

**SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES IN CHIMUTU, MALAWI:
OPPORTUNITIES, BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES.**

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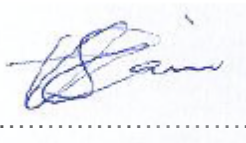
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DECLARATION

I, Janerose Yasin, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted to this or any other university for any degree before.

I also declare that all sources cited in the study (as verbatim quotes, paraphrases or summaries) have been correctly and fully acknowledged by complete references, and that the responsibility for doing so, as directed by my supervisor and in terms of the University's policy on plagiarism, is my responsibility and mine alone. I absolve my supervisor and the university of any responsibility should this later be proved otherwise.



Signed.....

4th December, 2013

DEDICATION

To my loving husband, Martin and children: Ronnie and Laura.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to the following individuals without whom the study would not have been possible for me: Dr .P. Moyo, my supervisor for guidance, motivation and advice throughout the research period; the School Health and Nutrition Coordinator in the Ministry of Education, Mr. Chikadza for facilitating the entry process to the study area; Good Neighbours committee members at Chata School, Mrs. Adam and Macdonald Kachepatsonga for accompanying me to the communities during the data collection exercise; the Head teachers for both Chata and Therezi Schools for making all the arrangements for the data collection exercise. I would also like to thank the people of Traditional Authority Chimutu for their willingness to participate in the study.

ABSTRACT

Developing countries have the highest dropout as well as non enrollment rates among primary school pupils. However there are efforts to reverse the situation through interventions like school feeding programme to improve schooling outcomes. The aim of this study was specifically to find out the details of why school participation is still a problem among primary school children despite provision of food in primary school. This was achieved through discussions on community members' participation, benefits and challenges of the school feeding programme.

Data collected from key informants and community members using in-depth interviews revealed the benefits and challenges as well as perceptions on community participation. Data was collected from 46 respondents of whom 14 were key informants from government and NGO implementers and 32 community members who are benefiting from the intervention in the area of Traditional Authority Chimutu in Lilongwe District, Malawi.

The study found out that although school feeding programme is beneficial through provision of at least a meal a day, it is not meeting some of its objectives. In summary the findings revealed community members acknowledgement that the school feeding programme encourages school attendance and high pupil enrolment. However, the findings revealed that meal provision in school can neither prevent school dropout nor malnutrition due to challenges like inconsistency in feeding frequency, porridge purchase expenses and monitoring and evaluation inadequacies. It was also found that community participation in the school feeding programme does not go beyond porridge preparation. Overall, the study revealed the need for community members involvement at all levels in the feeding programme to achieve sustainable development because the community members are key in identifying and addressing their livelihood challenges

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
CSB	Corn Soya Blend
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESIP	Education Sector Implementation plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HGSFP	Home Grown School Feeding Programme
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
LP	Labour Policy
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDHS	Malawi Demographic household Survey
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
MGP	Malawi Gender Policy
MNNP	Malawi National nutrition Policy
NSFP	National School Feeding Programme
NSO	National Statistics Office
PTA	Parents Teacher Association
SA	South Africa
SHN	School Health and Nutrition
SFP	School Feeding Programme
TA	Traditional Authority
THR	Take Home Rations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations international Children Fund

VAM Vulnerable Analysis Mapping

WFP World Food Programme

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

School Feeding Programme: An intervention that provides food to poor primary school children in the school setting with the intention of improving attendance, enrolment, nutritional status and learning outcomes

Community participation: Active involvement of all community members in the running of the school feeding programme.

Home Grown School Feeding Programmes: A school feeding programme that provides food produced and purchased locally.

Livelihood: a way of living that should comprise of people, their capabilities and their means of living including food, income and assets

National School Feeding Programme: A school feeding programme that operates in all public and nonprofit private schools.

NGO Implementers: Non Governmental Organisations that implement school feeding programmes in particular areas.

Take Home Rations: Food given to girls and orphaned boys upon regular attendance as food resource transfer to poor households.

