academic performance**



The above data shows that 97% of the respondents agreed that there have been changes in their children’s academic performance, whilst 3 % of the respondents disagreed. This therefore indicated that majority of the respondents targeted confirmed that there are changes in their children’s academic performance as a result of the school feeding project.

**The challenges of the school feeding project on the lives of primary school pupils**

Responses	AF	RF (%)
Poor government contribution in funding the program	21	23.3
Challenge in sustainability of the project	15	16.4
Ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the project	45	49.4
Inadequate infrastructure	10	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The data above shows that (23.3%) of the respondents targeted said the main challenge was poor government contribution in funding of the program, whilst (16.4%) of the respondents stated that there was a challenge in sustainability of the project, whereas (49.4%) of them said ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the project was the main challenge, and (10.9%) said it was inadequate infrastructure .The research finding has shown that majority of the respondents in the study area articulated ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the project was the main challenge of the school feeding project.

**Conclusion**

Education in Sierra Leone remains one of the most important investments, for both the government and individual households. Education is one of the greatest weapons in fighting poverty, ill health and diseases. The socio-economic factors that hinder pupil attendance, concentration and performance can be addressed through the School Feeding Programme (SFP) introduced in 1980. This effort contributed significantly to enrolment, attendance and lowering dropouts in primary schools. Although the government's introduction of free primary education in 2018 which enhanced participation by increasing enrollment to 7.8 million in 2006 from 6.1 million in 2002, the schools feeding programme has ensured that children from extremely poor households continue attending school, by the assurance of a mid-day meal in school. The Feeding programme made a remarkable contribution towards achievement of the sustainable development goal No.4 of Universal



Primary Education by the year 2030. The study identified the importance of School Feeding Programme (SFP) in enhancing access to primary education. The impact of the programme with regard to increased enrolment and to some extent the performance in the national examinations was clearly identified.

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