



Assessing Sustainability Mechanisms Underpinning Social Support Projects Implemented by Non -Governmental Organizations in Malawi - A Case Study of School Feeding Programs in Kaphuta Education Zone in TA Mzikubola of Mzimba District.

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ABSTRACT

Malawi is one of the list developed countries in southern Africa and heavily depend on the donor community. It is one of the country implementing school feeding programs which started in the late 90s. Despite having several SMP providers with different feeding and procurement modalities and the main providers being are the World Food Programme, Mary's Meals, Seibo Maria and the Government of Malawi, the school feeding program is facing a number of challenges in regards to sustainability. To understand the sustainability of the programme, the researcher conducted a study to assess the sustainability strategies or mechanisms underpinning social support projects implemented by Non -Governmental organizations in Malawi - A case study of school feeding programs. The study was conducted in Kaphuta education zone in TA Mzikubola of Mzimba District. The study was guided by four objectives and adopted a Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used. Data collection used semi-structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The sample study comprised of 105 participants which were school heads, SHN teachers, Directors, project coordinators, village heads, DSWO, SCTP Coordinator, M and E officer and District planning officer. The study uncovered a lot of issues in regards to sustainability of the school feeding programme. The responses pertaining to perception of school feeding programme, the researcher found out that almost all the respondents were positive such as increased school enrollment and attendance, improved performance, reduce dropout and absenteeism and reduced malnutrition as some of the benefits of the programme. On the challenges of the programme it was discovered that participants are not knowledgeable about the sustainability mechanisms used in school feeding programme. Some do not know the policy in place that guides the implementation of school feeding programme citing that they are not part of decision making in policy formulation. Some of the challenges mentioned during the study include environmental shocks that can affect agriculture production, political will to support and sustain the programme, social-economic in regards to local ownership and participation as well as inflation rates, devaluations that affect procurement of food products which have an implication on sustainability of school feeding programme. The researcher recommends that the challenges can be mitigated through solutions that fosters sustainable programme for example planning, conducting frequent monitoring, community mobilization, promote stakeholder coordination and collaboration.

1.0 Introduction

The study looked at assessing sustainability mechanisms underpinning school feeding program as a social support project implemented by Non - Governmental organizations in primary school in Kaphuta edication zone in TA Mzikubola, Mzimba District. For a better understanding of the issues at hand, this chapter provides background information to the study which practically explains effectiveness and sustainability of school feeding programmes in respect to achievement of education outcomes especially in primary schools but also perception of children and parents over the school feeding programmes, sustainability mechanisms implored by implementing agencies to ensure school feeding programs is addressing food insecurity, decreased primary school enrollment, primary school completion and reducing malnutrition conditions in Malawi, and beyond. The significance and aims of the study is also discussed in this chapter to provide the direction. The chapter contains a problem statement which provides a basis for conducting this study. Lastly, the working definitions is also detailed in this chapter to provide a clear understanding of some concepts used in this study.

1.1 Background of the study

School feeding programs (SFPs) are important tools for enhancing student livelihoods and academic performance in primary school. These programs have different goals and expectations in High-Income Countries (HICs) and Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) (dos Santos et al., 2022). In HICs, SFPs often focus on increasing dietary diversity and minimizing childhood obesity. Conversely, SFPs in LMICs usually focus on combating malnutrition and increasing school attendance and education outcomes. These programs often rely heavily on external donor support and local community involvement (Gelli et al, 2019).

One-third of children living in LICs and more than a quarter of those living in LMICs approximately 133 million in total have experienced a linear decline in growth, by their fifth birthday (UNICEF et al., 2023). These children account for 90% of stunting worldwide, carrying the health risks that accompany poor nutrition and the learning disadvantages that come with impaired cognitive development. Stunting in the early years is a strong predictor of cognitive and wider educational deficits in adolescents, which in turn increases the likelihood of stunted children becoming impoverished adults (Stevens et al., 2022a).

1.2 Problem statement

The effectiveness, efficiency and long lasting impact of social support projects under implementation by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Malawi are often grappled by issues related to sustainability. Despite the significant considerable efforts made by these organizations to address critical social challenges such as poverty, education, hunger, healthcare, and gender equality, many projects face difficulties in maintaining their outcomes once the project phases out or when the project period comes to an end. This raises questions about the mechanisms in place to ensure that the projects continue to benefit communities with long lasting impact. Poor understanding of sustainability frameworks contributes to NGOs risk to failure of their initiatives after the termination of their involvement, leaving vulnerable populations without the necessary support for continuity.

Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gap in knowledge regarding the sustainability practices of NGOs working in Malawi by examining how they devise, implement and evaluate sustainability mechanisms in their social support initiatives. It will explore the extent to which current practices align with sustainable development principles and identify potential barriers that hinder the continuity of positive impacts. By assessing these mechanisms, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations that will enable NGOs to adopt more effective approaches to sustainability, fostering long-term positive change for the communities they serve.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 Main objective

To assess sustainability mechanisms underpinning social support projects implemented by NGOs Mzimba district specifically in Kaphuta Education zone

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To evaluate the sustainability mechanisms of school feeding programs implored in primary school in Kaphuta Education zone.
- To examine the effectiveness of policies promoting sustainable school feeding programs.
- To explore the perception of stakeholders on school feeding programs.
- To examine factors affecting sustainability of School Feeding Programs implemented by NGOs.

1.5 Significance of the study

Given the importance of education as a catalyst for development, this may not be achieved if efforts to the government and non-governmental organizations have agreed to create a School Feeding Program (SFP) for primary schools. This study will provide detailed information on the reasons for persisting low coverage and sustainability of SFP and its significance to learners on education outcomes besides receiving school feeding programme.

