

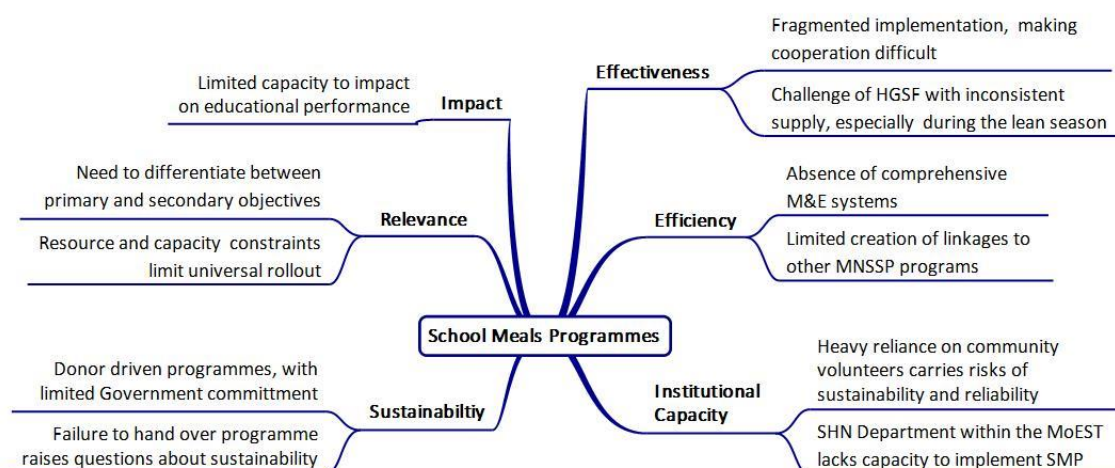


## MNSSP Review Brief – School Meals Programme Stakeholder Review

This brief summarizes key discussion points and recommendations made at the MNSSP Review workshop on Public Works Programmes, held at Crossroads hotel on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2016 in Lilongwe.

The purpose of the workshop was to evaluate the progress made by School Meals Programmes against the MNSSP results matrix and facilitate a critical discussion amongst programme implementers on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, institutional capacity, and sustainability of micro-finance programmes under the MNSSP.

### Summary of key challenges observed



### Traffic Light Evaluation of School Meals Programmes: Strategic outcomes

Strategic outcomes							
Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Source	Target 2016	Actual 2016	Source	Comments
1. Reduce and prevent malnutrition	Stunted	30%	National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan NESP	20%	42.4%	MDGs End line Survey, 2014	The Malawi Demographics and Household Survey done in 2016 will provide more recent statistics but it is not yet out
	Underweight	18%	National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan NESP	<10%	16.7%	MES, 2014	<p><b>Stakeholder comments:</b></p> <p>The 42% end-line value is for below five-year-old children only, which is inappropriate for the SMP, since that is not its target audience.</p> <p>Looking at the figures provided, the situation seems to have worsened. It was noted that the contribution of SMP to malnutrition is not clearly conceptualized. It was also argued that reductions in malnutrition are not achieved by one programme alone, but rather through multi-sectoral interventions. The question how much of it could be causally attributed to the SMP needs to be answered. Community-based child-care centres (CBCCs) also get feeding programs. They cater to, for example, three-year olds. At that age, the damage done by stunting may not be reversed, but certainly halted. SMP, however, which cater to children of seven or eight years, reducing stunting is impossible, so the indicator may be reconsidered.</p> <p>It was noted that the indicator is not limited to stunting. It is about malnutrition. While stunting may be an inappropriate indicator, other aspects of malnutrition are reduced by the SMP. Stunting after the age of two is irreversible but being underweight or anaemic should be kept as a yardstick to measure the SMPs progress.</p> <p>The baseline was done in 2006. There is no recent comprehensive study on malnutrition in schoolchildren. That is direly needed. The</p>



							targeted age group needs to be assessed with an eye towards nutrition and other question relevant to the SMP.
	Anaemic	54%		34%			
<b>2. School performance of vulnerable children improved</b>	Dropout	14.3%		5%	14.6%	EMIS, 2015	<b>Stakeholder comments:</b> From experience, stakeholders confirmed that SMP have indeed a string impacts on dropout rates. Globally, retention and absenteeism have been shown to be impacted by SMP, but this has often limited impacts on educational outcomes.
	Repetition	18%		5%	19.1%		
	Promotion	68%		90%	85%		
<b>4. Vulnerable learners complete Std. 8</b>	Std. 8 survival rates	29.7%		60%	75.8%	MES, 2014	

## 1) How relevant are School Meals Programmes?

### What are School Meals Programmes?

- Features of school meals programmes (SMP) differ across and within countries. However, programmes are often classified by two main types of feeding modalities:
  - In-school feeding:** Primary school students receive food in school for immediate consumption, either a prepared on-site meal or a high-energy snack
  - Take-home rations (THR):** Primary school students receive food rations to take home and share with their families, usually on a monthly basis
- Three procurement models are relevant for Malawi:
  - Centralised procurement:** Providers centrally buy the food and distribute it to schools
  - Grants:** Schools receive grants to purchase the food they need
  - Community production:** Communities allocate land and resources which is used to grow food

Malawi has several SMP providers with different feeding and procurement modalities. The main providers are the World Food Programme, Mary's Meals, and the Government of Malawi. WFP and Mary's Meals used to implement SM exclusively based on a centralised procurement model but have recently begun experimenting with alternatives. Both WFP and Mary's Meals serve a fortified corn-soya porridge (*Likuni Phala*) to all children in targeted schools. During the lean season WFP additionally provides a monthly THR of maize to girls and orphan boys in standards 5 to 8 on condition that they attend 80% of school days.

