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## Perception Study of School Meals Programme in the Gambia

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### ABSTRACT

School Meal Programme is an expensive venture that requires massive investment over the years. The programme's cost has continually grown year by year, thus necessitating a Perception Study of School Meals Programme in The Gambia. This study assesses the perception and opinions of beneficiaries of the existing programme with a view of justifying a rationale for a continuation of the programme and for a smooth transitioning for more government involvement. We conducted a Focus Group Discussion FGD to elicit relevant information from various participants across The Gambia. From the opinions and perceptions of the participants, a common theme is that beneficiaries of school meal programme derive benefit in the form improvements in health conditions, nutrition, cognition and class performance. The household benefits from income savings by reducing household's budget on daily food expenditures and medical bills as a result of the improved health condition of their child. By extension, the community also benefits from the programme through free lunches to the pupils, food security, better health and savings on health and food expenditures.

**Keywords:** *Focus Group Discussion, School Meal Programme, Perception, The Gambia.*

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### INTRODUCTION:

School Meals Programme is also referred to as School Feeding Programme is a safety net programme that provides a nutritious diet to learners at the Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Lower Basic Levels of The Gambia's school system. The programme is currently managed by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MOBSE) of the government of The Gambia. In 2014, WFP, MOBSE and other partners of the school meals programme conducted a mid-term review on the operational effectiveness of the current programme. Emerging from the aforementioned review was an action plan which recommended that a benefit-cost analysis be conducted for the programme and a transition process to facilitate full Gambia Government ownership of the programme.

This study is commissioned by the WFP and MOBSE to conduct a National Cost Assessment and a Benefit-Cost Analysis of the current school meal programme. Hence the study intends to inform policymakers, donors and other partners of the total cost and cost-per child of the programme. The study also provides empirical evidence using monetary benefits associated with the school meal programme in terms of income transfer as a saving to the household, healthier and longer life due to deworming medication received during the programme, educational outcomes of an increase in enrolment, an increase in attendance and a decrease in dropout rates which results in an increase in productivity. Finally, the spillover benefits are also monetized and represented as positive externalities of the programme. The study uses household survey and Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) to understand the perception of beneficiaries of School Meals Programme in The Gambia.

### Background of the study

According to WFP assistance on School Meals Project, "Establishing the Foundation for a Nationally Owned, Sustainable School Feeding Programme", focuses on strengthening the overall institutional and policy framework for a national school meals system and consolidating and improving the gains achieved in access to pre-primary and primary education. This is accomplished through direct support for school meals in the most vulnerable regions and districts. Key activities include the provision of daily mid-morning meals, nutrition education, improving household and community nutrition practices, and a pilot initiative on local procurement which links school meals to local agricultural production.

### Current School Meals Programme Implementation

Following a Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) exercise in December 2014, a school meals master plan was prepared and validated. A cash transfer feasibility study was conducted, resulting in the selection of 24 schools to pilot two cash transfer models, namely: community decentralized local procurement and caterer system. Other major activities being planned was the development of a signed transition agreement with the government, institutional capacity assessment and school feeding cost-benefit analysis. Support was provided for the development of a social protection minimum package, through the United Nations (UN) Social Protection Working Group, which was finalized in April 2015, which includes school feeding. Assistance was provided to finalize an assistance programme with the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil.

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, in partnership with WFP and other stakeholders conducted an operational review of the current school feeding programme through a mid-term review, conducted in the latter part of 2014. As part of this mid-term review, a national School Feeding capacity assessment was undertaken, using SABER methodology. This resulted in the establishment of benchmarks for the Gambia and an action plan on the way forward for school feeding in the Gambia (up to 2020). Some of the recommendations reflected in the action plan is a cost-benefit analysis of school feeding, as well as the preparation of a phased handover agreement to guide the transition of the programme through a full Government ownership.

While the potential benefits of school feeding are intuitively recognizable, programme costs pose the challenge of providing evidence on the quantifiable, monetary returns to the investment [1]. In response to this challenge, WFP and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) developed the school feeding Investment Case (IC) model in 2009. The IC model quantifies the value created per each dollar invested in school feeding. The model has been tested in eight WFP-assisted countries, each implementing one or more of the three different school feeding modalities (meals, take-home rations, and biscuits). The IC model draws from academic literature on the benefits of school feeding, grouping the evidence into: I) income transfer to the household; II) return on investment in the household's productive assets; III) increased productivity; IV) healthier and longer life, and V) externalities for the larger society. Based on the available evidence, the IC model shows that school feeding is an effective and productive safety net, an investment in human capital, and an essential strategy to achieve Education for All.

This study seeks to provide perception on school feeding programme in The Gambia.

### **Justification/Need for the Study**

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), global food, fuel, and financial crises have reconfirmed the importance of safety nets in providing relief to the millions affected globally. School feeding is one of the most widely used in-kind safety nets in low, middle and high-income countries as per the report by WFP. As a matter of consequence, therefore, there is an increasing need to assist governments design and implement school feeding programmes which can be sustainable investments in human capital [2]. The current framework for the designing of such programmes and the strengthening of capacities is the Systems Approach for Better Educational Results (SABER) in school feeding. This is a five-tiered approach that targets: (1) Policy Frameworks, (2) Financial Capacity (3) Institutional Capacity and Coordination, (4) Design and Implementation, and (5) Community Engagement Capacities.

