HOME GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN RIJAU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA NIGER STATE, 2017-2022

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of a Home Grown School Feeding Program on poverty reduction in Rijau Local Government Area (HGSF). The implementation of the HGSF program in Rijau Local government was to achieve lots of objectives aside the reduction of poverty. The HGSF program was meant to increase the nutrition of school children, increase school attendance and enrollment, create job for villagers and increase local agricultural production. The study fund the HGSF program to have positive impact on the nutrition of children, school enrollment and attendance, job creation, crime prevention and on the whole reduced poverty in Rijau Local Government of Niger State.

Introduction

The Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) program is a poverty reduction initiative implemented by the Nigerian government to provide free school meals for primary school children in public schools.[1] The program was designed to address the problem of malnutrition among school-aged children while also boosting school enrollment and attendance. The HGSF program was launched in 2005 as a pilot project in a few states, but it was not until 2016 that it was scaled up to a national program.[2] Today, the program covers more than 9 million children in 34 states across Nigeria, making it one of the largest school feeding programs in the world.[3]

Several studies have demonstrated the positive impact of the HGSF program on poverty reduction in Nigeria. For example, a study conducted by the World Food Program in 2017 found that the program led to a 3.3 percentage point increase in school enrollment, with the largest increase seen among girls.[4] Another study

conducted in 2019 found that the program led to a 5.2 percentage point increase in school attendance.[5] In addition to its impact on education outcomes, the HGSF program has also been found to have positive effects on household food security and poverty reduction. A study conducted in 2020 found that the program led to a significant increase in household food consumption and a reduction in the prevalence of food insecurity among program participants.[6]

The HGSF program has faced some challenges, including issues with program implementation and funding. However, its positive impact on poverty reduction and education outcomes has made it a key policy priority for the Nigerian government. Poverty is an issue that different governments in Nigeria have struggled to curb and reduce to the barest minimum. This has led to the implementation of several policies and programs to alleviate poverty. Among these programs is the HGSF program but regardless of this program, poverty has remained high in Rijau Local Government Area of Niger State. This makes the examination of the HGSF program and its impact of poverty reduction an important study to be carried out.

Objectives of Nigeria's Home Grown School Feeding Program

The overall objective of the HGSFP is the reduction of poverty among the beneficiary communities. Generally, the program has other objectives such as:

Enrollment and Completion of School:

The HGSFP is aimed at enhancing the number of children that enroll in primary school and graduate from primary schools in Nigeria. It is estimated that there are over 10.5 million out of school children in Nigeria who by their ages should attending primary school.[23] The HGSFP assumes that providing free food to children promotes enrolment of children into primary schools. Particularly in Niger State, Data provided indicated an increase in the number of pupils that enrolled into primary schools.[24]

Child Nutrition and Health:

The HGSFP is aimed at improving children's nutrition and health status by providing nutritious meals daily. It is believed that the provision of nutritious food to children on a daily basis improves the nutrition of the children and their Intelligence Quotient (IQ). By this assumption, the HGSFP includes as an objective the promotion

of learning outcomes and health status of children who receive school feeding.[25]

Local Agricultural Production:

One of the objectives of the HGSFP is to connect the program with local agricultural production. The HGSFP has direct economic benefits because it connects the entire community by stimulating local agricultural production and providing income to smallholder farmers by creating a viable and readymade market through the purchase and procurement of locally produced foodstuff thereby increasing local agricultural production.[26]

Job Creation and the Improvement of Family and Community Welfare:

The HGSFP seeks to create jobs while improving the welfare of families and the economy of the community.[7] The program's objective is to employ members of the community where school feeding is implemented. According to the program, this is to be accomplished by involving local people in the area who are involved in catering services, food supply, food vendors, food processing and food handling jobs.[27]

Impact of Home Grown School Feeding Program in Rijau Local Government Area

Every policy has impacts. These impacts can be positive or negative depending on a number of factors. A positive impact indicates a success of the program while negative impacts indicate the failure of that policy. The Home Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) was implemented to achieve a number of things including a higher rate of enrolment and graduation from primary schools and on the whole enhance poverty reduction. The impacts this program has had on Rijau Local Government determines if it has reduced poverty or not in the Local Government Area