The study will help the government to review education policies and other supporting policies in regards to school feeding programs so that the programme should be universal and sustainable. School feeding programs should be the Government obligation to provide the service to the children both in rural and urban areas. Developmental partners who compliments and supports efforts of the government through funding should make sure that there is sustainability in the implementation of school feeding programs through adequate and sustainable financing of school feeding programmes. The study may help the parents and the school management committees develop positive attitudes towards the active involvement in school feeding activities and processes for procuring food stuffs from local farmer groups. To the national government, the study may provide data on the administration of the school feeding programme and its effect on access and retention. Further, the study findings may provide critical information to the Ministry of Education and curriculum planners to develop a framework towards effective implementation of school feeding programmes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Literature review refers to the body of knowledge gathered by earlier studies. This section focused on Global and local overview of school feeding programme and school feeding programme in Malawi. The chapter reviews the literature related to the relationship between school feeding programs and education and health outcomes of school aged children in various primary schools in Malawi and elsewhere in the World. The chapter discusses statistics available on the effectiveness and efficiency of school feeding programs on education in various parts of the world. This literature reviewed also focused on the perception that children and parents have on school feeding programs, the sustainability strategies employed by agencies providing various food

staffs in schools, policy implications on school feeding programs challenges faced by stakeholders in relation to implementation of the programme and sustainability mechanisms or strategies being used to sustain implementation of school feeding programs.

2.1 Definition of key terms.

School feeding programme:

Is defined as a targeted social safety net that provide food to children in schools aiming to improve nutrition, health and educational outcomes. These programs are particularly vital in low income countries where they serve as mechanisms to enhance education outcomes and addressing hunger and malnutrition (world Food Program 2020)

School going children

According to UNICEF 2022, School going children refers to individuals within the official school age range of 5 to 18 years who are enrolled in and attending education institutions.

School feeding.

School feeding is defined as the provision of breakfast, lunch, or both to children while they are in school, sometimes also known as interventions that regularly provide nutritious foods to children and adolescents attending school (WFP 2020).

Completion rate

The total number of students completing (or graduating from) the final year of primary or secondary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of the official primary or secondary graduation age (Malawi National Education Profile 2018).

Dropout rate

Proportion of pupils from a cohort enrolled in a given grade at a given year who are no longer enrolled in the following school year (Malawi National Education Profile 2018).

School attendance:

Refers to the presence of a pupil at any regular accredited public primary school in Malawi

Nutrition

This refers to the process by which living organisms obtain and utilize food substance to maintain life, growth and optimal health. It involves the intake, digestion, absorption and metabolism of nutrients from the food (FAO 2019).

Malnutrition

This is a condition that occurs when the body does not receive adequate nutrients, vitamins and minerals to maintain optimal health. This happens due to poor diet, chronic illness aging and food insecurity (FAO 2019).

Sustainability

This refers to the ability to maintain or support a process, system or activity without depleting natural resources, or causing harm to the environment, economy or society.

Sustainable mechanisms

Sustainable mechanisms refer to the various tools, strategies and practices that support sustainable development by balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection

2.2 Main Literature Review

2.2.1 The impact and multiple benefits of school feeding programs on education outcomes

Evidence concerning the impact of school feeding programs on educational outcomes is mixed. Some researchers find positive and significant effects for at least some indicators (Nikiema, 2019) while others find no impact at all or very modest effects (Azomahouet al., 2019). Numerous studies describe and evaluate different aspects of school feeding, but there is no universally sustainable model (Fernandes et al., 2016). The primary objective of the school feeding program is to provide meals to alleviate short term hunger, increase attention span, facilitate learning and obviate the need for children to leave school to find food. In-school meals also act as an incentive to increase school attendance. In addition to that, micronutrient fortification and deworming could be included in the school meal program as they are cost-effective interventions. School meals provide a bridge between education and child health. That bridge starts at the pre-primary level. Far too many children enter school carrying the disadvantages that come with chronic under-nutrition in their early years – the ‘first 1000 days’. Those disadvantages include impaired cognitive development. Stunting in the early years, a product

of chronic under nutrition, is closely associated with lower levels of learning, an increased risk of school dropout, and more restricted life-chances. That is why the charity Their World has emphasized the critical role of pre-primary education in mitigating the impact of early childhood malnutrition and preparing children for school (Watkins. K. et al 2024).

2.2.2 Importance of School Feeding Programs

School feeding (SF) programs boast of a number of benefits ranging from nutrition, cognitive and education. Thus, School Feeding programmes are implemented with the primary aims of addressing child hunger and nutritional deficits, and boosting school participation and learning (World Bank 2018). As of 2018, 117 countries operating such schemes reported that as many as 370 million children receive school meals everyday (UNICEF, WFP 2020). SF can take the form of hot meals or snacks prepared in schools or centralized community kitchens (WFP 2018), or are incorporated into humanitarian assistance programs. The G20 has established a new Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty aimed at mobilizing resources and building a new partnership to turn the tide in the fight against poverty and hunger. A global drive to expand school feeding through nationally owned programs is a good starting point.

2.2.3 Relative cases of school feeding programmes and their relevance

2.2.3.1 Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, where girls received a home meal if they attended school at least 90% of the time, duplicating the effect of a conditional cash transfer, enrolment increased for both girls and boys (Nikiema, 2019). In southern Ethiopia, a randomized control trial found that students in a control group who did not receive school meals missed twice as many days of school throughout the year (Desalegn et al., 2021). The evidence on school meals is consistent with the wider evidence from conditional (i.e., contingent on school attendance) and unconditional cash transfer programmes (Bastagli et al., 2016). Other benefits of school feeding for learning have been widely documented. A summary of evidence from 11 studies demonstrated that school feeding contributes to better learning while keeping vulnerable children at school (Bedasso, 2022).