It is expected that the cost-benefit analysis, which serves to support the strengthening of financial capacity, through advocacy, as a tool will complement policy decisions on school feeding by reflecting the long run costs and benefits of particular safety net programs. As part of WFP's support to governments in the guide to transition and ownership, this set of analytical tools has been developed to help improve programme quality and reach sustainability. The tools focus on improving the programme quality, effectiveness and efficiency and bringing the stakeholders to assess the capacities in terms of adherence to the 8 quality standards; and to identify areas of improvement.

The results of the cost-benefit analysis will be used mostly for advocacy purposes and not for programme design, as the methodology entails the use of historical data for costs and impact over a defined time-frame. Ideally, a cost-benefit analysis should be preceded by a national cost analysis, hence the need for this perception report.

As part of WFP's technical assistance to the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, a cost assessment and benefit analysis of the school feeding programme in The Gambia will inform decision making on central resource allocation as well as internal/external resource mobilization leading to a nationally owned and managed school feeding system. The analysis of this study will be used to help the government in evaluating future costs and benefits of different programme options/modalities.

Lawson [3] highlighted the potential impact of food for educational programmes for children, he noted that these programmes increase the educational achievement of the learners so as to improve their productivity and future earnings. His paper further explained that the improvement in educational achievement occurs in three ways. Firstly, the school feeding programme increased attendance by lowering the opportunity cost of attending school, thus the additional incentive to engage in formal education. As a result of this incentive more time is spent in school and more time spent towards learning provide a path for greater human capital development and higher future returns. Secondly, the school feeding programme alleviated short-term hunger thereby improving the learners' cognitive functioning and attention span. Finally, school feeding programme should improve the nutritional condition of learners by providing them with calories and essential nutrients in addition to providing regular diet to them. This improved their health status and increase their ability to combat infectious diseases and illnesses that would keep students away from attending school. Good nutrition had an effect on educational achievement and increase school attendance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW:

In the literature on school feeding programme, most studies focus on impact evaluations of the school feeding programme. Several papers attempts to study the potential impacts school feeding programs (SFP) have on outcomes variables such as enrolments, dropouts, school attendance, health and nutritional status of children, and academic performances. However, little is known about the overall cost and benefit of school feeding in the Gambia. In this review, we survey some of both strands of the literature.

The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) has developed an investment case (IC) model in 2009-2011. This model quantifies the value created per each dollar invested in school feeding. The model has been tested in eight WFP-assisted countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Honduras, Malawi, Chad, Cambodia, Tajikistan, and Palestine). The model estimates the benefits of the programs by grouping the evidence into income transfer to the household, return on investment in the household productive assets, increased productivity, healthier and longer life, and externalities associated with the school feeding. These monetary benefits are thus compared with the cost (opportunity costs inclusive) of the school feeding programs. Comparing the cost and benefits of the programs, the net present value of the programs is estimated. The results from these eight countries show that the school feeding program is an effective safety net.

Several studies focused on the impact on the school feeding program on enrolment rates. For example, in Malawi, WFP [4] showed that the school feeding program over a three-month period, enrolment increased by 5% and 36% improvement in attendance. Furthermore, in Jamaica, Powell and Grantham-McGregor [5] showed that after the first semester, schools with 3school feeding witnessed improvements in school attendance compared to schools without feeding. However, Meme et. al., [6] disputed the significant effect of school feeding on attendance rates in Kenya. Other studies that show improvement in enrolments due to school feeding program includes Alderman et.al [7], He [8], Cheung and Perotta [9], and Alderman, Gilligan, and Lehrer [10].

School feeding programs arguably have impacted on nutritional status and nutrient intake of children. Using experimental design, Adelman et al [1] assessed the nutritional benefits of school feeding in Uganda. According to anthropometry measures, school feeding is shown to have no positive nutritional impact on primary school children. Additionally, in Peru Jacoby et. al., [11], showed that children who receive breakfast at schools, dietary intake increased by 2%, protein by 28%, and iron by 4% compared to the control group. Whilst in Brazil, participation in the school feeding program was associated with increased availability of 345 calories and 8.5 grams of protein [12].

Furthermore, the impact of the school feeding program on cognitive developments has also been assessed. Many of the studies focus on academic performance. In Argentina for example, Androque and Orlicki [13] founded that SFP increased language test scores by 0.15 standard deviations with no significant impacts on mathematics scores. Similar results were obtained by Kazianga et al. [14]. Improve verbal fluency due to SFP have been registered in Jamaica by Chandler et al. [15] and Grantham-McGregor, Chang, and Walker [16].

## METHODOLOGY:

The study on National Cost Assessment employs qualitative and quantitative methods. Review of documents, meetings with WFP and MoBSE helped in designing the survey and focus discussion questions. Administration of questionnaires were done through personal interviews (school level, regional level and Central level surveys), household surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FDGs).

### Sampling and Data Collection

The sampling type employed for the study was simple random sampling, however, the study ensured a proportional representation of the regions in other to give a true and fair picture of the school meal programme in all the regions. The table below shows the sample experimental schools from each region. The data collection schedule is provided in the appendices. Total School Meals' beneficiary schools were 582. Out of this total a sample of 33 schools was randomly selected as experimental schools whereas 10 schools were randomly selected as control schools however no meaningful analysis was done on the control schools due to data gaps, below was the sample structure:

**Table 1: Sampling Structure**

Region	Total Beneficiary Schools per Region	Experimental Sample (School Feeding Programme)	Control Sample (Non-School Feeding Programme)
Region 1	11	1	0
Region 2	40	2	2
Region 3	138	8	2

Region 4	77	4	2
Region 5	164	9	2
Region 6	152	9	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>10</b>

At the school level, two questionnaires were administered; for both benefits and costs. At the community level, four questionnaires were administered at households in the various school catchment areas. At the central level, a costs and benefits questionnaire was administered and so was at the regional level. A focus group discussion questionnaire was also administered to representatives of the school management committee, mothers' club, school farm committee, vendors, parents etc.