Government implements decentralised SM in selected schools, mainly through the community production and the grants model in special cases. Further, a number of NGOs and CSOs provide SMP in Malawi and recently stakeholders have begun piloting innovative SMP, such as Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF).

### What are the objectives of School Meals Programmes?

Malawi's SMP has multiple objectives, with different prioritisations amongst implementers and approaches. Generally speaking the aim is to increase school participation, whilst improving pupil's ability to concentrate, nutritional status and food security. SMP are further expected to contribute to improved health, cognitive development and school performance of children.

Through local procurement models some providers also focus on generating positive economic impacts for farmers and adjacent communities. Such approaches adds a promotion of local agriculture function to SMP. Other implementers, especially NAPE, emphasise the objective of improving nutrition education.



### Evidence discussed by stakeholders

<b>School participation</b>	Malawi's education system is characterized by infrequent attendance and high drop-out rates, especially in the transition towards secondary school. Girls are particularly vulnerable due to limited value placed on girls' education. There seems to be a need to incentivize enrolment and attendance.
<b>School attendance</b>	Low attendance and strong seasonality based on the agricultural cycle
<b>Ability to concentrate</b>	Given the widespread and chronic poverty, many children are constantly hungry, especially during the lean season. This can result in difficulties paying attention in class.
<b>Nutritional status and food security</b>	Large sections of Malawi's population are chronically food insecure and malnourishment is widespread amongst children. Regular and nutritious SM could improve the nutritional status of children and contribute towards food security for enrolled children and households.
<b>Local economic growth</b>	Recent innovations in SMP have led to programmes sourcing food locally to support the local agricultural economy.

### Key questions on the relevance of SMP

- **Multiple objectives:** Is multiplicity in objectives pulling the school feeding model in too many directions?
- What should be the primary objective of school feeding given the age of beneficiaries?
- **School participation:** Are SMP an appropriate response to low enrolment and attendance?
  - Do different feeding modalities have different impacts on enrolment and attendance?
  - Is enrolment or attendance the greater challenges? Should SMP be focussed on one?
  - Is the absence of school meals at higher grades (e.g. secondary) a significant reason of dropout?
- **Targeted or universal provision:** Should SMP be provided to all children around the year or targeted based on vulnerability?
- **Nutritional status:** Are SMP relevant interventions with respect to improving the nutritional status of children?
  - Does the school-based nature of SMP preclude impacts on nutritional outcomes?
  - How can school-feeding contribute to addressing chronic malnutrition vis-a-vis acute malnutrition?
- **Food security:** Are SMP capable of addressing food insecurity given the limited in-kind transfer only to children?

### Stakeholder discussion

Stakeholders started by discussing the objectives of the SMP and in how far current implementation modalities respond to the objectives. In particular, stakeholders debated how, if at all, SMP can effectively work towards the various objectives of SMP, which include educational outcomes, such as enrolment, participation, and retention, but also food security and improved nutritional outcomes.

A number of stakeholders suggested SMP may be more impactful if it would have a clearly defined primary objective, which the programmes should be able to directly affect. Enrolment, attendance, and educational performance were suggested as the primary objectives. It was argued that additional impacts, for instance on nutrition, should be seen as positive side effects or secondary objectives rather than primary objectives against which SMP should be evaluated.

Some disagreed and presented global evidence that suggests that healthy students are in a much better position to learn. Even if the objectives were purely focused on educational outcomes, it was claimed that only through nutritional improvement can SMP reach its educational goals.

Eventually it was agreed that, while primary and secondary objectives should be differentiated, SMP can have multiple objectives. The primary objective should be educational (enrolment, attendance, and performance), and health and nutrition outcomes would be secondary objectives.



It was stressed that SMP can be designed based on specific contexts. For instance, educational objectives should be universally applied, whereas nutritional objectives could be tailored to specific geographic context (i.e. a given SMP should address the health issues most common amongst the school's students).

With respect to the question whether SMP could be targeted based on geographic or seasonal vulnerability indicators, stakeholders referred to a 2007 Government directive, which stated that the program should be universal in coverage. In particular, all primary schools should be covered. However, it was recognized that resource scarcity and capacity constraints limit the rollout. Nonetheless, the objectives is still universal rollout.

### Stakeholder recommendations

- 1) **Achieve clarify on the primary and secondary objectives of SMP:** Develop a theory of change on how SMP directly contribute to these objectives
- 2) **Develop a strategy on how to increase coverage and achieve universal provision of SMP**

## 3) What is the impact of School Meals Programmes?

### Evidence discussed by stakeholders

<b>Lack of evidence</b>	There is a lack of rigorous evidence on the impact of different modalities of SMP in Malawi.
<b>Hunger alleviation</b>	Most immediate effect of in-school feeding is the short-term alleviation of hunger. International and Malawian evidence suggests SM are effective in alleviating hunger
<b>Energy consumption</b>	Global evidence suggests total energy consumption of children in SMP schools increases compared to children without SMP. In Malawi, Mary's Meals' evaluation suggests that children are more energetic as a result of SMP.
<b>Micronutrient levels</b>	Global evidence suggests that fortified SMP can mitigate some micronutrient deficiencies. Impacts tend to be are larger for children with large initial deficiencies and SMP cannot remedy damage caused by early childhood deficiencies. In Malawi, no study has yet investigated the impacts of SMP on micronutrient levels.
<b>Anthropometric measures</b>	Global evidence suggests that children receiving in-school feeding do not consistently improve their anthropometric measures. However, SMP have limited impacts on measures that are largely determined in the first two years. If at all, positive impacts usually found for weight rather than height. Only study in Malawi found a significant impact on catch-up growth in lean muscle mass but not on height or weight related indicators.
<b>Health</b>	International studies of SMP with high-nutrition snacks found positive health impacts beyond improved nutrition, e.g. reduced anaemia, morbidity and illness. Mary's Meals' evaluation found improved children's health, with fewer children falling ill due to hunger.
<b>School attendance</b>	Global evidence suggests that children in schools with a SMP spend more time in school than children without SMP. Impacts on participation are often larger for girls, if baseline participation levels are low, if in-school feeding is combined with a THR, and if THR are targeted at girls. One WFP study in SSA estimated that SMP on average increases enrolment by 10%. Mary's Meals' evaluation found evidence of substantial increases in enrolment and attendance.
<b>School progression</b>	Global evidence of impacts on school progression indicators, such as dropout, grade progression, highest grade achieved, and completion is limited and inconclusive..
<b>School performance</b>	Educational performance is commonly measured through test results or tests of cognitive abilities. Globally, evidence for educational performance is inconclusive. Some studies found evidence of positive impacts on cognitive abilities but there is no consistency within test categories or across countries.
<b>Ability to concentrate and learn</b>	Malawian studies of on-site meals find evidence of improvements in short-term ability to concentrate. In Mary's Meals' evaluation, teachers and students report improved grades.. Children in WFP SMP schools show statistically significant improvements for reversal learning but not for other outcomes.