2.2.3.2 Nigeria

School Feeding Programme have been a key response to the recent food and economic crises and function to some degree in nearly every country in the world. Tijani, et al (2017), in the study at Maiduguri metropolis of north eastern Nigeria define school feeding as the provision of food on site or to take home, or the provision of food to school children. School feeding is a multi-sectoral intervention with effects across education, health and nutrition and with the potential for benefits across a life course. Free school feeding in some states in Nigeria is a way to supplement the existing food and nutritional ration among the children. The first time a school feeding programme was launched in Nigeria was in 2005 with the assistance of the United Nations' Children Education Fund (UNICEF) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Ayodele, 2019). The goal was to provide one meal per school day to all primary school pupils in Nigeria aimed at improving the health of school children, increase their enrolment, retention and completion rate (Cummings & Kulutuye, 2017). The essence of free feeding with regards to public health objectives and educational development in Nigeria, is to address the quantity and quality challenges in children nutrition, as well promote enrolment, punctuality and performance among pupils. The programme also set to reduce the rate of dropout and child labour among pupils (Kiilu & Mugambi, 2019).

2.2.4. School Feeding Program in Malawi

In Malawi, School feeding program has proved to be effective in increasing access to basic education particularly for OVCs. There has been an expansion of school meals with 43% of all public primary schools offering school meals. Not only has the number of schools covered increased; but also the number of school meal models have increased from the traditional centralized procurement model where food mostly Corn-Soybean Blend (CSB) is centrally procured and distributed to schools to home grown school meals programmes. In schools where school meals have been provided, there have been reports of increased enrolment and improved attendance of learners in class (MESA 2019).

2.2.5. The effectiveness of policies promoting school feeding programs

According to Roothaert et al., 2021, policies for a sustainable SFP should include: (i) leadership and public awareness; (ii) operational considerations, (iii) parental contributions, and (iv) food diversity and nutrition.

2.2.5.1 Leadership and public awareness

Leadership is essential for SFP success and sustainability. Well-structured school food committees at the grassroots level that are accountable to parents and school management can play an active role in fundraising and resource mobilization in locations where SFPs are not fully funded by the government or other donors. Initiatives, often government or donor sponsored, should provide opportunities for schools to participate in professional development workshops, receive guidance and support from multiple, varied stakeholders, and access resources and guides specifically designed to facilitate SFP implementation (Roothaert et al., 2021; Rossi et al., 2021; Wolfenden et al., 2019).

2.2.5.2. Operational considerations

Engaging students in menu planning can reduce food waste by ensuring that desirable recipes are used for food preparation. Making a game of this process by having the students include foods with different nutrient contents in potential meals teaches students the value of a balanced diet and helps them understand constraints that are critical to planning adequate meals at home as well. Including factors influencing food refusal in the menu planning process also can reduce food waste (Davis et al., 2015; Eustachio Colombo et al., 2020; dos Santos et al., 2022).

2.2.5.3 Parental contributions

Parents and the community surrounding a school are essential partners with schools, government and benefactors of SFPs in ensuring a program's sustainability (Roothaert et al., 2021). Parent and community groups can make their significant contributions to a SFP and are essential for SFP sustainability. Communities must be aware of the need for infrastructure like kitchens and warehouses or storerooms at the school premises, and should work with government authorities at national, local levels and parents to develop the necessary facilities for school feeding. School communities usually provide the labor to prepare school meals, paying cooks and other personnel. Schools also must safeguard human and environmental health, develop resource-efficient supply chains, support regional food cultures, and ensure safe and healthy local food production and consumption, regardless of a student's socioeconomic class or identity (Eustachio Colombo et al., 2021; Pagliarino et al., 2021 and Kluczkowski et al., 2022;). Experience has shown that the involvement of local women in the SFP is paramount for the long-term success of a SFP.

2.2.5.4 Food diversity and nutrition

Schools should participate in initiatives to increase nutritional awareness among the general public and thereby influence the diets of everyone in the community. SFP policies should include certification standards, and protocols for adopting new supply chains and for sustainable local sourcing of ingredients (Gaddis and Jeon, 2020). Comprehensive implementation support is essential for long-term adherence to school nutrition policies with a goal for schools to adhere to established nutrition policies in the absence of external support for at least 12 months (Wolfenden et al., 2019).

2.2.6. The perception of children and parents affecting implementation of school feeding program

Deliberate measures that encourage positive perceptions of an SFP by children and their parents results in better acceptance of the food provided and reduces waste. Food provided must suit the students' tastes without compromising the dietary requirements for adequate nutrition on the one hand and promoting environmental health on the other (Eustachio Colombo et al., 2021; Gaddis and Coplen, 2017; Roothaert et al., 2021).

To succeed, communications and education efforts are needed to increase and diversify students', parents', and communities' limited knowledge about the environmental sustainability of food production and consumption. Introducing concepts of environmental care and providing age-appropriate messaging can help students understand the connection between their food choices, their health, and the well-being of the larger communities around them.

2.2.7. Sustainable mechanisms employed by organizations implementing School Feeding programs

Sustainable Mechanisms in development project entails systems, processes and strategies that ensure the long-term viability, effectiveness, environmental and social economical balance of an initiative. The mechanisms aim to meet the current needs without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs. They often involve community involvement, efficiency of resources and environmental, institutional and financial stability (United Nations 2015).

2.2.7.1 Approaches to sustainable mechanisms in developmental projects

Economic sustainability, Social sustainability and Institutional sustainability.

Community involvement and participation

Community engagement is critical for the finances of an SFP. As noted above, implementing agencies must leverage local sourcing through good communications with farmers' groups, local businesses and other organizations to secure resources that go beyond government or donor provided materials. Donations or in-kind contributions are particularly important in resource-constrained contexts and to sustain programs when externally funded support programs finish and transition to local resources is expected. Government involvement is crucial in the establishment of SFPs and formulating school feeding policies. (dos Santos et al., 2022; Roothaert et al., 2021).

2.2.4.2 Government funding and support

The Government of Malawi (GoM) is supporting the program, recognizing its potential to improve education and address food security challenges. Funding SFPs is a critical factor facing very different challenges for their long-term success and sustainability. According to the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (2022), low-income countries including those in sub-Saharan Africa have an average allocation of about 46% in the total budget

and the remaining funds is being provided by external development partners. Budget allocations provide a window into financing school meals. These allocations may or may not reflect actual expenditure.