**Table 2: Total Number of Respondents**

Questionnaires	No. of Respondents
Experimental Schools	66
Households	167
Central	3
Regional	6
Focus Group Discussion	33
Control School	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>

### Instrumentation

Questionnaires were designed and utilized for data collection. They were divided into the following categories:

- Household Questionnaire
- Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire for the community
- School Level Questionnaire for both Benefits and Costs
- Regional Level Questionnaire for both Benefits and Costs
- Central Level Questionnaire for both Benefits and Costs
- Control School Questionnaire for Benefits

Anonymity and confidentiality clause was stipulated in the questionnaires in order to allow all respondents to fully participate without fear. The purpose of the study was briefly explained in the questionnaire. See appendix for further details.

Prior to the data collection exercise, all categories of the aforementioned questionnaires were pre-tested by a team from the UTG and WFP. Subsequently, both teams amended the initial questionnaires based on the pre-testing exercise, before obtaining final approval by WFP to execute the study. All enumerators selected for the data collection exercise were also adequately trained on the effective use of the questionnaires and data collection techniques.

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS:

#### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

##### Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions was conducted in all the regions of the country. In each of the communities where school-level questionnaires were administered, it was complemented by FGD and household surveys. The regions and communities visited are listed in table 3.

**Table 3: FGD showing Community and number of Participants**

Region	Community	Number Of Participants		
		Males	Females	Total
1	Banjul	1	2	3
2	Kanuma Village Sintet	4	4	8
		3	6	9
3	Berending	3	4	7
	TambaKunda	4	4	8
	Kerr Mama	3	5	8
	Munyagen Village	3	8	11

	Kerr Ardo	6	5	11
	Kanuma	6	6	12
	NuimiNemaKunku	2	7	9
4	Kang DemboJabbi Islamic School - Soma	2	4	6
	BuibaMandinka	5	5	10
	Kwinella	3	7	10
	Sare Samba Lbs	4	4	8
5	GallehManda	5	4	9
	Mabalikuta	4	3	7
	Janjanbureh	5	3	8
	DaruLbs	5	5	10
	Kuntaur	4	7	11
	Jahanka	3	4	7
	Jahally	2	6	8
	Bansang	2	6	8
	Galleh (AshabulKa-If – Madrassa)	3	4	7
	Dankunku	2	5	7
6	Garawol	4	3	7
	Passamas Village	6	4	10
	Kumdam	5	5	10
	Nyakoi	3	5	8
	TarbiyatulIslamia, Suduwol	7	1	8
	Sare Gubu	6	4	10
	Jah Kunda	4	3	7
	MurrehKunda	5	2	7
	PeraiMamadi	8	3	11
	Total Participants	132	148	280
	Percentage	47.14 %	52.86 %	100%

### Community Understanding Of School Meals Programme (SMP)

According to the FDGs, the community members opined that SMP is a WFP and Government supported programme that provides food to children at school to improve their health, nutritional status, and their concentration in class. SMP means food supply for the wellbeing of the kids and relieving parents from giving daily lunch to these kids. It enhances learning and attendance and improves performance, enrolment, and retention. It improves cleanliness e.g. washinghands with soap before meals.

It reduces hunger and malnutrition and therefore, reduces the poverty situation in the household level. SMP reduces the expenditure of parents and hence more saving to take care of other household needs. It is a vital program that has great benefit to the pupil and the community in general. SMP means cooking and serving meals to children to retain them in the school. It is food meant for children only.

### Comprehensive Breakdown Of The Perceived Benefits As A Result Of School Meals Programme

The FGD reveals that SMP benefits children, parents, the community and the country at large. It reduces expenditure and increases saving on parents. Parents saved from kids' not eating dinner after school and hence the consumption of food at home by the pupils is reduced. Benefits to the parents spill over to the whole community in terms of savings in food and health expenses.

It also reveals that school enrolment, attendance, concentration and performance of pupil improves as a result of the programme. Cognition is improved as most of the children in the community are able to read. SMP helps in building human capital for the community and improves children's willingness to help in domestic chores and tackles the problem of drop out since SMP motivates other children to go to school. Hence, retention of children in school improves.



SMP provides a balanced diet and increases the nutritional status of children. Increase in the health condition of the children and reduces hunger among children. Students come to school early to get a meal. Teaching and learning are enhanced. Better nutrition and diet for the pupils. Hygiene learnt from school has been transferred to homes. “With GMD<sup>1</sup> contribution, the child can eat even without giving extra money to buy other food-stuff” – Narrated a Food Management Committee Representatives in Bansang Region 5.

### **Some Of The Challenges Encountered During The Existing Programme**

Delays and inadequate supply for the school term from WFP caused kids not to attend classes regularly. Sometimes the supply is inadequate for the term. The late arrival of supplies is mostly caused by the rains and/or bad roads.