### Key questions on the impact of SMP

- **Impact:** Improve the quality of evidence on impacts setting up a rigorous impact evaluation?
- **Impact on short-term hunger alleviation:** Is this enough? Are there ways for SM to more long-lasting impacts on hunger?
- **Limited impact on anthropometric measures:** What are implications?
- **Limited impact on micronutrient levels:** Should all of Malawi's SM be fortified to address micronutrient deficiencies?
- **Impact on health:** Are there any complementary measures that could further increase the impact of SM on health outcomes?
- **Impact on enrolment highest when combined with THR and targeted at girls:** Should SM increase its focus on girls and increase the use of THR?
- **Limited evidence of impact on school progression:** Is there a way SM could support school performance beyond reducing drop-out levels?
  - Is this beyond the scope of SM and a problem relating to the quality of education?
- **Limited evidence of positive impacts on performance:** Are there ways to increase impacts?

### Stakeholder discussion

A number of studies in Malawi have shown that take-home-rations (THR) are effective in motivating households to keep their kids, in particular girls, in school. These transfers are especially helpful during the lean period.

Given the positive evidence of THR, stakeholders discussed why only one implementer (WFP) is implementing them. THR are an additional transfer to the household, targeted and conditional. Under WFP's programme they are aimed at upper-class girls and orphans boys who meet minimum attendance requirements. The THR is supposed to improve household food security and provide additional incentives not to drop out of school. In higher grades, and especially for girls, there is considerable pressure on students to leave school, earn an income and get married.

Mary's Meals confirmed that the NGO is planning to introduce some THR as well, which will be targeted towards vulnerable households.

Stakeholders discussed what the primary objective of THR are, and especially the focus on girls. If the goal of THR is to ensure that older girls remain in school, it was argued, THR may not be the most effective intervention there are many reasons why girls drop out of school. Some, but not all of them, sanitation-related. It was suggested that cash transfers might be more useful to address these issues, since money is more fungible. In some districts, THR are not provided in-kind but instead paid out as a cash equivalent. This gives household more options as to how to use the transfer. Regardless of cash or in-kind transfers being used, it was argued that THR, by reducing a household's food needs, should free up resources that would enable girls to remain in school.

It was noted that cultural factors also play role in girls dropping-out but that this was beyond the capacity of SMP to address.

Throughout the workshop it was stated that SMP should be careful not to seem to take away parents' responsibility for making sure that kids go to school and are adequately fed.

The discussion frequently turned towards the question whether SMP should be expected to have an impact on educational performance indicators (beyond enrolment and attendance). It was argued that a number of different factors feed into the education production function, for example the infrastructure available or the quality of teaching. It was stated that it is the job of SMP is to get children into class. What parents do, what teachers do, whether there are any teachers present in the first place, or whether there is even a school, was not seen as the responsibility of SMP.





It was often stated that it is not SMP job to improve the quality of education. However, for SMP to live up to current expectations, attendance is not enough and improvements to educational outcomes of students are needed. Stakeholders recognized the challenge that SMP can be effective in improving enrolment and attendance but, without improvements in Malawi's education sector, these impacts will unlikely lead to improvements in education outcomes.

A major challenge of discussing the various SMP implementation models is the lack of research and data, which is the result of the absence of comprehensive and unified M&E system. The development of a harmonized M&E system for the SMP sector was suggested to be a priority.

It was further suggested that, given the limited resources available, the focus of future research should also be on the timing of SMP and when the SMP are most effective. For example it would be interesting to know whether SMP are especially impactful during the lean period.

Generally speaking, stakeholders expressed frustration with the fragmented programming of SMP. It was claimed that had SMP been implemented in a more coordinated manner, the impacts would have been larger. Development partners and the Government implement SMP very differently and even amongst DPs there is considerable variation, which makes cooperation is difficult. A more harmonized and coordinated sector was seen by many as a prerequisite for more impactful implementation.

#### **Stakeholder recommendations**

- 1) **Undertake research on the impact of SMP timing on programme objectives**
- 2) **Develop a strategy on harmonizing the use of THR**
- 3) **Strengthen harmonization of SMP implementation across the sector and improve cooperation**
- 4) **Clarify the relationship between the SCT and SMP**

## **4) How effective are School Meals Programmes?**

Due to the considerable differences in the three main SMP models, each will be discussed separately.

### **Centralised SMP: Corn-Soya Blend Model**

This is the 'traditional' and, by far, the most widespread SMP modality. Under this model, a Corn-Soya Blend is centrally procured, mainly by Mary's Meals and WFP, and then transported to participating schools, where community members, on a voluntary basis (Mary's Meals has 65,000 volunteers) prepare the porridge. In addition, implementers often provide utensils, kitchens, and training.

