Improving the nutritional content of school meals to address the double burden of malnutrition: A review of nutrient standards of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Program

Sub theme: Scaling Up Nutrition Interventions through appropriate policy guidance

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School Feeding Programs & SDGs

Goal 1: No Poverty
Goal 2: Zero hunger
Goal 2.2: End malnutrition and all its forms by 2030
Goal 4: Quality education
Goal 5: Gender equality
SDG 8: Good jobs and economic growth

Nutritional status of school- aged children

Child malnutrition and COVID- 19

African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN) Initiative Embedding Nutrition within the Covid-19 Response and Recovery

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Child malnutrition and COVID-19: the time to act is now

The COVID-19 pandemic is undermining nutrition across the world, particularly in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs).[1] The worst consequences are borne by young children. Some of the strategies to respond to COVID-19—including physical distancing, school closures, trade restrictions, and country lock-

four life-saving interventions: prevention of wasting in children at risk; treatment for children who are wasted; biannual vitamin A supplementation for children aged 6-59 months (90% coverage); and mass communication for the protection, promotion, and support of breast-feeding that focuses on caregivers or families of children

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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this project is to **analyse the nutrition targets of the NHGSFP** and **identify how the food industry can partner in the NHGSFP to help to realise its nutrient targets**

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Nutrient targets of the NHGSFP

- **30 – 40% of total daily dietary requirement** for SFPs that children spend half day in school
- Proposed Minimum **Energy and Nutrient Intake Targets** for NHGSF:

Nutrient	RNI†	NHGSF Nutrient Target (% of RNI)	NHGSF Nutrient Target (Amounts/Day)
Energy (kcal/day)	1871	30	561
Protein (g/day)	58	50	29
Fat (g/day)	62	30	19
Iron (mg/day)	8	50	4
Iodine (µg/day)	105	50	53
Vitamin A (µg RE/day)	475	50	238
Vitamin C (mg/day)	33	50	17
Zinc (mg/day)	5	50	3
Folate (µg DFE/day)	250	50	125

Source: Nutrient targets for NHGSFP

Gaps in nutrient targets of the NHGSFP:

Fortification

- However, appropriate amounts of micronutrients not present in home grown school meals. [1]

- A study on the nutritional value of school meals and their contributions to energy and nutrient intakes of rural schools in Enugu and Anambra (2018):[2]

❑ The meals provided a third of recommended daily intake of **protein**, **zinc and Vitamins A and C**

❑ However, the portion sizes given to pupils were not nutrient dense enough to provide the required one third of energy and nutrient intake requirement for **calcium and iron**

Gaps in nutrient targets of the NHGSFP:

Fortification

- How about **iodine, zinc and folate** recommended by the NHGSFP?

- **Iron, Zinc, and Copper malnutrition** among Primary School Children between 5-8 years old in Lagos (2011). [3]

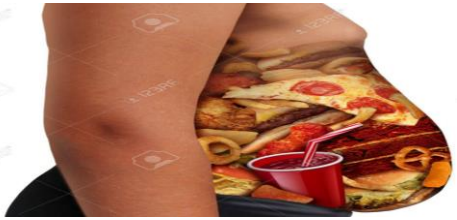
- Complementary interventions such as **micronutrients fortification and supplementation in SFP**s improves **micronutrient status** and **reduced anemia**[4]

- Consequently, will require food processing as a step in the value chain[5]
- According to WFP, consideration of **tradeoffs between nutrition and local procurement** of SFPs[1]

Gaps in nutrient targets of the NHGSFP:

Why place upper limits for fats, sugars and salt ?

- Childhood overweight and obesity are one of the main public health challenges of the 21st century, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. [6]



- Evidence of overweight and obesity in school aged children and youths in Sub-Saharan Africa. [7]

- School based interventions have potential to **improve diets**, **physical activity behavior** and **prevent unhealthy body weights** in LMICs. [8]

The need for nutrition guidelines and standards for SFPs

- More emphasis should be placed on setting **upper limits for saturated fat, sugar and sodium or salt**, especially in context where **overweight and obesity is prevalent among school children** or when **processed food products are included in the program**.[9]

- **Gaps** in terms of guidance on **nutrition standards** and **menu composition** in LMICs. [10]

Stakeholder engagement

- There is a **challenge to improve the nutritional value of school meals** to meet nutritional requirements for school children **merely through home grown meals**
- Include **fortified foods that are locally grown**
- NHGSFP will consider **factors that will ensure that processed foods are nutritious**
- Standards should **be science-based, coherent with global standards and technically achievable**
- SMEs will need **technical assistance to develop / reformulate their food products to comply with these standards**

The need for nutrition guidelines and standards for SFPs

International organisations recommending the development of nutrition guidelines and standards

ICN2 Framework for Action. Recommendation 16: "Establish food or nutrient-based standards to make healthy diets and safe drinking water accessible in public facilities such as hospitals, childcare facilities, workplaces, universities, schools, food and catering services, government offices and prisons, and encourage the establishment of facilities for breastfeeding" (FAO and WHO, 2014)

Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, Healthy meals in schools Policy Brief. Recommendation 1: "Define a national policy goal to revise and update the nutritional standards for school meals, which should be consistent with national dietary guidelines: Policy-makers should make 'healthy meals' a minimum requirement for all food programmes in schools, and use this requirement to promote ancillary nutrition education, physical activity and behaviour change activities." (GLOPAN, 2015)

WHO, Global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013–2020. Policy options for promoting healthy diets: "Promote the provision and availability of healthy food in all public institutions including schools, other educational institutions and the workplace. For example, through nutrition standards for public sector catering establishments and use of government contracts for food purchasing" (WHO, 2013).

Source FAO, 2019

CONCLUSION

Source: FAO, 2019

RECOMMENDATION/NEXT STEPS

- Step 1: Develop national nutritional guidelines and standard for processed foods in the NHGSFP that consider micronutrient deficiency and includes upper limits for salt, sugars and fats.

- Step 2: Public sector engagement

- Step 3: Private sector engagement

- Step 4: Monitoring and evaluation

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

- SFPs can contribute to addressing the **Goal 2.2** as well as other **SDGs**
- SFPs are one of the **most cost effective and efficient strategies to address the double burden of malnutrition**
- **Nutrition criteria for school meals** can serve as procurement standards for school meals in SFPS as well as a guide for foods available in the school environment and nutrition education
- **Private sector** contribution is essential to meeting nutrition objectives of SFPs in a sustainable way

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Thank you!

JOINT ACTION FOR HEALTHY DIETS

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