Schools do not have sufficient cooking utensil, serving plates and condiments due to inadequate funds. Rations are not enough for all students. The condiments that used to be provided such as sugar, flour, milk, meat, corn beef and fish are no longer available.

The poor condition of the kitchen makes it very difficult to cook at times. Most of the schools do not have a dining hall and experiences water shortages and firewood is not available most of the time. Absence of good stove and store.

There is a problem of contribution on the side of the parents. Only a few can afford the contributions of GMD1. The GMD1 contribution is a challenge especially when one have a lot of children within the ECD and Lower Basic levels.

Access to food supplies is a challenge. “Inaccessibility of the supply because vehicles cannot reach the village especially in the raining season” – Lamented FDG participant in Region 5 Jahanka.

Lack of proper school fence is also a major problem since animals destroy the crops in the school farm. Inadequate farm implements and tools to enhance production on the farm. In some cases, there is no school garden to supplement the available food. The school is not fenced at all in some cases. As a result, strong animals always penetrate their garden and destroy their vegetables.

The payment for cooks is always delayed whenever limited supply is received and upper basic schools do not benefit and therefore the attendant benefits may not accrue to this level.

### **Findings On Food Rations’ Savings Per Child As A Result Of School Meals Programme In The Community**

SMP benefits the community. Increase in saving is used for other activities in the community such as meeting other needs of the children like clothes, health, stationery, uniform, shoes etc. School meal program empowered the community in terms of healthy food.

School Meals Programme reduces expenditure at the household and community level. They save a minimum of GMD2 and a maximum of GMD35 per child per school day. “They would like to see the programme continue for them to save more money, and use the savings to provide medications for their children, buy stationery, uniforms etc. for their children” – Pointed a participant in Bansang Region 5

### **Comprehensive Breakdown Of The Perceived Benefits Enjoyed By The Household As A Result Of School Meals Programme**

In the communities where there are SMP, households tend to benefit in different ways. There are savings on food expenditure, reduction in lunch expenditure, reduction in expenditure on health and reduction on the amount of rice consumed at home. SMP allows parents to use save ration for other basic needs.

Parents no more force their children going to school (willingness of the children to go to school) and it increases the nutrition and health levels of household members. SMP helps reduce the burden of feeding on parent (poverty alleviation) and help fight against hunger and malnutrition. The programme helps to sustain feeding to other family members as children most of the time do not eat at home during school days

### **Community’s Contribution To The Existing School Meals Programme For 2014/15 School Year**

The community contributes a lot in the school feeding programme. It contributes both cash and in kind. Community creates a community farm, and Cashew farm for the school. Community contribution to the existing school meal by cultivating a community farm and some proceeds are given to the school. It also contributes in terms of cooking

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<sup>1</sup> Dalasis (GMD)- local currency of The Gambia

materials, rice, millet, groundnut, groundnut paste, onions, cabbage, vegetables, maize, coos, other farm produce, firewood, salt, soap. It helps in gardening and in the school farm and engages in clearing exercise i.e. set-setal for kitchen. The community provide cooking materials and the Village Development Council build a kitchen in Janjanbureh – Buttressed FGD participant in Janjanbureh Region 5

The community provides seeds and fertilizers for the gardens. It also operates a rice farm on behalf of the school and provides labour for the maintenance of the school. The community cultivates the school farm and donate the farm produce to the school. They help in the watering of the school garden. They help “They provide firewood to the school (about GMD9,500 (US\$237.50) worth of firewood last year)” – GallehManda Community FGD region 5. “The community mobilize zakat to support school feeding program” – Elucidated FGD participant in Tarbiyatul Islamia, Region 6.

Some women clubs supply vegetables for SMP. Mothers club provide the school with garden produce (vegetable) and assist the school on the school farm (labour) and garden and engage in fundraising for the school to support the SFP. Mothers club also help in cooking utensils and cleaning the school environment.

There was no community contribution as for last year from Kanuma Village – Noted FGD Participant at Kanuma Village Region 2

### **How The Existing Programme Can Be Improved To Better Serve The Community**

The SMP involves operational costs, however, the benefits are huge. There are few schools benefiting from the programme. This is a programme needed by all the schools in the country because of the benefits such as increased enrolment, increase attendance, reduce dropout and increase cognition as empirically manifested by the study. To improve the existing programme, the following are recommended.

- The Ministry of Education, WFP and school should work together in close consultations on a periodic basis
- Supply to the school should be provided on a regular basis for smooth facilitation of the program. It is recommended to increase the food ration. Increment in the amount of ingredient like beef, flour, sugar, flour, powdered milk, wheat, beans, canned beef, dry fish, sardine, groundnut, milk, “Dukula”, etc. which are no more available or supplied
- Establishment of a school garden, provision of water supply and farm inputs to help with gardening. Construct school fences to protect the garden from animals and provision of farm equipment or tools for school farm
- Growing of cash crop which can be ploughed back to sustain feeding program
- provide financial compensation for the cooks. To at least increase the wage of the workers to one bag per month. Train cooks on the different methods of cooking to suit the taste of the children
- Provision of cooking utensils and hand washing basins, farming implements and tools, utensils, kitchen and dining hall
- The community to produce more to supplement school feeding
- Extending the program to the middle and high school
- WFP to continue support school meal program
- Strengthening the mother’s club through capacity building
- Breakfast should be included in the SMP
- FMC should sensitize the community on SMP for more contribution
- Increase community participation and Empower the community especially SMC and mother’s club to be responsible for the management of the school meals
- Provision of a good road network
- A standard kitchen and stove put in place
- There should be collaborated effort between the community as they will provide labour, WFP, government to provide the necessary financial contributions for sustainable school farms

### **Quantitative Findings**

#### **SURVEY RESULTS**

The results from the SMP study using the individual survey questionnaire are summarized here.