2.2.4.3. Donor funding and support

International development financing for school meals suffers from fundamental failures. Aid is underfinanced, fragmented, and dominated by transfers linked to the preferences of individual donors, rather than the needs and strategic opportunities presented by recipient countries. Innovative finance in the form of debt relief, bond issues, and international levies is limited. International advocacy for school meals has had limited impact. (Watkins 2024).

2.2.4.4. Local resource mobilization

Expanding domestic resource mobilization is the most efficient route to finance school feeding programmes and other priority social spending. Most governments finance school meal programmes out of general revenue. Approaches to parental and community contributions for school feeding programmes vary across, and often within, countries. The most effective school feeding programmes combine responsiveness to local needs with local ownership and mechanisms for community engagement. Community contributions are delivered through informal mechanisms. While it is often difficult to establish cost-sharing ratios between public spending and parental contributions, the latter represents a critical source of finance.

2.2.4.1 Legal framework that regulates social support programs in Malawi

The school feeding program in Malawi has been aligned with globe and national policies. The National Social Support Policy and the first MNSSP were developed in 2012 as a result of increased national and international awareness that social support programmes are crucial for tackling pervasive poverty and food insecurity, for addressing inequality and ensuring that economic growth translates into improved livelihoods for the poorest and most vulnerable people. The slow pace of poverty reduction and the increased share of the population who were ultra-poor led to the realization that growth alone is not sufficient for reducing poverty at the scale and pace needed in Malawi. The Malawi National Social Support Programme II (MNSSP II) was projected from 2018 to 2023 building on the successes and lessons learned during the implementation of the first MNSSP.

School meal programme related strategic actions to increase coverage;

Gradually increase the coverage of school meal programmes towards providing school meals to all primary school students. Ensure that adequate quantities and quality of food is provided and explore extending coverage to early childhood development centers.

Models of School Feeding Programs

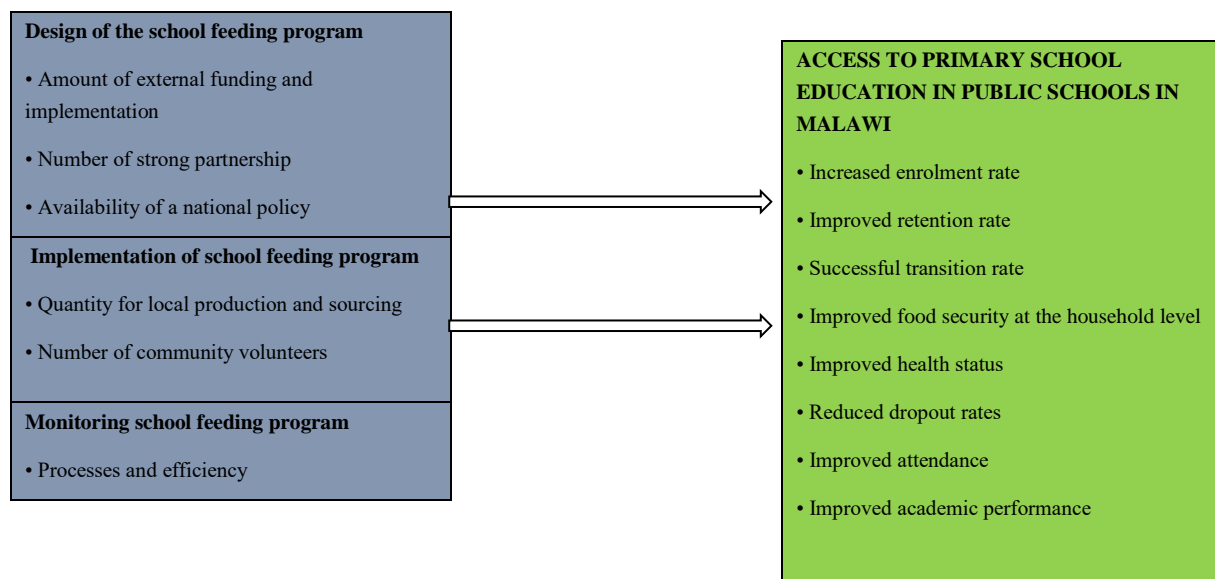
The SFP can be implemented under different types, models, and principles. Yendaw and Dayour (2015) identified two main types of school feeding program. They are the in school feeding and the take-home ration. The in-school feeding program describes a type of school feeding program where children are fed in school whereas the take-home ration describes a situation where families are given food when they enroll their children in schools.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This will define and describe the theoretical pertains to school feeding programmes. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory stands as a cornerstone in understanding human motivation and behavior. Proposed in 1943, Maslow's proposition outlined a structured hierarchy intended to categorize and rank human needs, ranging from basic physiological needs to the pursuit of self-actualization. The theories of Abraham Maslow's Human Motivation (1943) and theory of change will be used in the research. SFPs serve as a source of incentive for learners, while the theory of change chain depicts the project's interventions and outcomes. Meals serve as a motivator for children's learning since they respond quickly after acquiring nourishment. As a result, the expected result is observed. Abraham Maslow's Human Motivation model has five hierarchical levels which includes; physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework depicts the interdependence of the independent and dependent variables under study. The current study is supported by a conceptual framework that thoroughly explains the sustainability of the school feeding program in public primary education in Malawi. The school feeding programmes variables include topics such as program design, finance, collaborations, implementation, and monitoring. The results of the school feeding program during the implementation phase are the independent variable

Independent variables**Dependent variables****2.6. Research Gap**

Since 1999, Malawi school meals programs have continued to be effective and make progress but have not been able to reach all schools. Literature has shown that School feeding programs have been beneficial for the physical, mental, and psychosocial development of school-age children and adolescents, particularly those in low- and middle-income countries. While school feeding programs are universal, the specific benefits of school feeding programs are unclear (Wang and Fawzi 2020). The school feeding strategy has been important in promoting education outcomes, health outcomes, curbing food insecurity but also increasing economic welfare by providing nutritious food to children while supporting smallholder farmers. School feeding programs face numerous and continuous challenges, some of which are context-specific. However, others are more universal and apply to all SFPs implemented in developing countries. The sustainability of these programs, procurement of food in light of food price fluctuations and environmental and agricultural changes, as well as questions of a program's cost effectiveness are common challenges faced by SFP planners and designers. Hence this research will focus on assessing effective sustainability strategies that can make a lasting impact on school feeding programs in Malawi.