Impact of Home Grown School Feeding Program on School Children

A school feeding program can have several positive impacts on school children. Here are some of them:

Improved Nutrition: School feeding programs provide students with nutritious meals, which can help improve their overall health and well-being.[8] Adequate nutrition is essential for children's growth and development, and a well-planned school feeding program can provide the necessary nutrients for their physical and cognitive

development. Nasir[9] opined that the school feeding program in children's school has improved his physical health of children. Being a teacher he claims that the food served at the schools are highly nutritious and have great health benefits compared with the food these children eat at home.

Better Academic Performance: Proper nutrition is also linked to better academic performance. Children who receive adequate nutrition are more alert and better able to concentrate in class, which can lead to improved academic performance.[10] In agreement with is claim Amina[11] stated that the children in her class have become more intelligent and are alert. This she attributed to the school feeding program which provided nutritious food for the children.

Increased Attendance: A school feeding program can also help increase attendance rates. Children who are well-fed are less likely to miss school due to illness or hunger. Additionally, school feeding programs can act as an incentive for parents to send their children to school regularly. Children are happy to go to school because they are aware that they will be fed.[12] This has increased the attendance in school. Feeding is an incentive that attracts children and gives them the zeal to attend school.[13]

Reduced Malnutrition: In many developing countries, malnutrition is a significant problem among school children.[14] A school feeding program can help reduce malnutrition rates and improve overall health outcomes.

Economic Benefits: School feeding programs can also have economic benefits. For example, they can provide a market for local farmers and boost the local economy.[15] Children from such families who may not have had the hope of furthering their education due to finance would be able to further their education due to the economic benefits of the family.

Overall, a well-planned and well-implemented school feeding program can have significant positive impacts on school children, including improved nutrition, academic performance, attendance, and health outcomes.

Impact of home Grown School Feeding Program on Farmers

A home-grown school feeding program can have several positive impacts on farmers. Here are some of them:

Increased Demand for Local Produce: Home-grown school feeding programs prioritize the use of locally sourced food items,

which can create a reliable and consistent demand for farmers' produce. This can help to increase the income and livelihoods of local farmers.[16]Danjuma[17] stated that the demand for his vegetables have increased due to the HGSFP in Rijau Local government Area of Niger State. Before the implementation of the program, he claimed to producing and making much less than he earned when the program was implemented.

Diversification of Income: Home-grown school feeding programs can encourage farmers to diversify their crops to meet the needs of the program. This can help farmers to reduce their dependence on a single crop and provide a more stable income. Danjuma[18] stated that he has added the cultivation of beans to his vegetable farm and his income chain has improved ever since.

Improved Market Access: Home-grown school feeding programs can provide a guaranteed market for farmers' produce, which can improve their market access and bargaining power. When the assurance of a market is guaranteed, production becomes certain. Farmers are discouraged when they have to markets for their products. The HGSFP gives farmers confidence of a market that they can sell their products.[19]

Increased Investment in Agriculture: Home-grown school feeding programs can incentivize farmers to invest in their agricultural practices by providing a stable and reliable market for their produce. This can lead to increased productivity and yields over time.[20]

Improved Food Security: Home-grown school feeding programs can contribute to the overall food security of the local community by promoting the consumption of locally produced food items. This can help to reduce reliance on imported food items and improve the resilience of local food systems.[21]

Overall, a well-implemented home-grown school feeding program can have significant positive impacts on local farmers, including increased demand for their produce, diversification of income, improved market access, increased investment in agriculture, and improved food security.

Impact of Home Grown School Feeding Program on Caterers

Homegrown school feeding program can have several positive impacts on caterers who provide food to the schools. Here are some of them:

Increased Business Opportunities: A homegrown school feeding program can create new business opportunities for caterers who specialize in providing healthy and nutritious meals to schools. This can help to increase their revenue and expand their customer base.[22]

Improved Business Sustainability: A homegrown school feeding program can provide a more stable and consistent source of income for caterers. This can help them to better plan and manage their resources, improve their business sustainability, and reduce the risk of financial instability. Hauwa[23] opined that her income has improved greatly through the job she does as a caterer who cooks for the school children.