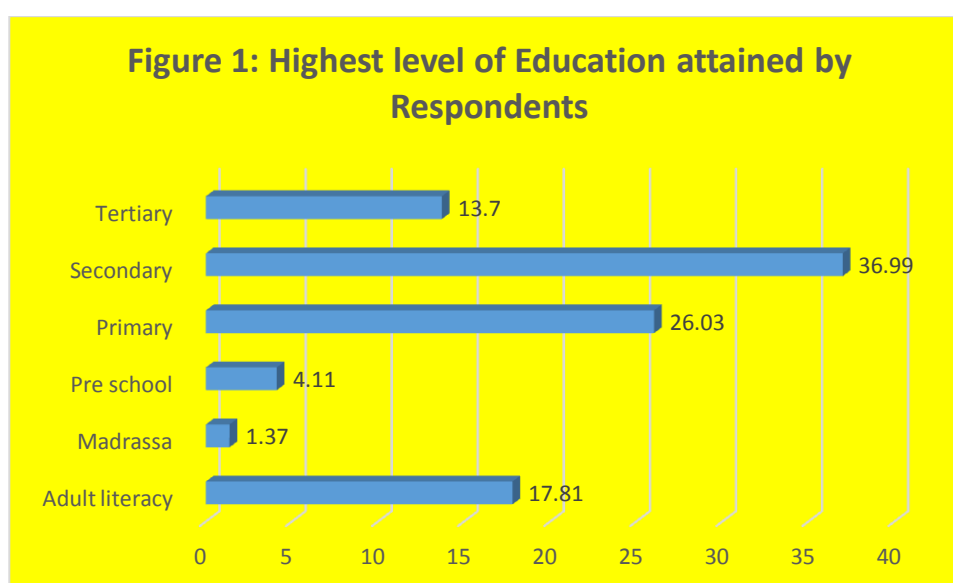
#### **Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents**

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents are provided in the table below. 56.89% are males and 43.11% females. They are all Muslims. Most of them are married (96.41%) and 43.71% said they are educated.

**Table 4:** Characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	95	56.89
Male	72	43.11
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	161	96.41
Single	1	0.60
Widowed	5	2.99
<b>Education</b>		
No	94	56.29
Yes	73	43.71
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Fula	48	28.74
Jola	12	7.19
Mandinka	55	32.93
Manjago	3	1.80
Sarrahuleh	14	8.38
Serrer	7	4.19
Wollof	25	14.97
Others	3	1.80
<b>Age</b>		
10 to 19	1	0.60
20 to 29	24	14.37
30 to 39	46	27.54
40 to 49	41	24.55
50 to 59	22	13.17
60 to 69	22	13.17
70 to 79	10	5.99
80 to 89	1	0.60

Of the respondents who are educated majority attained secondary level (36.99%). Primary is 26.03% and tertiary is 13.7% (See **Figure 1** below ).



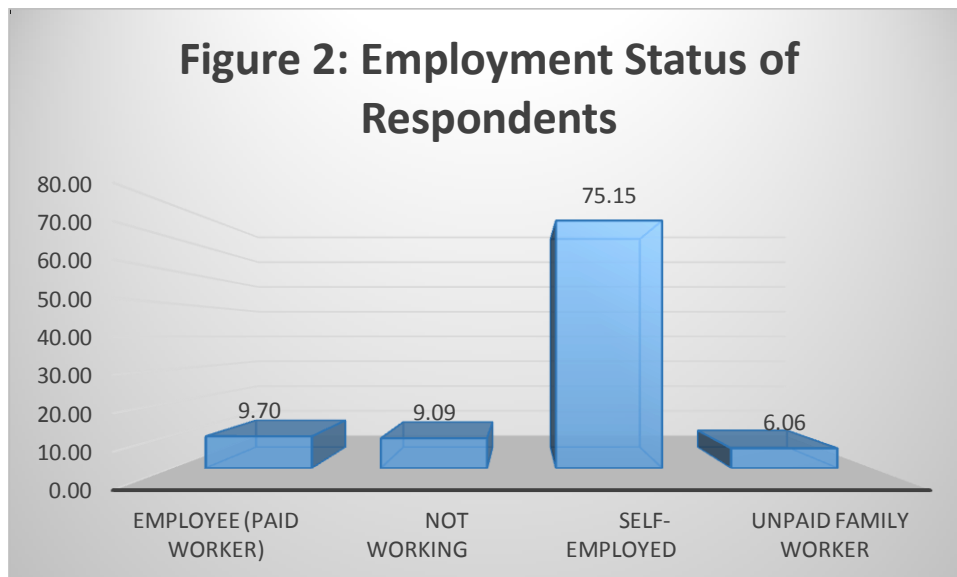
The annual incomes of all respondents are summarized in the table below. The average annual income of a household is GMD52012.98 in 2013/4 and it increased to GMD55727.7 in 2014/5.