3.– RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**Introduction**

This chapter outlined the methodology which employed in this research. It describes the study area where the research was conducted, the demographic information of the participants, the population and the sampling method which was used in the research. The chapter also highlights the type of research design used in this research, the data collection methods and instruments, recruitment procedure and the ethical principles observed in the research.

3.1 Description of the Study Area

The research was conducted in Mzimba district at Kaphuta Education zone in TA Mzikubola and partly in TA Mmbelwa.. Kaphuta education zone has 10 schools implementing school meals programme supported by Seibo Maria a Japanese organisation.

3.2 Research Design

The study places its central focus on the characteristics of the population with the aim of providing a clear explanation of the variable (Mishra & Alok, 2017). The study employed a qualitative techniques for data collection and analysis in specific studies Kabir (2016). For this study, utilization of qualitative research methods was implored, such as interviews centered on exploring the attitudes and emotions of the participants. The study employed systematic qualitative methods such as questionnaires and observations to collect data that could give descriptive analysis. This approach was utilized to establish the relationship between School Feeding Programs (SFP) and sustainability strategies.

3.3 Population of the study

The study will target DPD, M and E, District Planning Officer, DEYS, SCTP coordinator, District Social Welfare Officer and village heads around the targeted schools. These were chosen deliberately because they are cadres that influence decision making on operationalization of the programme but also are directly involved in the implementation of school feeding programs at school level.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The study implored a Purposive sampling, or judgmental sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique in qualitative research that's commonly used. In purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select participants with specific characteristics or unique experiences related to the research question.

3.5 Sample size

A total of 105 participants were included in the study drawn from the district and the community which include; school feeding programme committees, Village Heads, School Health Nutrition Coordinators, School Heads to achieve both validity and reliability, a sample size that includes all 10 schools represented a total population chosen.

3.6 Sources of Data

The primary data was obtained through interviews which were organized to gather first-hand information from the respondents. The data allowed the researcher to control the information provided by the respondents rather than depending on questions and information asked by another party, perhaps with quite different intention. Secondary sources of data include the use of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, newspapers and both online and offline articles on the topic of interest. A comprehensive list of these sources is provided in the references appendix found at the end of the paper.

3.7 Data collection

Data collection refers to the systematic process of gathering information from a variety of sources to answer research questions, test hypothesis, and evaluate outcomes it involves using tools or instruments which include surveys, interviews or experiment to obtain accurate and reliable data. Data collection involves applying the measuring instrument to the selected group for investigation (Kabir 20200). There are two major approaches to gathering information about a situation, person, problem or phenomenon. These are:

3.8 Data Collection Techniques

A qualitative research method was used to collect data for the study. The primary data was gathered through semi-structured questionnaire. These instruments are used by researchers to facilitate debate and elucidate subjects that are being discussed. They have been recommended for the qualitative data collection technique.

during implementation of projects. Additionally, SSIs allowed for probing questions and follow-up inquiries, enabling a deeper exploration of key themes and issues relevant to the study's objectives.

3.8.1 Administration of Key Informants Questionnaire

The researcher identified and chose key informants based on their relevance and competence in subject areas such as project implementation, sustainability aspects, and institutional dynamics. After receiving informed consent, the questionnaires were sent to the key informants, with explicit instructions for completion. These questionnaires are structured to elicit specific insights and knowledge from the informants. Once completed, the questionnaires were collected for subsequent analysis. The data obtained from key informants is integral in providing a deeper understanding in the context of school feeding programme. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) offered unique perspectives from stakeholders involved in the implementation and oversight of the School feeding projects

3.8.2 Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research technique in which a moderator leads a small group of people usually six to twelve to discuss on a particular topic of interest. The objective is to investigate various viewpoints, dispositions, and encounters associated with the study subject within a collective context. FGDs are useful for studying social dynamics and conventions within a community or group, creating ideas, and unearthing collective insights.

3.9 Tools for Data Collection

3.9.1 Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Using the research instruments already mentioned, a questionnaire was pre-tested and altered accordingly before data collection. Before administering the questionnaire was pretested to remove irregularities and maintain accuracy. The questionnaire was not emailed to respondents but rather will be administered face to face to increase respondent rate

3.9.2 In-depth Interviews

For qualitative data, interviews were done by a team of enumerators identified by the researcher. The researchers solicit data from respondents from the sampled schools identified.

3.9 Tools for Data Analysis

Kennedy (2018) rationally analyzed the given facts using both inductive and deductive reasoning. To extract conclusions from the collected results, reasoning abilities and critical thinking was used. The data was organized in a sequential order depending on its importance and visually depicted using a chart or spreadsheet format created with the Microsoft 365 Excel software.

3.10 Limitations of the study.

This study faced some limitations in terms of generalizability due to its localized scope within specific cultural and geographical contexts, which potentially limit the findings in some broader settings. During data collection on focus group discussions the respondents might have introduced biased responses that could affect the accuracy of information reported. Furthermore, the study might have encountered challenges in capturing a comprehensive representation of all stakeholder experiences within the school feeding programme.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from relevant authorities including; the Principle/Head of Department from DMI. ST. EUGINE University, the Director of Planning, Director of Education and Youth Services, the chiefs around the schools, school heads/authority and parents.

