

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that perpetuate under-participation in education among the Maasai children, assess the effect of the School Feeding Programme (SFP) on the pupil's participation in primary education, examine by use of anthropometric measurement, the nutritional status of the SFP beneficiaries and analyze problems related to the management of the feeding programme in Kajiado District.

The study followed a conceptual framework that views provision of school meals as an effort to enhance learning through alleviation of hunger, which is a stressful state for school children. The conceptual framework also shows that provision of school meals is an incentive for enrolment and regular school attendance not only to parents in the form of an implicit subsidy but also to the children who enjoy the free meals. School meals are also offered to improve the nutritional status of pupils, particularly in deprived arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) districts like Kajiado where calorie deficiency is endemic. The point of departure with this conceptual framework was that the present study also focused on factors that engender and sustain under-participation in education by children of nomadic pastoralists in spite of interventions like the SFP.

The study employed a descriptive analysis approach and used qualitative and quantitative techniques in data collection. The purpose of using these two research techniques was to gather as much information as possible on the variables that the study dealt with. The research design was comparative. It was based on two categories of schools: schools on WFP feeding programme and those without this programme. As a prelude to the analysis of main research tasks, the study analyzed the development of education in Kajiado District in the colonial and post-colonial period before the launching of the school-feeding programme as background to the discussion of the impact of the school-feeding programme on the school participation rates of primary pupils in the district.

The study established that the problem of under-participation in education among the Maasai children in Kajiado District has a historical dimension. From its inception, both religion and formal education were not adapted to the nomadic life of the Maasai. As in the colonial era, Kajiado District, as well as other ASAL districts in Kenya, has never been integrated into mainstream socio-nomadic development agenda. The massive neglect coupled with the nomadic nature of the Maasai appears to have sustained underdevelopment that has in turn affected the provision of education to the Maasai children but with extreme marginalisation of girls due to socio-cultural children but with extreme marginalisation of girls due to socio-cultural constraints. Several measures taken such as the introduction of low cost boarding schools have not met the desired objectives.

The study showed that their SFP initiative has some incentive value for sending children to school in Kajiado District, particularly in the most arid parts inhabited by nomadic Maasai pastoralists where distances from homes (manattas) to schools are long and yet the incidence of famine is high. Although this study noted that the SFP has had some modest impact on the primary pupils' school participation rates in the district, it also pointed out that the SFP alone cannot eliminate structural education problems in ASAL districts like Kajiado. These problems include rampant poverty, under-development, socio-cultural impediments and inappropriate teaching methods and inadequate facilities in schools.

With respect to the logistics of food supply, it was found that schools in Kajiado District receive their food commodities irregularly due to secondary transportation problems from the National Cereals Produce Board (NCPB) depots or the district headquarters to schools. This constraint is caused by inadequate allocation of funds by the MoEST for this exercise and limited financial imputes from the Parents and Teachers Associations of the beneficiary schools.

By use of three indicators of nutritional status: low-weight-for-height (wasting), low--height-for-age (stunting) and low-weight-for-age (underweight) in combination with age, the study revealed that the nutritional status of pupils in SFP schools is relatively better than that of pupils in the non-SFP schools. This is mainly because the SFP provides a sizeable and significant nutritional supplement to its beneficiary children; most of whom are drawn from nutritionally deprived backgrounds.

Knowledge of the interrelated barriers, that create and sustain the under participation of the Maasai children in education and factors that militate against the effectiveness of the SEP initiative, has implications for policy formulation that will seek to improve schooling among the Maasai children and enhance the efficient management of the SFP. To that end, the study made several recommendations including:

- the need for the Government of Kenya (GoK) to increase its inland transport, storage and handling charges (ITSH) financial allocations so as to facilitate effective transportation of food from the National Cereals Produce Board (NCPB) depots at Kajiado and Oloitoktok towns to schools.
- The need of recognizing the distinct nature of the Maasai culture in recommending educational policies of their children. This would allow the adaptation of curriculum to the Maasai culture and occupational needs so that lessons/classes are organized around their work rhythms.
- The need to set up sensitization campaigns focusing on girls low enrolment and completion rates by the GoK, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions and the Maasai themselves (those who have experienced the value of formal education).
- The need to address the question of sustainability of the SFP programme when donor assistance ceases by urging the GoK to begin adopting some recommendations in "The Social Dimensions of Development in Kenya (1996)", a policy document which recommends provision of schools lunches and health services to children in primary schools with emphasis on community participation and
- the need to improve the Maasai access to education by striving to incorporate them into the market economy and alleviation of their poverty as a basic building block for a range of development activities. This could entail improving the livestock sector of the Maasai, which is the mainstay of their economy from the points of view of production and marketing.