**Table 5:** Annual Income



Annual Income of Respondents					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Income in 2014	161	52012.98	82395.87	500	638478
Income in 2015	161	55727.7	85240	0	700000

The results of the study indicate that most of the respondents, 75.15% are self-employed, 9.09% are not working, 9.70% are employee (paid workers) and the rest, 6.06% are unpaid family workers (see figure 2 below).



The major source of income for respondents are farming, formal employment and trading. Majority of the respondents are farmers (59.74%). Traders constitute 24.68% of the respondents, 8.44% have formal employment and the rest are categorized as others (see table 7 below).

**Table 6: Primary Source of Income**

Primary source of income		Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Farming	92	59.74	59.74	
Formal employment	13	8.44	68.18	
Others	11	7.14	75.32	
Trading	38	24.68	100.00	
Total				

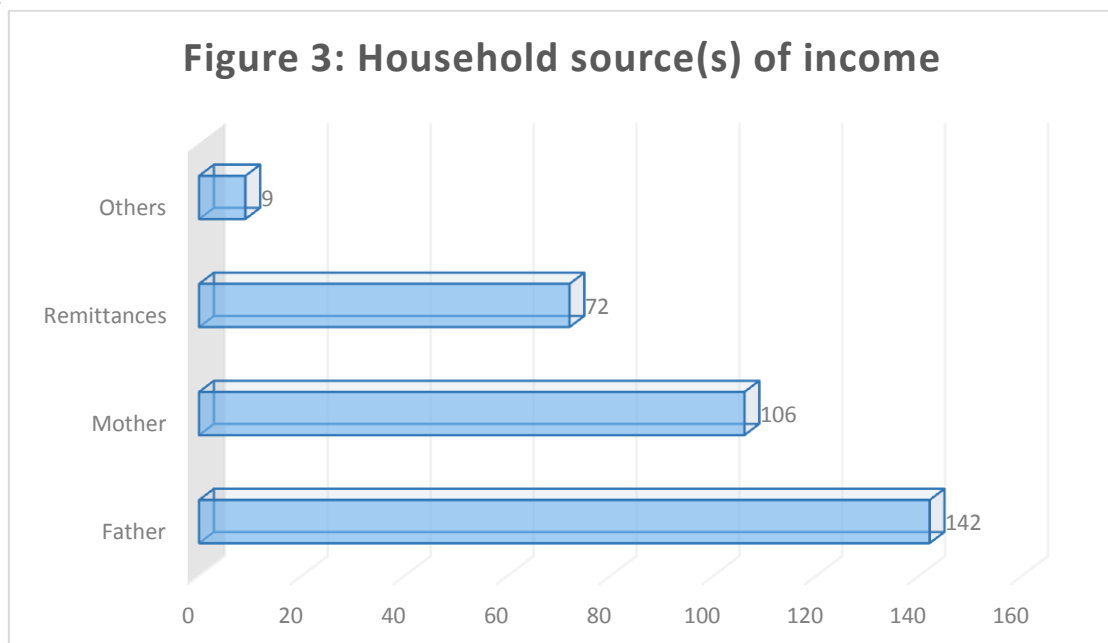
### Employment and Primary Source of Income of Respondents

Table 7 below relates the employment status of respondents and primary sources of income. Most of those who are self-employed (65.32%) are into farming and 27.42% are into trading.

**Table 7: Employment and Primary Source of Income**

Sincome	Estatus					Total
	Employee	Employee	Not worki	Self-empl	Unpaid Fa	
Farming	1	0	2	81	7	91
	1.10	0.00	2.20	89.01	7.69	100.00
	6.67	0.00	40.00	65.32	87.50	59.48
Formal employment	12	1	0	0	0	13
	92.31	7.69	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
	80.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.50
Others	0	0	1	9	1	11
	0.00	0.00	9.09	81.82	9.09	100.00
	0.00	0.00	20.00	7.26	12.50	7.19
Trading	2	0	2	34	0	38
	5.26	0.00	5.26	89.47	0.00	100.00
	13.33	0.00	40.00	27.42	0.00	24.84
Total	15	1	5	124	8	153
	9.80	0.65	3.27	81.05	5.23	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

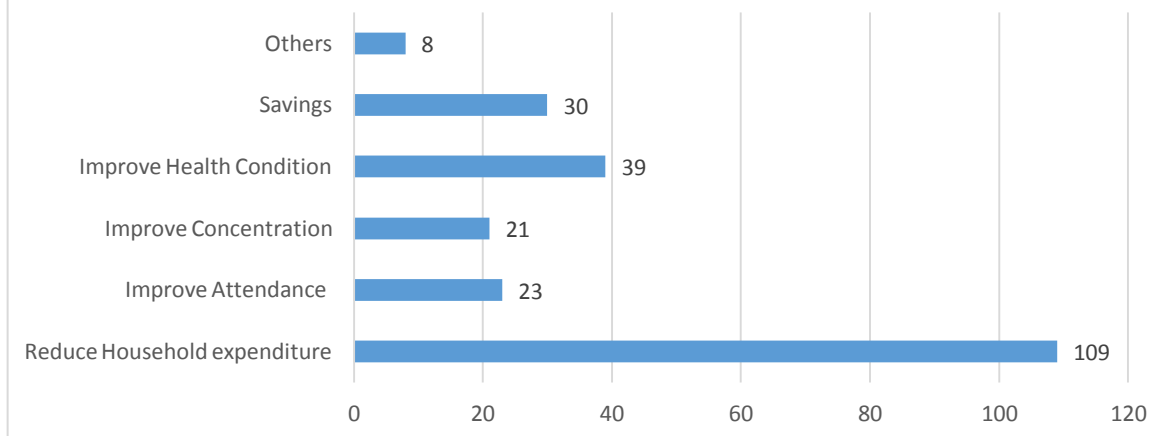
**Figure 3** below displays the household source of income. Most of the respondents stated the major source of income is from the father of the household followed by mother and remittances. Other include brother, brother-in-law, grandmother and son.