### **Decentralized SMP: Cooperative Local Food Procurement**

Under this model, schools received a budget to produce food from local suppliers. Schools further received training on dietary diversity, budgeting, and planning.

### **Decentralized SMP: Community Based, Inputs-Only (Government model)**

The Government's approach to SMP is currently being piloted in Mchinji and involves a partnership with the Local Development Fund's Public Works Programme (PWP). Under this model, land is set aside for schools to grow food for school meals. The Government provides inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilizer) and communities grow crops, which are used to feed the school. This can be maize but complementary crops, such as cassava, are also encouraged. Through the PWP partnership, schools are equipped with three facilities: a garden, an orchard and a wood lot. Schools take grow different crops and use them differently. Some schools sell a proportion of the vegetables and then buy ingredients such as sugar or cooking oil. Others grow cash crops and sell them, using the proceeds to buy food for the meals. Under this model, the provision of meals is not always year-round.



## Evidence discussed by stakeholders

### A “service delivery” perspective

<b>Limited coverage</b>	School feeding is not implemented nationwide. While there are districts especially in the Southern and Central regions where more than one implementer operates, there many districts without any activities. In 2014 about 25 percent of primary school children received SMP.
<b>Cost-effectiveness</b>	Limited evidence, data and comparability across countries and models. With USD 59 PPP per child per year, Malawi's SM are the second most expensive in a comparative study of WFP SM in Africa, above the average of USD 40. Commodities make up 50% of total costs.
<b>Regularity and predictability</b>	Unreliable provision of SMP potentially harmful, especially in the presence of substitution effects. Mary's Meals feeding rate is 93% according to its 2016 evaluation.
<b>Home grown school feeding</b>	Challenges with respect to the regular supply of large quantities of diverse food and community support. Improvements in the model being made in Zambia to ensure more steady supply of locally procured food.
<b>Feeding modality</b>	Choice of the feeding modality is a crucial design feature with different advantages and disadvantages. Choice depends on the prioritized objectives, the budget, transportation costs, availability of food, seasonality, community capacity, and local food preferences.

### Key questions on the effectiveness of SMP

- **Cost-effectiveness:** Is SM the most-cost effective policy to improve enrolment, attendance, and children's nutrition?
  - Can objectives be more effectively reached through investment in the education system, health/nutrition interventions, or other social protection interventions?
  - What is the added benefit of SM vis-a-vis direct interventions on specific objectives?
- **Targeted or universal provision:** Is it desirable to have universal government-financed SM in all primary schools all-year-round?
  - Could it be more cost-effective to limit SM to parts of the year in some or all schools?
- **Choice of procurement modalities:** Should there be different procurement modalities for different schools and different contexts?
  - Which procurement modality work best in what contexts?
- **Food security:** Are SM enough to provide food security for children?
  - Which SM modality is the best suited for safeguarding food security?
  - Is there evidence of a 'substitution effect', where households no longer feed children that receive SM? (limited evidence base)
- **Safety net function:** Are SM an adequate safety net for enrolled children and households?
  - Is SM's in-kind transfer sufficient to provide adequate protection?
  - Which SM modality is the best suited with in view of providing a safety net?
  - Could SM be made more crisis-sensitive, i.e. through changes in ration, targeting and frequency during a crisis?
- **HGSF:** Is it possible to provide large-scale SM based on the HGSF model?
  - Is there adequate and sustainable community support for HGSF?
- **Local economic growth:** What is the cost of shifting from central procurement to community procurement procedures?
  - Are local farmers able to consistently provide the quality and quantity required?
  - Which SM modality is the best suited to promote local economic growth?
- **Choice of feeding modalities:** Should there be different feeding modalities for different schools and different contexts?
  - Which feeding modality work best in what contexts? (limited evidence base)



## **Stakeholder discussion<sup>1</sup>**

### **Centralised SMP: Corn-Soya Blend Model**

There are a number for benefits associated with this modality, which are the possibility of near 'total provision' of school meals, consistency in supply and a relatively low cost per child (universal provision for primary schools could be achieved for \$60-75m per year). Further, the centralized corn-soya blend model could be used to mitigate gaps in provision in other models through. The model relies on the free labour of local volunteer teams (majority women), which is a significant local input into the provision of SM.

However, the model is not without challenges. While the Corn-Soya Blend (CSB) model is able to address micronutrient deficiency, it is relatively lower in total calorific value and offers less dietary diversity than offered by some Home Grown School Feeding programmes, which focus on six food groups. The model also requires significant unpaid input in the form of community volunteers, which can be a source of lacking sustainability.

It was noted that if volunteers were paid Malawi's minimum wage, they would provide about 50 percent of the value towards most SMP. This is important to keep in mind when discussing the reliance on community volunteers.

For WFP there is the question of whether paid staff or volunteers are a more reliable and effective option. WFP observes cases where the entire village is busy (funeral, etc.) and none volunteers to cook. Paying community members to cook would make SMP more reliable. Mary's Meals contents that 'unpaid community labour' is a way to generate community ownership and buy-in. Further, Mary's Meals affirms that the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) policy emphasises the role of the parent in adequate feeding, which implies that parents and community members should contribute actively to SMP. The Government stresses that the key question is which of the two modalities provides the best quality of service and value-for-money.

An important distinction of the centralized CSB SMP is that the modality does not provide the daily total caloric value required for a school-age children but only a percentage of that. Implementers stressed that it is key to communicate that parents still have the responsibility to continue feeding their children and do 'push' their feeding responsibilities vis-a-vie the child towards the school. In addition, there is a natural limit to how much children can eat during a school day.