Ultra poor household: A household that is unable to earn a living to attain acceptable food levels and basic needs.

Vulnerability: The diminished capacity of poor people to cope with or recover from food insecurity and poverty in rural areas.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Background

Globally, levels of hunger and malnutrition remain high. Statistics show that about 870 million people are undernourished, 35% deaths of children are due to under nutrition and 40% of people in Sub Saharan Africa are stunted (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2012 ; Malawi National Nutrition Policy (MNNP), 2009). Malawi like many countries in the sub Saharan African region has not been spared as records indicate 38% of deaths beyond infancy are associated with malnutrition (MNNP, 2009). Furthermore, 30% of school aged children are stunted, and 18% are underweight (ibid).

As one of the poor countries, Malawi realizes the importance of primary school education in its development agenda and eradication of poverty. In 1999, Malawi showed its commitment to primary education through the introduction of the school feeding programme (SFP) to reduce hunger among primary school going children so that hunger is not a hindrance to their education (World Food Programme, 2009). This attempt to retain more children in primary school is in line with Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number 2 which calls for increased primary school enrollment and reductions in gender disparities in school (WFP, 2009; Malawi Gender Policy, 2008; Education Sector Implementation Plan, 2009).

The current Malawi SFP is being implemented by the Ministry of Education with support from WFP, Mary Meals and other NGO partners. It is operational in 13 of 28 districts and has reached about 635,000 most vulnerable children (Lambers, 2009; WFP, 2009). According to Burbano and Gelli (2009) pupils take a mid morning Corn Soya Blend (CSB) porridge of about 100g (locally called Likuni Phala) estimated to provide 22% of daily energy requirements for a primary school going child. In times of food scarcity, Take Home Rations (THR) are provided to

girls and orphaned boys from standard 5 to 8 as an incentive to keep them in school (WFP, 2009).

As an intervention, the SFP was put in place as a valuable social safety net to respond to rural peoples' concerns of poor health, poor nutrition and poverty which were barriers to primary school access in rural Malawi despite universal free primary education (WFP, 2009; MNRP, 2009). The main aim of the programme as stipulated by the WFP Policy (2009) is to end the cycle of hunger. Some of its objectives include: to enhance nutrition and health of school going children; promote education in terms of enrolment, increase retention, decrease dropout and improve school achievement; promote gender equality in education; and value transfer in terms of increased household income (WFP, 2009).

The increase in school participation among girls from 49.3% in 2003 to 50.8% in 2008 (Education Sector Implementation Plan, 2009), is an indication that the SFP has an impact on primary education enrollment and retention. Educated girls have the potential to close the gender gap because they can head food secure households and make informed choices. It has also been highlighted that there is an increase of 30% enrollment, 36% attendance of the enrolled children and recommended age at primary school entry (ESIP, 2009). In addition, completion of primary schooling increased to 40.2 % in 2008 and the ratio of girls to boys is estimated to rise to 1:1 by 2015(Ibid).

However, there remains a high dropout rate of 15% each year and low completion rates (ESIP, 2009; Education Management Information System, 2007). This has led to the understanding that short term hunger is not the only challenge faced by primary school children. Therefore, this study tries to debunk the other factors that prevent parents from sending children to school where free food is provided. It further focuses on the meanings that the rural community members attach to the efficacy of the SFP.

1.2 Research problem

Malawi has poor economic indicators with the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimated at US\$157.4 (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2007). This has resulted in poor funding for school going children. Although there have been some improvements in schooling through universal free primary education and school feeding policies (WFP, 2009), enrolment and high dropout rates are still a problem. The National School Health and Nutrition (2009) report reveals that generally, 22% of children in Malawi never start primary, and 40% of children from vulnerable homes never start primary education.

The 2006 National School Health and Nutrition (SHN) cross-section household survey revealed that one third of children interviewed never ate breakfast when going to school, an indication that the children could be malnourished when entering the formal education system (SHN, 2009). Good nutrition is important for a growing child to improve health and wellbeing which affects a person's livelihood throughout life (ibid). The MNNP (2009) proposed the improvement of nutritional status of primary school children through agricultural diversification and consumption of the required amounts of pulses, fats, fruits, vegetables, animal products and staples.