### Benefits Received as a Result of SMP

Benefits received at the household level as a result of the School Meals Programme include a reduction in household spending, improve attendance, improve concentration, improve health condition, and savings. Majority of the respondents stated reduction in household spending as the major benefit from SMP followed by improved health condition. Others or other benefits include happiness, increase performance, reduce hunger and improve diet (See figure 4 below).

**Figure 4: Benefits received at the household level as a result of the School Meals Programme 2014/2015**



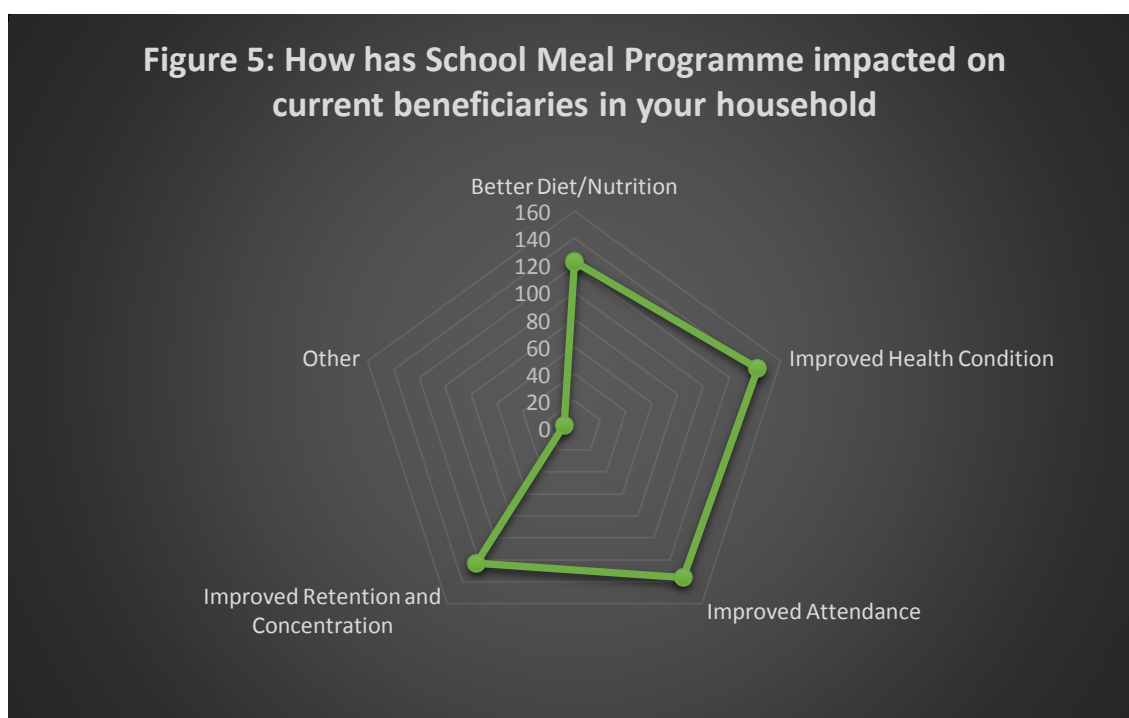
**Impact of School Meal Programme on Current Beneficiaries in Your Household**

SMP has a big impact on beneficiaries. Majority of the respondents ranked improved health condition as the most important benefit followed by improving attendance (see table 8 and figure 5). Other include activeness, happiness, hunger reduction, improve livelihood, reduces the burden on parents and savings.

**Table 8: School Meal Programme Impact on Current Beneficiaries in Your Household**

Better Diet/Nutrition	123
Improved Health Condition	142
Improved Attendance	136
Improved Retention and Concentration	123
Other	8

**Figure 5: How has School Meal Programme impacted on current beneficiaries in your household**



**Number of Household Members that have Benefitted from SMP in the Past**

The respondents stated that 86 males in all the households benefitted from SMP. A number of beneficiaries range from 0 to 11 with an average of 0.515. Similarly, 46 females in all the households interviewed benefitted from SMP. A number of beneficiaries range from 0 to 6 with an average of 0.2754.

**Occupation of SMP Beneficiaries** are banker, business, Education Officer, Farming, Mason, Nurse, Plumber, Security, Student, Teacher, Trading, caretaker, civil servant, Clerk, cooks, farming, legal assistant, photographer, plumbing, Tailor, technician.

**The Wage of SMP Beneficiaries**

The average wage of SMP beneficiaries is GMD 19625.26 in 2014 (WBsmp14) and GMD 19946.42 in 2015 (WBsmp15). Wage ranges from GMD 0 to GMD 100,000.