Government states that the different feeding modalities are a problem. For instance, Mary's Meals provides 67 grams of CSB per student per day, whereas WFP provides 100 grams. That there is a need for standardization based on nutritional requirements and cost-effectiveness.

Reliability of the supply is one key advantage of the centralized CSB model. Some stakeholders wondered whether this is true even during the rainy season. Mary's Meals informed stakeholders that they are able to address this through planning and that feeding is consistent throughout the year, regardless of the season.

## **Stakeholder discussion**

### **Decentralized SMP: Cooperative Local Food Procurement**

The main advantage of the Home Grown School Feeding (cooperative local food procurement) model is dietary diversity and varied and nutritious menu it can provide. These models also often contain a strong education and behavioural-change component on nutrition and the importance of food diversity. The model further includes capacity-building of local cooperatives and supply chains and can stimulate local agricultural productivity.

In terms of challenges, the modality is vulnerable to capacity limitations of implementing partners, which can lead to an inconsistent provision of meals. In addition, schools may face challenges in the timely and cost effective procurement of inputs and foodstuff and there is the risk of misuse or mismanagement of funds by school boards. As food is grown locally, there is the risk of inconsistency in supply of local product and during lean season, food may be scarce or unavailable.

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<sup>1</sup> The following discussion of benefits and challenges of various SMP modalities was facilitated and based on research by Imani Consultants as part of the development of a best practices guideline. The MNSSP review workshop was shared with the consultants.





It has been observed that cost of decentralized production, especially at the school level, is higher than that of centralized production. This is mainly due to economic of scale in procurement. One option to reduce cost at the school level would be to find cheaper protein than meat, such as bean or eggs. However, there is a problematic lack of proper nutrition knowledge and many people assume that meat is the most nutritious food available. Developing consistent supply of affordable, nutritious, and locally-grown menus is a challenge.

However, it was stressed that the decentralized model has better nutritional value than the centralized approaches, which should not be lost. Further, the decentralized models provide valuable nutrition education and can communicate the importance of food diversity.

Sanitation was briefly discussed. The implementation guidelines state that no SMP can be established without adequate access to safe water and sanitation facilities. The guidelines further include sensitization to the importance of proper hygiene. Volunteers receive training on these issues at the inception of a SMP. Volunteers preparing the food are required to be in good health and adhere to hygienic standards. .

Quality control is possible but difficult, given the decentralized nature of the model. The food cooked by volunteers needs to be checked every day. At the community level, quantitative indicators, such as maximum amounts of toxin, micro-bacterial levels etc., will not be infeasible. However more qualitative indicators and guidelines may work (such as not storing meat and perishable veggies for long amounts of time).

A key challenge of HGSF models are the potential of inconsistent supply. It was therefore recommended to develop complementarity between centralized and decentralized models, to allow the centralized model to act as a back-up system in case of production shortages.

### **Stakeholder discussion**

#### **Decentralized SMP: Community Based, Inputs-Only (Government model)**

One advantage of the Government model is the strong community ownership. Lower dependency on external resources (mostly seeds and fertilizer) also suggests a relatively high level of sustainability. Through agricultural extension officers, capacity building on agricultural practices is also provided to local communities.

A key challenge, as with all HGSF programmes, is the high dependency on local communities. Further, if land and/or labour are scarce, the capacity to implement this model may not be available. The approach is also vulnerable to climate shocks (droughts or floods), as schools rely to 100 percent on their own crops. It has also been observed that the model is often implemented with a 'one size fits all'-approach. For instance, the amount of seeds and fertilizer provided are apparently not tied of the number of students in the school. Also, the type of crops promoted was not linked to regional climatic conditions. Due to limited inputs, such programmes feed either exclusively during the lean season, or only a few days per week.

A frequently observed challenge of most HGSF SMP was volunteer management. In particular, finding community volunteers for construction duties has proved to be difficult.

It was suggested that a strong focus needs to be placed on ensuring that school gardens are able to grow food year-round. Small-scale irrigation systems were considered promising by stakeholders. The combination of irrigated maize fields for year-round production and a side-focus on cash crops (to enable schools to buy additional ingredients) was considered to provide on sustainable basis for an affordable and diverse diet.

The 'one size fits all' approach of the Government's HGSF model was frequently criticized by stakeholders. It is important to note that the approach is currently being evaluated by the Government. Part of the ongoing evaluation is the question of which inputs should be provided by the Government. The Government is aware that different crops do better in certain regions than others. The Ministry of Agriculture is therefore to provide guidance to teachers on which crops grow best in a particular area. However, teachers have to talk to extension workers for that approach to function and often teachers are unaware of this service. Further, there are also a number of taboos assigned to some foods, and students are more willing to eat certain foods than others, which complicates dietary diversification.



It was suggested that targeted programmes of nutrition education could address this challenge. School meals could, in turn, function as examples of diverse and nutritional meals.

The model is conceptualized by the Government to provide meals throughout the year but if production is inadequate for year-round feeding, the Government advises schools to focus on the lean season, since dropout rates are highest during that time. As mentioned earlier, another option worth exploring could be a centralized back-up system.

### Stakeholder recommendations

- 1) **Standardize feeding portions of centralized CSB model based on nutritional requirements and cost-effectiveness**
- 2) **Develop a strategy on how to include nutritional education in the centralized model**
- 3) **For decentralized SMP, develop sets of low-cost nutritious and regionally sensitive menus:** Include a elements of nutrition education in school meals programmes
- 4) **Consider a system of complementarity between centralized and decentralized models, to allow the centralized model to act as a back-up system in case of production shortages**
- 5) **For decentralized models, develop a system of agricultural and nutritional advice to ensure that schools plant regionally appropriate and nutritious produce for a year-round supply**

## 5) How efficient are School Meals Programmes?

### Evidence discussed by stakeholders

#### A “systems” perspective

<b>Lack of harmonization</b>	Multiple delivery modes and service standards.
<b>Institutional framework and coordination</b>	Ineffective institutional and coordinating mechanisms. Due to inadequate understanding of roles and responsibilities, ineffective communication, high membership turnover. Absence of integrated work plans of implementers
<b>Information systems and technology</b>	Fragmented data and information management systems among implementers
<b>M&amp;E capacity</b>	Weak supervision, monitoring and reporting capacities across the schools. Heavy reliance on manual records by implementers. Limited information on the day-to-day performance, the costs of the various components, and impacts. Lack of consolidated information on costs and impacts across different design and implementation modalities.

