Do school-focused Public Food Procurement Policies have nutritional benefits in sub-Saharan Africa: Implementation challenges and enablers

The HD4HL Project Multi-stakeholder Technical Task Team (M3T) Retreat

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Presenter: Julia Liguori - julia.liguori@ird.fr, PhD Candidate, IRD

Team members: Prof. Michelle Holdsworth, Dr Mathilde Savy, IRD; Prof Amos Laar, Silver Nanema University of Ghana; Dr Hibbah Osei-Kwasi, Loughborough University
School Meal Programmes

~ 418 million children in 176 countries received a school meal (WFP, 2022)

In Africa, an estimated 65.4 million children in 51 countries received a school meal (African Union, 2021)

Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP)
Public Food Procurement (PFP) Policies

- Food procurement for public institutions represent large proportions of government budgets at the local and national level.

- PFP are increasingly recognised as a relevant preventive strategy to reduce noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the context of increasing overweight/obesity in children and adolescents in SSA (WHO, 2021).

- Opportunity to improve the health and nutritional status of programme beneficiaries, such as pupils and overall nutrient quality and sustainability of food served.
Systematic Review conducted: Research questions

1: What is the impact of Public Food Procurement Policies in schools on school food environments and nutritional outcomes of children/adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) ?

2: What are the barriers and facilitators to implementing effective Public Food Procurement Policies in schools in SSA ?
34 studies included after a rigorous screening & selection process of 2922 studies.
School Food System Framework

Policy & Legislation
Production of food
Wholesale & Trading
Transport & Storage
Processing & Distribution
Food preparation
Distribution to students
Students as stakeholders
Community involvement
Food preparation
Distribution to students
Students as stakeholders
Community involvement
Enablers

- Students
- Community involvement
- Processing & Distribution
- Wholesale & Trading
- Food preparation
- Distribution to students
- Policy & Legislation
- Production of food
- Transportation & Storage

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<td>Students</td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
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<td>Student perceptions (positive)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dei, Desalegn, Khama, Sanousi, Sibanda, Sulemana</td>
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<td>Community involvement</td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td>Molotaj, Okae-Adjei, Rendall-Mkosi, Sanousi, Sibanda</td>
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<td>Banda, Daitai, Moepeng, Okae-Adjei, Rector</td>
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“Before the school feeding programme, you had to go and borrow money if you didn’t have for the child to buy something, but now the programme has reduced the burden such that even when there is no money, the child can fall back on what will be served in school”
[Caregiver, Ghana] (Fernandes et al., 2016)
Challenges

- Distribution to students
- Food preparation
- Policy & Legislation
- Wholesale & Trading
- Transportation & Storage
- Processing & Distribution
- Students
- Community involvement
- Production of food

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<td>Meal diversity</td>
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<td>Teachers receiving school meals</td>
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“The government does not release money to the school on time, so the matron cannot do her best to provide good food. You see, the food sometimes is not that fine and even the quantity is sometimes small but what [to] do, the matron cannot use her own money to cook for the children. We just have to pray that the government increases the support” [Head Teacher, Ghana] (Yendaw & Dayour, 2015).
Recommendations (so far)

For researchers:
- More rigorous methods at baseline and endline, larger sample sizes, larger scope
- More impact evaluations + frequency of evaluations
- Further research needed on: intersectoral programming, the purchase of locally grown food, monitoring mechanisms for food suppliers, decentralized food procurement models, tools

For government and schools:
- Restructure the SFP, e.g. the eligibility criteria of the quintile system in South Africa
- More monitoring and evaluation of the SFP
- Expand school gardens
- Work with farmers to encourage them to grow more diverse and nutrient-rich crops
- Identify ways that challenges can be overcome and who can help address them
Next steps

- Analyse policy-specific recommendations
- Analyse the quantitative findings
- Finalise results and submit draft/report by July 2023
Thank you!

Some of the review team members visiting Pantang Hospital Primary School in Greater Accra, May 2023.