**Table 9: Wages of SMP Beneficiaries**

The wage of SMP Beneficiaries					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
WBsmp14	38	19625.26	26266.39	0	100000
WBsmp15	38	19946.42	27611.58	0	100000

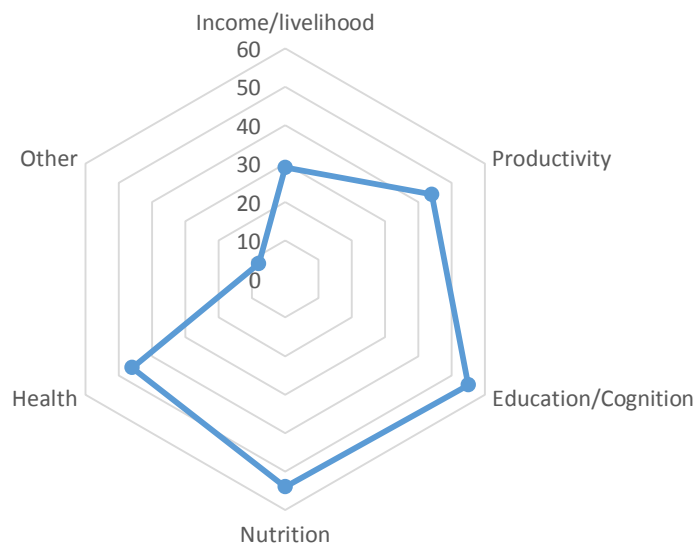
**Impact of SMP on the Different Aspects of Your Life**

SMP has a huge impact on different aspects of life. It increases income, productivity, cognition, nutrition and health. Majority of the respondents revealed that SMP impacted heavily on their lives through an increase in cognition and nutrition followed by health, productivity and income (see table 10 below).

**Table 10: Impact of SMP**

How has School Meals impacted on the different aspects of your life	
Income/livelihood	29
Productivity	44
Education/Cognition	55
Nutrition	54
Health	46
Other	8

**Figure 6: How has School Meals impacted on the different aspects of your life**



### Amount Spent per child on Education

The average spending on child education is GMD2308.21 in 2014 and GMD2589.31 in 2015. Respondents' spending on child education ranges from GMD 0 to GMD 29090 per annum in the Gambia in 2014 and 2015 respectively (see table 11 below).

**Table 11: Spending on Child Education**

Spending on child education					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Eduexp14	149	2308.208	3816.574	0	29090
Eduexp15	150	2589.313	4042.961	0	29090

### Amount Spent per child in Healthcare Expenditure

The average spending on child health is GMD1896.40 in 2014 and GMD2092.85 in 2015. Respondents' spending on child health ranges from GMD 0 to GMD 27100 per annum in the Gambia in 2014 and 2015 respectively (see table 12 below).

**Table 12: Spending on Child Health**

Spending on child health					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Health Exp 2014	152	1896.395	2874.975	0	27100
Health Exp2015	151	2092.854	3030.757	0	27100

Average number of males in the household is 6.898204 and average number of females is 7.167665. Average number of males going to school is 2.88024 and females is 2.838323. The average number of males benefitting from School Meals is 2.262195 and that of females is 2.310976.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The study on National Cost Assessment of the school meals programme illustrates the costs drivers of the existing programme at the school level and the central level. In view of these appropriate steps can be taken to manage the drivers at both levels in other to make the programme more cost effect and better managed. The cost per child for both the school level and central was established at GMD652.7 and GMD431.8 respectively, leading to consolidated cost of D1084.50 per child /annum (\$ 27.11 per child per annum). As explained earlier the reason for a high cost at the school level is because no cost was provided for logistics, storage & utilities, management and administration and other running costs at the central level. Having comprehended the costs nature of the existing programme at both levels policy maker and planner can now be in a position to formulate and plan future school meal programmes that will optimize its benefits and reduce its costs for posterity.

We hereby make the following recommendation:

- 1) The need to devise ways and means to reduce the cost of the programme especially at the school level to make the programme more cost-effective
- 2) The smoothening of supply cycle to avoid stock out situation, so that schools will not spend unnecessarily in the purchase of food condiment
- 3) There is a need for all relevant stakeholders to periodically meet to assess and evaluate the cost of the programme at all levels so that the programme will continuously be effectively designed and implemented
- 4) For schools to upkeep their stores and kitchen
- 5) The need for basic training for school managers on data entry
- 6) For MoBSE and WFP to engage the National Assembly on SMP
- 7) To harmonize all safety nets programmes in the Gambia
- 8) The study to captured age variations, gender and regional dimensions
- 9) Partnership strengthening to include local farmers who will be trained and supported (training) in food preservation and processing
- 10) For Agriculture (due to their role in food security) to take a bold step by supporting women and local food suppliers at the grass root level for increased productivity

- 11) For consultants, together with MoBSE and WFP to meet with National Assembly Members and Cabinet for discussions on the sustainability of the SMP
- 12) Need to promote and domesticate local procurement to minimise cost and improve development at community levels
- 13) Decentralise the management of the SMP to improve efficiency; and also include the SMP into the National Development Plans (NDP) to enhance cost reduction
- 14) To be innovative by taxing as low as one Dalasi on the price of fuel so that funds will be generated in support of the SMP. This same tactic can be used on the GSM companies
- 15) There need to be established, functional, and secured year-round school gardens to support the SMP
- 16) Promote local meals such as 'cherreh', as part of the meals prepared at schools
- 17) Establish and support summer farms in schools
- 18) In general, for cost control and effectiveness of the program, there need to be coordinated effort in terms of funds mobilisation, decentralisation, and domestication of food supply and procurement

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