### Key questions on the efficiency of SMP

- **Programme harmonization:** Should delivery modes and service standards be harmonized?
  - Should a National Programme be established which different modalities can be gradually aligned (similar to SCT)?
- **Lack of coordination and collaboration:** How can coordination and collaboration between implementers be improved?
  - What institutional arrangements need to be established to facilitate this?
- **Government ownership and leadership:** Is the Government in a position to effectively coordinate and lead implementation of SM?
  - How can the Government be supported to ensure cooperation amongst implementers?
- **Information systems and technology:** Is the Government currently able to effectively fulfil its mandate to oversee and provide policy guidance on SM?
  - Can implementers’ data management systems be harmonized into a unified national system?
- **Monitoring and evaluation capacity:** Can implementers establish a more robust monitoring and evaluation system, taking into account the capacities of schools?
  - Is there a need to move away from paper-based M&E systems?



## Stakeholder discussion

Lack of detailed and up-to-date data on the implementation of SMP and the different reporting practices of stakeholders was recognized as a key challenge to the effective management and supervision capacity of the Government, in particular the Ministry of Education. This challenge was recognised by all stakeholders.

The Government is planning on developing a sector-wide M&E system and wants to pilot how to efficiently elicit data directly from school headmasters. Currently, data collection is based on ad-hoc requests, which are inefficient and very time-consuming, as data needs to be requested from implementing partners. Government also raised the issues of implementers having the possibility of not revealing certain information to the Government.

It was agreed that a sector-wide and Government-owned M&E system needs to be developed. A small set of indicators, which implementers can easily assess and provide information on needs to be compiled and reporting requirements of implementers need to be strengthened and streamlined.

The SCT management and information system (MIS) was brought up as a positive example of a well-functioning system. The SCT has a comprehensive MIS, which is available online. SMP implementers should support the implementation of a similar system. It would be very useful to harmonize the information from individual implementers, and also to harmonize data collection and formats, so they can be presented in a single comprehensive database. Some implementers already have such systems in play. These might provide guidance on how this could be centralized.

The national TWG exists and meets quarterly. It is very functional at the moment. There are similar structures in the districts.

With respect to the deliberate creation of linkages to other MNSSP programs, not much progress has been made. MoFEPS is currently developing a linkages concept for the SMP, based on a similar document developed for the SCT. Which linkages to establish and how to establish them needs to be more of a focus in the future.

## Stakeholder recommendations

- 1) **Develop a sector-wide M&Es system based at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology**
- 2) **Develop a strategy on linking SMP to other social protection programmes and services**

## 6) What is the institutional capacity of School Meals Programmes Implementers?

### Evidence discussed by stakeholders

<b>Leadership and management</b>	Inadequate leadership stability and continuity. Inadequate strategic, project and change management competences. Weak political ownership, commitment and support
<b>Policy, strategy and legislation</b>	Limited awareness and knowledge of relevant developmental instrument
<b>Human resources</b>	Inadequate staffing levels and high workloads due to vacancies. High workload due to use of existing teachers as SHN coordinators. Inadequate knowledge in programme management. Absence of HRD strategy
<b>Physical resources</b>	Inadequate physical resources for coordinating structures. Different standards with respect to kitchens and utensils amongst implementers



### Key questions on the institutional capacity of SMP

- **Management capacity:** How can institutional communication, coordination and collaboration mechanisms be strengthened?
- **Inadequate staffing levels:** How can staffing levels be improved?  
• How can the turnover of senior leadership and managers be reduced?
- **Operational support infrastructure:** What is the necessary investment cost of putting in place adequate operational support infrastructure is in place
- **Fragmented implementation systems:** There seems to be a need to increase Government ownership and streamline implementation systems with a clear Government-led management structure  
• What steps need to be taken to achieve greater Government ownership over SM?

### Stakeholder discussion

It was noted that if volunteers were paid Malawi's minimum wage, they would provide about 50 percent of the value towards most SMP. This is important to keep in mind when discussing the reliance on community volunteers.

For WFP there is the question of whether paid staff or volunteers are a more reliable and effective option. WFP observes cases where the entire village is busy (funeral, etc.) and none volunteers to cook. Paying community members to cook would make SMP more reliable.

According to implementers and the Government, the SHN Department within the Ministry of Education does not currently have the necessary resources to implement all of the suggestions made at the workshop, such as an MIS system. It was suggested by the Government that DPs might be able to provide technical assistance to the Department.