Although Malawi's SFP seems the answer to poverty stricken households, it is unclear how the vulnerability of poor rural families can be fully addressed through the feeding scheme. It has been noted that children from poor households do not eat adequately at home due to failure by parents to provide for them. This leads to absenteeism and withdrawal from school as both parents and children try to look for other means of survival. Against this background, this study investigates the benefits of the SFP in Chimutu community. It seeks to understand the food access, food security and schooling benefits of the SFP. It also seeks to understand the levels

of community participation in the programme. The challenges around the SFP are also explored as are intervention strategies to address these challenges.

1.3 Research questions

The research aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the benefits of the school feeding programme in Chimutu community, Lilongwe?
- 2) To what extent do Chimutu community members participate in the school feeding programme?
- 3) What are the challenges facing the school feeding programme and how can these be addressed?

1.4 Research aim and objectives

The main aim of this study is to assess the benefits, challenges and levels of community members' participation in the SFP. In order to achieve this goal, the following specific objectives are pursued:

- 1) To explore the benefits of the school feeding programme in Chimutu community, Lilongwe District.
- 2) To assess Chimutu community members' participation in the school feeding programme.
- 3) To find out the challenges facing the school feeding programme and how these can be addressed

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Amartya Sen's (1981) entitlement approach. The entitlement approach is a general framework for analysing poverty and famines (Sen, 1981). The approach describes how poverty is equated to food insecurity and highlights how interventions reduce poverty and vulnerability (Sen, 1984 in Devereux, 2001). The approach defines entitlement as: "*The set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of rights and opportunities that he or she faces*" (Sen 1984:497).

The entitlement approach describes all legal sources of food, which Sen (1981) reduces to four categories: "production-based entitlement" (growing food), "trade-based entitlement" (buying food), "own-labour entitlement" (working for food) and "inheritance and transfer entitlement" (being given food by others). Sen (1981) further indicates that hunger can be caused by "exchange entitlement decline" (adverse shifts in the exchange value of endowments for food, e.g. falling wages or livestock prices, rising food prices) as well as by "direct entitlement decline" (loss of food crops to natural shocks). According to Sen (1981), famine can occur even when food supplies are adequate and markets are functioning well because food insecurity affects people who cannot access adequate food due to poverty irrespective of food availability.

The relevance of the entitlement approach in studying the benefits and challenges of the school feeding programme in Malawi is based on the provision of food to vulnerable children in primary schools as a transfer entitlement. The approach is helpful in emphasizing that rural people in poor countries like Malawi are vulnerable to shocks leading to food insecurity. According to the Department for International Development Framework (2005), economic, health, crop/livestock and natural shocks have resulted in upward price adjustments of food on the market making it impossible for poor people to have access to both nutritious food and viable livelihoods. In this

case, poverty among the community members becomes the main reason for food insecurity so the school feeding intervention that reaches out to the poor people's children, reduces vulnerability through the provision of school food thereby increasing peoples sense of wellbeing(DFID,1999) as well as encouraging school children to participate in school.

The entitlement approach explains how poor people suffer from hunger and how the state and cooperating partners can take care of the situation of the poor through providing food. The SFP therefore fits well as the incentive by the Malawi government and partners to provide food to vulnerable school children as a way of keeping them in school and prevent malnutrition. The provision of food to school children in poor countries like Malawi will help the children to complete primary education. Completion of primary school will make children become agents of change by breaking the vulnerability circle.