3.12 Organization of the chapters (Brief description of each chapter)

In chapter one the study contains the following; background of the study, the globe scenarios and local scenarios, problem statement, main objective and specific objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study and conclusion of the chapter, chapter two contains the following; definition of key terms, main literature, conceptual framework, research gap, theoretic reviews and empirical evidence about the sustainability strategies on school feeding program. Chapter three is about research design and methodology which contain the study area, research design, target population of the study, sample size, sampling techniques, sources of data, data collection methods, data collection instruments/tools, data analysis plan, ethical approval, study limitations. Chapter four is about presentation of results and interpretations and contains the following; Introduction, Response Rate, Demographics or personal details, Presentation of findings and a Summary. Chapter five contains the following; Introduction, Findings of the study, Findings from primary Research, Conclusions of Conclusions, Recommendations of the Study, Area of the study and Summary

4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the results and the research findings, summarizes the study findings in accordance to specific objectives of the study based on the responses from the respondents, discusses and explains them to address the research questions. The methodology outlined in chapter three, which described the study approach and research design, including data collecting and analysis, is the foundation for this.

4.1.1 Response Rate

Response rate is the proportion of the sample that participated and responded as intended in the study. In this research, 40 questionnaires were distributed as follows

4.1.2. Sex of respondents

Participants in the study comprised both male and female who are directly involved in the implementation of School Feeding Program in Kaphuta Education Zone in Mzimba South. The respondents were from the district level duty bearers and the community level school staff and committee members.

The researcher sought to know sex of the respondents who participated in the study. The figure below show sex distribution of the respondents directly involved in the school feeding programme

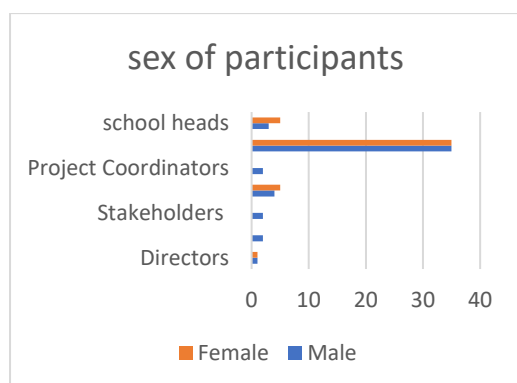


Fig. 4.1. Sex of respondents

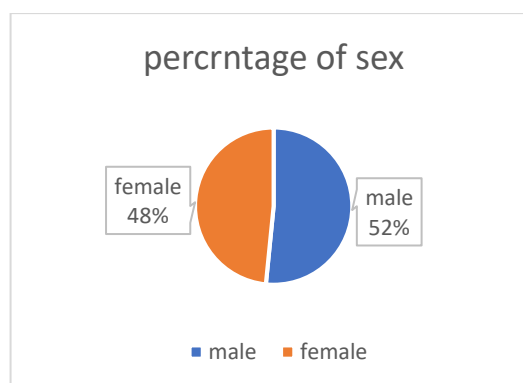


Fig 4.2 percentage of sex of respondents

The data in figures 4.1 and 4.2 above shows that 49 of the respondents who participated in this study were males against 46 who were females representing 52 % and 48% respectively. This indicates that the study had more male's respondents than females in the school feeding program.

4.2. Presentation of findings

The presentation is based on the sustainability mechanisms of school feeding programs implored in primary schools, the effectiveness of policies promoting sustainable school feeding programs, the perception of stakeholders (parents, communities and the learners) on school feeding programs and factors affecting sustainability of School Feeding Programs implemented by NGOs.

4.2.1. Responses on the sustainability mechanisms of school feeding programs implored in primary schools

Challenges in School Feeding Program

The study identified several challenges related to the School Feeding Programme being implemented in the schools under study. The responses include the following; High cost of corn soy blend due to unstable economic conditions, inconsistency in food supply sometimes is erratic, less community involvement, absenteeism of volunteers who cook porridge for learners on daily basis, poor mobilization of firewood, shortage or inadequate of storage facilities in schools, monotony of food stuffs being prepared on daily basis, lack of standard structure to support feeding program eg. Kitchens, lack of incentives to volunteers who prepare the food, low production of crops hinders farmers to supply food stuffs to schools in schools using HGSFP, heavily dependent on donors, inadequate capacity building on proper cooking methodologies. School feeding programme is not rolled out to all primary schools in the district lack of sustainability police that can influence the programme implementation

Community participation and involvement

Another significant finding revolves around community participation and involvement in the school feeding programme. The researcher sought to know the extent at which the communities are involved in the school feeding programme. The respondents said that the communities do participate and are actively involved in the implementation of School Feeding Programme. A respondent from the rural schools implementing the programme said that;

4.2. The effectiveness of policies promoting sustainable school feeding programs.

4.2.1. Understanding the policies in School feeding program

The researcher sought to know the extent at which participants understands policies regarding school feeding program.

Table 4.2.1 Understanding of policy by respondents

Respondents	Knowledgeable	Not knowledgeable
	12	83

The table above shows how participants understands the school feeding programme policy and how the policy works. The findings reveal that 12 of the respondents have knowledge and do understand school feeding policy and 83 of the respondents has no idea on the school feeding policy and how the policy operates representing 13% and 83 % respectively. This translate that most of stakeholders in school feeding policy either do not have knowledge or understand school feeding policy especially the school feeding committees at school level and the community at large.

4.2.3. Effectiveness of the policy on programme sustainability

The researcher also sought to know how effective are the policies in sustaining the school feeding programme. The table below shows the effectiveness of policies in the school feeding program.

Table 4.2.2. policy effectiveness on school feeding programme

Respondents	Effective	Not effective
Directors	2	0
M and E	1	0
SHN coordinators	1	6
School heads		7
Project coordinators	2	
SCTP		1
DSWO		1
SFP Committee		70
District Planning officer	1	

The data in table above shows revealed that only 7 (7%) participants have knowledge on the effectiveness of school feeding policies whilst 88 (93%) participants said the school feeding policies are not effective citing the knowledge gap in the policy formulation and the steps in policy development.