Improved Professional Standards: A homegrown school feeding program can help to improve the professional standards of caterers by requiring them to meet certain quality and safety standards. This can help to improve the overall quality of food served to children and increase customer satisfaction.

Increased Training and Skills Development: A homegrown school feeding program can provide caterers with training and skills development opportunities to help them improve their culinary skills, menu planning, and food safety practices. This can help to improve the quality of food served and increase customer satisfaction.[24]

Increased Social Responsibility: A homegrown school feeding program can help caterers to increase their social responsibility by providing healthy and nutritious meals to school children. This can help to improve their public image and increase their customer loyalty.[25]

Overall, a well-implemented homegrown school feeding program can have significant positive impacts on caterers, including increased business opportunities, improved business sustainability, improved professional standards, increased training and skills development, and increased social responsibility

Impact of Home Grown School Feeding Program on Traders

A home-grown school feeding program can have both positive and negative impacts on traders, depending on the specific details of the program and the local market conditions. Here are some possible ways that such a program could affect traders:

Positive Impacts:

Increased Demand for Food Items: A school feeding program that purchases food items from local markets can increase the demand for those items, which could benefit traders who sell them. For example, if the program purchases vegetables from local farmers, those farmers may have more customers and be able to sell their products at higher prices. Mikailu[26] stated that his business has improved due to the increase in the demand for the things they sell. Mikalilu who sells condiments needed for the preparation of the meals said, he sells way higher than what he was earning before the implementation of the HGSFP

Stable Demand: A school feeding program can create a stable demand for certain food items, as schools typically require a set amount of food for each meal. This can help stabilize prices and reduce price volatility, which can be beneficial for traders who sell those items. For traders who are involved in the HGSFP, the demand is stable. We are sure that our products will be demanded and prices will be stable.[27]

Increased Income for Households: If the program sources its food items from smallholder farmers and local food processors, it can create new markets for those producers and increase their incomes. This, in turn, can benefit traders who sell goods and services to those households. Abdulkadir[28] stated that that since his wife became a major supplier of the needed condiments and ingredients required for the school feeding program, the income of their home has improved and things have turned out better.

Negative Impacts:

Increased Competition: If the school feeding program sources its food items from the same markets as local traders, it could lead to increased competition for those items. This could lead to lower prices and reduced profits for the traders, especially if the program has a large purchasing power and can negotiate lower prices.[29]

Displacement of Traders: In some cases, a school feeding program may displace local traders who previously supplied food items to schools. This could happen if the program requires a certain volume or quality of food items that local traders cannot meet, or if the program has its own distribution channels that bypass local markets.[30]

Distortion of Local Markets: If a school feeding program has a large purchasing power, it could distort local markets by creating a

monopoly or oligopoly in the food supply chain. This could lead to reduced market access and bargaining power for smallholder farmers and local traders, which could have negative impacts on their incomes and livelihoods.[31]

Overall, the impact of a home-grown school feeding program on traders depends on a range of factors, including the program's design, implementation, and procurement policies, as well as the local market conditions and the existing food supply chains. To ensure that the program benefits all stakeholders, including smallholder farmers and local traders, it is important to involve them in the program design and implementation, and to ensure that procurement policies are transparent, fair and inclusive

Impact of a School Feeding Program on Poverty

A home-grown school feeding program can have a significant impact on poverty, both directly and indirectly. Here are some possible ways that such a program could affect poverty:

Direct Impacts:

Improved Nutrition and Health Outcomes: A school feeding program can improve the nutrition and health outcomes of school children, especially those from low-income households. This can reduce the incidence of malnutrition, anemia, and other health problems that are more prevalent among poor children, and can lead to better school attendance, academic performance, and long-term outcomes such as increased earning potential and improved health status. In Rijau Local Government, malnutrition has reduced and the nutrition pupils in beneficial schools receive is an indication of poverty reduction. One of the signs of poverty is malnutrition. A reduction in malnutrition is an indication of poverty reduction.[32]