### Stakeholder recommendations

- 1) **Develop a capacity building strategy for the SHN Department within the MoEST:** Development Partners to support the SHN Department through technical assistance

## 7) How sustainable are School Meals Programmes?

### Evidence discussed by stakeholders

<b>Donor dependency</b>	The implementation of SM programmes is heavily dependent on donors and NGOs
<b>Limited sustainability</b>	Limited Government contribution to SM, and potentially high levels of expenditure in relation to Government resources, leaves the programme vulnerable to changes in donor priorities
<b>Government capacity</b>	Inadequate Government capacity to implement large scale SM programmes as indicated by the postponement of the Government-handover of implementation
<b>Sustainability of HGSE</b>	Questions with regards to the sustainability of HGSE pilots due to the high levels of community support required



### Key questions on the sustainability of SMP

- **Analysis of cost:** what would be the realistic cost of operating a national school feeding model at scale?
- **Limited Government ownership:** Will the Government take on greater ownership of the programme?
- **Donor contributions:** How to devise an effective strategy for donors to gradually reduce their contribution to the programme in relative terms?
- **Government capacity:** Over the mid-term, does the Government have adequate financial and logistical capacity to implement a large scale SM programme?
  - Is it realistic to expect the Government to implement the programme in the mid-term future?
  - What does this mean for sustainability of SM in Malawi?
  - Is it possible to adapt current implementation modalities to a model that can be financially sustained by Government in the future?
- **Sustainability of HGFSF:** Are HGFSF approaches the answer to limited sustainability?
  - Can HGFSF overcome the challenges of the community-driven approaches and, in the mid-term future, provide SM large sections of Malawian students?

### Stakeholder discussion

It was agreed by all stakeholders that it is important to develop a mid-term plan for programme handover to the Government. In order to learn from previous failed attempts of handover, it is very key that a handover strategy is developed that outlines steps to be taken before the SMP can be handed over to the Government.

It was suggested that “ownership” is more than a financial term and increase Government ownership of the programme should be a first step before a full handover is undertaken. For instance, the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) remains heavily donor funded but nonetheless stakeholders called it a Government programme due to the strong institutional ownership of it by the MoGCDSW. It was observed that, at the moment, this cannot be said about the various SMP, which are still very much seen as donor programmes.

Stakeholders suggested selecting some schools or even a district to serve as a handover-pilot. This would allow for an analysis of challenges and opportunities.

### Stakeholder recommendations

- 1) **Develop a medium-term plan for programme handover to the Government:** The plan to include capacity building and technical assistance components. In the short-term, ensure that funds flow through Government systems rather than parallel systems.
- 2) **Build evidence on the sustainability, reliability, and quality of service community volunteers vis-a-vis paid staff**





## Traffic Light Evaluation of School Meals Programmes: Interventions, outputs and activities

Strategic interventions, indicators, baseline values and targets for school meals							
Intervention	Indicator	Baseline	Source	Target 2016	Actual 2016	Source	Comments
Develop sustainable funding mechanism	Proportion of total budget required funded	11.3%	MoE SWAP, MoF	100%			Not met
	Proportion of disbursed funds utilised						Partially met
Support schools to develop infrastructure needed to deliver TSSMP	No. of targeted schools fully equipped as per the SHN guidelines	18.6%	MoE	100%			
Develop linkages between TSSMP and relevant sectors e.g. SCT, SHN, OVC, Gender, Agriculture, Health	% of eligible of schools benefiting from other sectors	TBC	MoE, MoGCC D	TBC			Performed poorly on linkages
	% of eligible OVC learners benefiting from other sector services						<b>Stakeholder comments:</b> -Implementers focus on linkages, since certain construction tasks (such as boreholes or kitchen facilities) are usually necessary. This has proven to be quite effective. -But implementers experience that linkages did not exist when they started the program. For example, PWP workers could not be recruited easily. -Cooperation is already good at the higher (national) level, but gets worse as you get closer to the field. Ministries should tell their extension workers to focus on linkages.
Improve Nutrient Content of the meal	Level of protein, fat and micronutrient in the food served	15g protein, 350Kcal/meal	MoE, WFP, Mary's Meals	1/3 of daily reference intake by age group?			Implementers use different standards. A Best Practice Guidelines consultancy under way to provide solutions  <b>Stakeholder comments:</b> -Implementers are experimenting with different portion sizes. Financial constraints create a trade-off between outreach/extent of the SMP and the food provided to each student. -Implementers are also still experimenting with the meal composition. -The government should provide minimal standards.
Promote community ownership and sustainable community contribution	% of targeted schools with well-functioning food committees	18.6%	MoE M&E reports	100%			Some have functioning committees, others do not
Strengthen Management Capacity for TSSMP	% of needed posts filled	TBC	MoE quart. reports	All posts that are needed			<b>Stakeholder comments:</b> -Current class sizes are too large, which suggest a lack of capacity on part of the government to manage the SMP. The teacher strike also looks bad. It seems that the government lacks personnel. -The Ministry of Education's SHN department is in need of support, both in terms of human resources and other input. The Ministry should designate two central people for managing the SMP. -There is also a need for support in terms of capacity. Every single program in the country has an impact on education. Yet even at the district levels, there are no nutritionists, for example. A unit devoted to running the SMP would be great. -Using the existing capacity might be more practicable. Expertise is available all the way down to the grassroots, people there just need to coordinate better.
	% of staff who have the requisite knowledge and skills			Created and filled with approp. qualified and skilled people			
	%age of staff who have adequate logistical and office equipment	TBC	MoE quart. reports	All staff in post adequat. equipped			