4.3. The perception of stakeholders (parents, communities and the learners) on school feeding programs

4.3.1 Importance of school feeding programme to learners

The researcher sought to know the perception of participants on school feeding programme in primary schools in Kaphuta education zone. The respondents highlighted the following to be the importance of school feeding programme to learners in school; *'school feeding programme increase school attendance, improve retention and increase performance of learners, small scale farmers have readily available markets where they can sell their farm produce, the school feeding reduces absenteeism and school dropout, increased enrollment, improve nutrition status of learners, reduce stunting and other nutrition related diseases.*

4.3.2. Policy challenges affecting the program

Policy guides implementation of any program or project to achieve its objectives or for the project to be effective.

The researcher wanted to know challenges in policy affect programme implementation. This was done to establish policy challenges and ways to mitigate the challenges. The respondents said the following; *'the existing policies does not focus much on school feeding program, the policies do not guide of sustainability of school feeding program, there is lack of mindset change by the communities to influence policy change to address issues of quality*

4.3.3. Stakeholders involvement in the implementation of the school feeding program

The researcher wanted to investigate the extent at which stakeholders are involved in the implementation of school feeding program at district and community level.

The figure below illustrates the involvement of stakeholders;

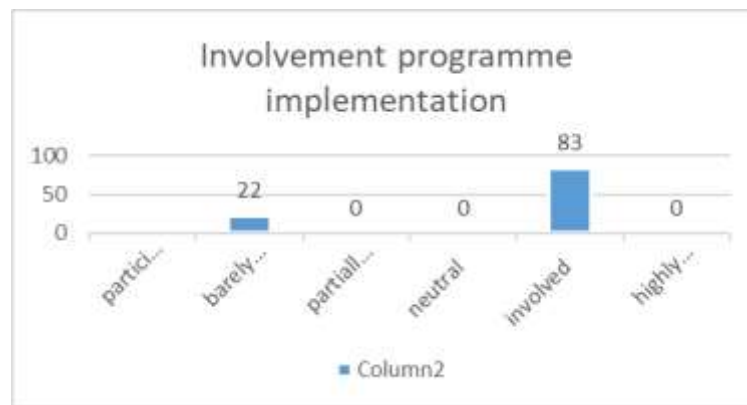


Fig 4.3.1 stakeholder's involvement in implementation

The findings in the figure above reveal that out of 105 participants 22 (21 %) participants are barely involved in the program while 83 (79 %) of the participants responded that they are actively involved in the implementation of the school feeding programme. The findings translate that 79% of the participants are actively involved the implementation of the program but un different levels.

4.3.4. Levels of stakeholder involvement into the school feeding programme.

There should be stakeholders narrated that some of involved in supervision and management of funds especially government funds, keeping on track through monitoring and conduct evaluations, encouraging community mobilization of local resources, conduct capacity building on food preparation, advocating for sustainability of the programme, coordination and collaboration at district and community levels towards achievement of programme agenda, ensure programme is implemented as planned, replacement of worn out utensils and ensure good storage facility and payment of staff that prepare the porridge especially in urban schools where they hire labor to cook the porridge , ensure timely distribution of food stuffs, ensure accountability, support planning and execution of the programme, advocating for scaling up of the programme, budgeting, providing guidance, Seibo maria narrates provision of food staffs and kitchen utensils but also conduct monitoring to enhance quality assurance,

4.4. Factors affecting sustainability of School Feeding Programs implemented by NGOs.

4.4.1. Financial, social and logistical challenges affecting implementation of school feeding programme

The researcher wanted to explore financial, social and logistical factors that affect programme implementation. During the research, participants had different views on this topic. Some highlighted inadequacy of resources, mindset change to own the programme and untimely delivery of food products may affect the programme, no government funding, inadequate farm inputs to support HGSFP, high cost of food commodities and other administrative costs, inadequate capacity of farmers to supply food stuffs during lean season, lack of investment in necessary technology to support the programme, high upfront costs for sustainable practices, limited funding sources, luck of commitment from the community to sustain the programme, knowledge gap of food management by school committees.

4.4.2. Donor dependency and funding fluctuation impact programme continuity

The researcher wanted to investigate on how donor dependency and funding fluctuation can impact program sustainability? The participants responded that untimely delivery of food stuffs (corn soy blend), delayed funding to support the programme, erratic supply of food stuffs, promotes donor dependency syndrome whereby encourages laziness, donors apply strings and conditions in their projects and programmes, funding gaps interrupt provision of services, leads to instability of programs when the project of programme phase out, instability of currency affect programme implementation, donor fatigue.

4.4.3. The extent that community participation influence sustainability

The researcher wanted to explore the extent that community participation can influence the programme. The question was poised to all the participants and these were the responses;

'if communities are empowered through affordable farm input, full community participation, involvement and commitment to support the school feeding programme, community understanding of the programme through capacity building and policy development.

4.4.4. The role of agricultural production and supply chain in sustaining the programme

The researcher wanted to find out the role of agriculture production and supply chain in sustaining the programme. The participants responded the following;

They form cooperatives or farm organizations to supply their farm produces to school in their localities. They grow crops, produce and supply farm products to support school feeding program thereby creating stable markets in return boosting their economy, strengthening local support.

4.4.5. Environmental, political, and economical factors influence sustainability of the school feeding programme

The researcher wanted to know other environmental, political, and economic factors that can influence sustainability of school feeding programme. The following were the views of respondents from the district and community level; *Positive political influence propels the program, poor economic policies may affect programme implementation, robust economy may increase funding towards school feeding, political stability helps partners to invest in programme, politicians to participate by supporting school feeding programme push for funding allocation towards school feeding programme, use of green energy to conserve the environment as firewood support cooking of porridge, stable economy support investment of feeding programme, political will affect how resources are allocated to programmes, weak governance affect programme implementation, climate change affects agriculture production especially when there is drought hence affecting supply of food produce to support school feeding programme, changes in food prices and inflation affect market economies.*

5.– SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five contained a comprehensive overview, final conclusions, and useful suggestions based on the study. In the context of the School feeding programme sustainability, this chapter summarized key issues and discoveries from the research and provided conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further study. The researcher will compare responses of the participants from different questions and establish correlation. The study's output was a set of practical suggestions meant to improve programme effectiveness and sustainability.