Increased Household Income: If the school feeding program sources its food items from local farmers and food processors, it can create new markets for those producers and increase their incomes. This, in turn, can benefit poor households who rely on agriculture and other rural livelihoods for their income. Additionally, if the program employs local cooks and other staff, it can create new jobs and income opportunities for poor households. The HGSFP employs Local cooks, buys from local farmers and traders, employs local food vendor. All these increase household income which reduces poverty.[33]

Reduced Household Food Expenses: If the school feeding program provides free or subsidized meals to school children, it can

reduce the food expenses of poor households who struggle to provide nutritious meals for their children. This can free up resources for other household needs, such as education, health, and housing. Families no longer worry about making provision for food when children are in school and are well fed.[34]

Indirect Impacts:

Increased School Enrollment and Attendance: A school feeding program can increase school enrollment and attendance, especially among poor children who may drop out of school to work or help their families with household chores. By providing free or subsidized meals, the program can incentivize poor families to send their children to school and keep them there, which can improve their long-term prospects and break the cycle of poverty.[35]

Improved Gender Equity: A school feeding program that prioritizes girls' education can improve gender equity by increasing girls' school attendance and reducing gender-based barriers to education. This can lead to improved outcomes for girls and women, including increased earning potential, better health outcomes, and greater social and political empowerment.[36]

Improved Community Well-being: A school feeding program can contribute to the overall well-being of the community by reducing malnutrition, improving health outcomes, increasing school attendance and academic performance, and creating new income and employment opportunities. This can strengthen social cohesion and reduce poverty and inequality in the community. Ramat[37] stated that the welfare of Rijau is the combination of the welfare of the various households. Since the school feeding program improves the welfare of traders, farmers, children and caterers, the combination of this welfare increase increases the welfare of the Local Government as a whole

Overall, a home-grown school feeding program can have a transformative impact on poverty by addressing the root causes of poverty, such as malnutrition, low education levels, and limited economic opportunities. To maximize its impact, it is important to design and implement the program in a way that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable, and that involves the participation of all stakeholders, especially poor and marginalized communities.

Impact of Home Grown School Feeding Program on Crime Prevention

A homegrown school feeding program can have a positive impact on crime prevention, especially among vulnerable and marginalized communities. Here are some possible ways that such a program could affect crime prevention:

Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: By providing free or subsidized meals to school children, a school feeding program can reduce the economic pressure on families, especially those living in poverty.[38] This can help reduce the likelihood of children engaging in delinquent activities, such as theft or drug abuse, as they may be less likely to engage in such activities to support themselves or their families.

Improving Academic Performance: A school feeding program can improve academic performance among school children, which can reduce the likelihood of dropping out of school and engaging in delinquent activities. Children who are well-nourished and healthy are more likely to concentrate in class and perform better academically, which can lead to better job prospects and reduce the likelihood of engaging in criminal activities.[39]

Strengthening Community Cohesion: A school feeding program can help strengthen community cohesion by providing a platform for engagement among different groups in the community, such as parents, teachers, farmers, and food processors. This can help build trust and social capital, which can reduce the likelihood of crime and violence in the community.

Creating Employment Opportunities: A homegrown school feeding program can create employment opportunities for local communities, especially farmers and food processors. This can help reduce poverty and increase economic opportunities, which can reduce the likelihood of engaging in criminal activities due to financial strain. One major cause of crime is poverty, the HGSFP created jobs for the people of Rijau thereby reducing poverty and crime within the Local Government Area.[40]

Conclusion

The HGSFP has numerous impacts on the people of Rijau Local Government Area. It has played great roles in enhancing the nutrition of children, attendance of children in schools and even the enrolment of children that were previously out of school. On the whole, it can be concluded that the program increased the welfare of the community through the creation of jobs and business opportunities for traders, caterers, and farmers. As a result, it

reduced the level of poverty and crime rate within the local government area.

Endnotes

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