Strategic Outputs and Activities		
Strategic Output Target 1: Implementation structures put in place		
Strategic Activity		Comments
SHN dept. conduct human capacity gap analysis for SMP delivery at all levels.		
Develop posts and Job Descriptions for people needed (28 district SMP monitors; 4 HQ: 2 procurement, 1 PPP, driver).		
Procure equipment and secure space for 4 central level personnel and provide for running costs.		
Strategic Output Target 2: All qualified personnel in place with the appropriate equipment		
Recruit required personnel (28 SMP monitors; 2 procurement officers; PPP officer and driver).		
Support personnel costs (training and salaries).		
Strategic Output Target 3: M&E system and tools developed and implemented, M&E system linked to EMIS		
Merge / Revise M&E system linked to EMIS: Conduct 3 meetings over 2 months with 10-member task force (MoE SHN, EMIS, WFP, Mary's Meals and a consultant).		SHN/SMP Indicators were incorporated in the EMIS and will be reported on a constant predictable basis
Assess, procure equipment (if needed) in the 28 targeted vulnerable education districts for DSHNC & SMP monitors.		
Run training course on the use of the M&E tools to collect and process the data. (Target 118 staff from education districts 28 DEMs, 28 DSHNC, 28 SMP monitors, 28 EMIS; 6 education divisions; and 6 facilitators from MoE HQ M&E & SHN).		
Carryout 2 support visits (then regular SHN monitoring) involving 12 people from HQ/Division to 28 districts.		This has been happening but not on a regular basis
Strategic Output Target 4: Resource allocation in national budget for TS-SMP		
Sensitise and create awareness targeting relevant Ministries and stakeholders (Target 400 people (parliament, sector leaders, DPs); 1 event / biannually)		Not done on a consistent basis
Strategic Output Target 5: Mechanism for public-private partnership developed and operationalized (Game, banks, Illovo, Toyota Malawi to construct school kitchens as part of corporate social responsibility		
Conduct at least 1 meeting / quarter with potential private sectors to support TS-SMP.		
Sign at least 2 MOU partnership agreements /year.		
Strategic Output Target 6: Linkages with other sectors strengthened		
MoE SHN negotiate with other sectors (MoGCCD, MEPD, MoLG) to provide support necessary to VC in TS-SMP areas.		
Quarterly District SHN meetings (subgroup of DEC).		Some districts have been having them, others not
Prepare, print and disseminate MoE SHN bi-annual SHN newsletters.		
Strategic Output Target 7: Support to VC from other sectors		
DSHNC & DSWO - create electronic district database/ mapping for support available to VC in all 34 education districts, meet with DEC, DPD, etc.		
DSHNC & DSWO - Print & Distribute appropriate sections of the database to 5,300 schools and sensitize all head teachers to services available, work with head teachers to fill in the gaps where VCs need support.		
Strategic Output Target 8: Increase level of awareness of institutional energy options available		
Conduct a Energy Workshop with field visits for school meals partners and energy partners. By the end of the workshop have 15 potential pilot schools.		
Strategic Output Target 9: Develop and test a menu of locally adaptable suitable energy source options		
MoE, MoNREE develop and run 1 year pilot on energy options with at least 15 targeted vulnerable school communities. Select and Assess 15 schools to determine best energy options to pilot.		
Procure equipment / build as needed (biogas, fuel efficient stoves, solar, hydroelectric).		
Central level provides 2-day Training for 15 Food Committees on last day invite and sensitize 15 school communities (50 people in each community).		Implemented irregularly
Conduct 2 pilot monitoring visits, 2 Review Meetings and carry out documentation.		
Strategic Output Target 10: 2,250 Vulnerable Schools supported to implement the appropriate energy supply options		
1 Training and 2 support visits per school, then regular SHN monitoring. 2,235 targeted vulnerable schools (2,235 = 2,250 vulnerable -15 pilot).		Irregularly done



<b>Strategic Output Target 11: Standardised infrastructure specifications developed</b>		
Assess targeted schools for infrastructure needs. Start with WFP/MM to merge databases for current 989 schools and develop form for DSHNC to fill in gaps in the database for their district in 28 targeted vulnerable education districts; provide communication units.		Partly done
MoE SHN, EIMU, DPs Meet to standardise the kitchen, storeroom and dining areas specifications. Start with WFP/MM to merge standards.		Enforcement of this happened in 2016
<b>Strategic Output Target 12: TS-SMP infrastructure built in 1,853 schools</b>		
Utilise linkages with PWP for TS-SMP infrastructure. SHN Dept/National PWP work with 28 DEMs to include in DIPs and DEPs and assist school committees to write proposals to District PWP; also support with communication.		Linkages least explored
Build infrastructure in 1,853 schools (WFP/MM already in 532). Procure & deliver external items as needed: cement, wood, iron sheets, rebar, and local artisan. DEMs communicate with National SHN or EIMU to update national database on SMP infrastructure.		
<b>Strategic Output Target 13: Awareness and understanding created within targeted schools and communities</b>		
28 DSHNCs Conduct 2 sensitisation and awareness meetings with 550-600 new school communities per year on the TS-SMP.		Awareness meetings were conducted but as not stipulated in the targets
Public awareness SMP campaign (2 annually) in the popular media.		Implemented irregularly
<b>Strategic Output Target 14: Capacity to manage and implement the programme built</b>		
28 DSHNC conduct Food Committee / SMC trainings in each school on how to deliver the SMP.		Trainings have been done but not as required
Implement CSB School Meals Procurement & Delivery CSB to start (Target ~550 schools in 28 districts / year (about 18 schools/district / year); 25 kg bag CSB = 2,100mk w/delivery, etc. = 250 children), including current 989 schools run by WFP/MM as they will handover to government.		Handover did not happen, WFP and other orgs reaching more schools
Support schools handover and train new Food Committee Members when turnover occurs, DSHNC monitor during regular SHN monitoring.		
Home Grown School Meals: DSHNC with DSNC (FNO) assist school communities to grow their own foods to supply the SMP. Target 500 schools in 28 district/year.		MoE is able to reach over 500 schools now but initially it was not
<b>Strategic Output Target 15: Menu of suitable, locally available and nutritious meal options developed</b>		
Develop 1 electronic nationwide database of local food producers and their products appropriate to SMP.		Not done
Run 1 year pilot to test acceptability of different Meals Options for SMP. 200 schools in 4 districts, trying different possibilities. DSHNC and Nutrition Officer from MoH or MoA do sensitizations, develop/test 10 products.		Different meals have been tried but with limited options (porridge, energy biscuits, etc)
2 pilot monitoring visits by central level staff, 2 review meetings and documentation of experiences / lessons.		These have been happening but not regularly