5.2 Discussion

A number of conclusions were drawn from the study based on the title assessing sustainability mechanisms underpinning social support projects implemented by Non -Governmental organizations in Malawi - A case study of school feeding programmes in Kaphuta education zone in TA Mzikubola of Mzimba District. The study was governed by four objectives. The findings according to objectives were as follows;

5.2.1. To evaluate the sustainability mechanisms of school feeding programs implored in primary school in Kaphuta Education zone.

The findings revealed that about 23 (93%) stakeholders from the district level are knowledgeable on the sustainable mechanisms and 2 (7%) do not have ideas as regards to sustainability mechanisms on school feeding programme, furthermore it also indicates that only 5 (8%) from the community level have knowledge on sustainability mechanisms whilst 65 (92%) has no knowledge on sustainability of the programme. From the findings on this objective it shows that majority of participants do not know the sustainability mechanisms which translate that there is a knowledge gap on sustainable mechanisms employed by Non- Governmental Organization. Most organizations work on vacuum of which they don't have a blue print on how they sustain their projects According to FAO 2022 implementation of sustainable schools feeding model is based on the school feeding programme of Brazil, which is strongly rooted on the human right to adequate food approach, as well as on the environment, cultural, social and economic sustainability of the programme. This model is linked to the use of school gardens and to food and nutrition education, as a way to promote lifelong healthy eating habits among schoolchildren and, by extension, their families. It also focuses on the utilization of local products, especially from family farming, promoting the consumption of fresh, local, seasonal and healthy foods, while, at the same time, boosting local job creation and local production, thereby reducing the food import bill. The model calls for at least three levels of integrated management structures: (i) at the parliamentary level, to ensure legal broad-based support, budget allocation and continuity of policies; (ii) at the ministerial level, both at the highest political level to ensure public commitment to strengthen the SFP and at technical level to inform civil service functionary responsible for programme's leadership and analysis; and (iii) at the level of the school and community, empowering and allowing the participation of those closest to the programme, including parents.

5.2.2. To examine the effectiveness of policies promoting sustainable school feeding programs.

The findings reveal that 12 of the respondents have knowledge and do understand school feeding policy and 83 of the respondents has no idea on the school feeding policy and how the policy operates representing 13% and 83 % respectively. This translate that most of stakeholders in school feeding policy either do not have knowledge or understand school feeding policy especially the school feeding committees at school level and the community at large. Policy development follows steps

School feeding policies must at all cost pass through the same process to allow stakeholders and participants of projects and programs to partake in decision making and have access to information regarding policies

5.2.3. To explore the perception of stakeholders on school feeding programs.

On perception of stakeholders it was revealed that most parents and community stakeholders have a positive perception towards school feeding programme as almost most of them narrated the school feeding programme increase enrolment, reduced dropout rates, and improved learning performance for learners.

The findings is consistence with Watkins 2024 who emphasizes that providing school meals can increase enrolment by 10% or more in a low-enrolment setting. More time at school and the better concentration that comes with a nutritious meal can improve learning, and the poorest children make the greatest gains. An assessment in Ghana's found out that school feeding programme allowed poor children to improves nutrition – and not just for the immediate beneficiaries. Remarkable evidence from India's midday meal programme shows that children of mothers who had participated were less likely to be stunted.

5.2.4. To examine factors affecting sustainability of School Feeding Programs implemented by NGOs.

The researcher found out that donor dependence, community participation, local agricultural production, environmental, political and social economic factors play a significant role in sustaining school feeding programme.

This is in line with (WFP and IDB, 2022) which stipulates that working through agricultural cooperatives can reduce costs. Longer-term supply contracts can create an enabling environment for smallholder farmers to invest by creating a secure market. Investing in storage facilities can also improve efficiency

5.3. Summary

The study investigated the sustainability of school feeding programme in schools benefiting from the programme in kaphuta education zone in Mzimba south in Malawi. The research aimed to identify the sustainability challenges, opportunities and best practices in sustaining the programme. Secondly, on the analysis from the data collected it is confirmed that most participants do not have an idea on sustainability strategies either they are not oriented by the partners on the onset of the programme or the programme does not have sustainability strategies

Thirdly, most of the participants are not aware of the existing polices on school feeding program

Participants perceive school feeding program as beneficial to learners as well as parents which include increasing school attendance and retention, parents reduce burden of preparing breakfast for their children, reduced malnutrition. The social economic, political and environmental factors play a crucial role in ensuring sustainability of school feeding programme.

5.4. Conclusion

The sustainability of school feeding programme is crucial fro ensuring the long term benefits of the initiative. Based on the research findings, it is imperative to know that while school feeding programme have a positive impact on learner's health and education, the sustainability of the programme depends on several factors include community support to the programme, consistent funding support, and effective management of the programme. The study highlights the need of developing strategies that address the challenges to ensure programme long term sustainability.

5.5. Recommendation

- School feeding program has a lot of benefits as such should not depend on donors rather government should take over the initiative or there should be more coordination and collaboration
- Government and stakeholders in school feeding programme to conduct monitoring and supervision to provide checks and balances during programme implementation
- Enhance community participation where communities mobilize local resources to contribute towards sustainability of the programme.
- Ensure that the programme is well guided by clear policies that focus on school feeding programme and locals to participate policy formulation process.
- Government to formulate policies focusing school feeding programmes in addition to existing policies on education.
- Scaling up the programme to others schools to reach out to every child in Malawi
- Provision of diversified food stuffs to increase nutrition content for children unlike eating the same type of food on daily basis

5.6. Areas of further study

The researcher recommends that further studies may be conducted on the impact of consuming same type of food to learners on their cognitive development and nutrition, assessing the

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