

Are we implementing the School-based Feeding Program the right way?

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research brief



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Are we implementing the School-based feeding program the right way?

Methodology

The research involved select public elementary schools in Cavite Province and in other provinces of Region IV-A. A total of 58 Lighthouse schools (LS) (40 schools in Cavite and 18 schools from Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon provinces) were selected using purposive sampling.

The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Interviewer-administered survey was conducted based on the existing SBFP guidelines of 2016 to identify program implementation practices. The survey was conducted at the start and at the end of the school year. Periodic visits were conducted in-between to provide technical guidance and monitor the status of SBFP implementation through observational data collection.

Gains of the SBFP implemented as an Integrated Program

- Generated unique practices among schools that have linked the three components nutrition education, school gardening, and school feeding.
- Fostered collaboration between focal person and school heads to sustainable outcomes.
- The implementation of the integrated school nutrition program has identified key links between components: menu, garden as learning venue, and nutrition education practices.
- Realized the value of leadership, external partnership, community relations, and parent engagement in achieving sustainable outcomes.
- Added value to school feeding programs: from “providing food to undernourished children” to “venue and bouncing board to nutrition learning”
- The implementation have given focus on nutrition; valued local vegetables and crops – increased the use of local recipes. The SBFP alone has given a different impression on school feeding, it is more than just feeding the undernourished.

Key Findings

- Timing of the release of funds have been a factor for the efficient implementation towards completion of the 1 days feeding. DepEd has regional allocations for SBFP. School funds were released or downloaded to schools in different months along the start of the school year. 64% of the schools at baseline received the funds in October and 70% received the funds a month earlier at endline.
- The release dates of the fund also drives the feeding start date; 72% of the schools started their feeding proper in October during school year 2016-2017 and 76% started in September during school year 2017-2018.
- The use of calibrated anthropometric tools is a necessity to schools accurate data collection and identification of feeding beneficiaries. The research had found variety of brands of anthropometric tools use in schools. 74% of the schools are using bathroom scale, 17% are using beam balance or detecto and the remaining schools used varying brands alternately. 69% of the schools use tape measure to for height measurements and 20% use the same height tool that is attached to the beam balance that is used for weighing. Other remaining schools use varying tools which includes improvised methods and wall mounted poster for height measurement.
- A helper or cook had been found to be of great help for the efficient implementation of the SBFP. There are 24% to 32% of schools who have hired cook sourced from SBFP funds from baseline to endline. 28% to 17% of schools don't have hired cooks from baseline to endline. Schools relied heavily on volunteer and parent support for the daily the feeding activities.
- The teachers who are SBFP coordinators spent extra hours to accommodate the efficient implementation of the feeding. Baseline and endline data suggests that on the average teachers spent 3.6 to 3.7 extra hours on top of their teaching roles. The Highest reported extra-hours spent in SBFP activities is at 6 hours per day.
- Menu had been found to be a key driver of activities and mechanism across three components. Schools have a set of 20 recipes for their menu cycle; at baseline the composition of the menu is using 12 of its recipe is malunggay based and 8 using FNRI -based (indigenous recipe). The schools adaption of the indigenous recipe have improved at endline; on the average schools are using 10 recipes from indigenous and 10 recipes from malunggay based. Variety of recipes is necessary to the improvement of the nourishment of the children. The menu also dictates the utilization of the garden produce in the schools.
- Feeding facilities has been found to play an important role in nutrition education it came out to be one of the most feasible time to conduct nutrition education for children-more than a place for feeding. At baseline 55% of the schools have a designated feeding facility and 66% at endline.

Recommendations

- Efficient mechanism to enable the efficient and timely release of funds from the region can help achieve the completion of the desired feeding days.
- Calibrated anthropometric tools based on WHO standards should be provided to schools. Fund that is used for SBFP activities and accurate researches depends heavily on the accuracy of the SBFP nutritional assessment data.
- An additional provision of a food service worker mandated for school based feeding program can help standardized the efficient implementation and may help reduce the workload of teachers. This may also help teachers to focus on their task as an educator and better supervise the feeding activities.
- Flexibility on the selection of the standardized recipe will help schools to diversify their menu that may better suit the needs and taste of their beneficiaries. The school must be empowered to create or utilize diverse sources of produce to enable lasting impacts in the nourishment of children. The creativity in menu also served as a tool for educating the beneficiaries' parents. Diversification and variation in recipe is highly recommended.
- A school with a school based feeding program must have a school based feeding facility that is conducive for children to have their nutritious meals; it also should serve as a center for nutrition education for all the children in the school.