Devereux (2001) provides interesting critiques of Sen's entitlement approach to famine. He observes that the entitlement approach has shortfalls in that it assumes that people will immediately sell or exchange their assets for food. Apparently not all poor people are willing to sell their assets for food but many rather choose to starve to avoid assets depletion. According to Devereux (2001), the theory also fails to recognise that even if the household has no assets as exchange entitlements, people facing subsistence crises are forced to "sacrifice" weaker household members. The weaker members of the family in this case include children and the elderly. The SFP therefore targets children in order to prevent them from being victims in their poor households. This is in line with the Convention on the Right of the Child which calls for a warrant of protection for children because they are powerless to protect themselves both at home and beyond (Harper and Marcus cited in Hope, 2005).Children depend on others to promote their interests and welfare, both as a group and as individuals (ibid).

Despite the criticism indicated above, the approach is relevant in studying the SFP in Malawi. Sen (1981) indicates that there are social, economic factors known to poor people which lead to starvation among certain groups in a society. Using Sen's approach that focuses on positive freedom, the empowerment of poor people would give them freedom to decide whether an adopted intervention is effective in terms of poverty alleviation and food security.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study attempts to inform policy to consider people's views, perceptions and socially constructed notions of development when planning for programmes that would deliver and improve the wellbeing of beneficiaries. The findings on benefits as well as drawbacks of the SFP provide information on the reasons for backdrop in primary school after the incentives provided by the Malawi government. This will be an eye opener for different stakeholders, policy makers and decision makers at both local and national levels who are or will be interested in improving the standards of primary schools education in rural Malawi. It is anticipated that the study will further assist the Ministry of Education to understand better the challenges faced by rural communities in providing for their primary school children.

1.7 Outline of the study

Chapter one provides the background for the study. The research problem, research questions and objectives are also covered in the same chapter. It also covers the theoretical framework that guides the research. It further discusses the significance of the study and an overview of the chapters.

Chapter two is the literature review. It provides a discussion of the contested benefits of SFPs in rural areas as lined against the objectives set. It explores the individual and geographical targeting; ingredients of the school meals; benefits of school meals in terms of nutrition and

health, education, poverty alleviation, household income and gender equality among school going children. The chapter also discusses benefits and challenges of the HGSFP. It finally covers the perceptions of community members on community involvement in the SFP.

Chapter three covers the research methodology and methods. It describes the study area, discusses the research design, methodology, sampling, data collection methods and analysis for the study. The chapter further highlights ethical considerations and limitations of the research.

Chapter four presents, discusses and analyses the findings of the study.

Chapter five provides the conclusions and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The Malawi government has social support programmes (SSPs). Such programmes which aim at reducing poverty among the ultra poor include cash transfers; village savings and loans; micro-finance; school feeding and public works. According to the National Social Support Policy (2012), the school feeding programme (SFP) is rated high in improving quality of life among children from poor households. This chapter therefore reviews the SFP as one of the social (support) safety net instruments that relate to education, nutrition and health, poverty alleviation and gender equality benefits.

2.2 School feeding programme policy objectives in Malawi

The objectives of the Malawi SFP include:

- Improve nutrition among primary school children (WFP, 2009).
- Achieve equality in nutritional as well as educational outcomes (WFP, 2009; Nyongani, 2012; Nkhoma et al, 2013; Mhurchu, 2010).
- Ensure decreased morbidity and school dropout.
- Increase access to basic education through enrollment, attendance, class participation and retention rate (Bundy et al, 2009; Cueto and Chinen, 2008; Lawal, 2011).
- Increase gender equality in terms of enrollment ratios between girls and boys in primary schools and decrease HIV/AIDS prevalence among the youth (WFP, 2009).
- Improve poor households by directly reaching out to them in terms of Take Home Rations (THR) (Nyongani, 2012).

2.3 Targeting criteria of school feeding programmes

The SFPs give priority to the poorest and vulnerable children since hunger is a direct result of poverty in most of the developing countries. This is why it is necessary to have policy and objectives that deal with targeting and other mechanisms (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2004). Two types of targeting namely geographical and individual are used in both developed and developing countries as follows:

2.3.1 Geographical Targeting

This deals with identification of areas where poverty levels are high with a focus on the rural people. The WFP Vulnerable Analysis Mapping (VAM) is used to reach out to poverty stricken food insecure villages regarded as disadvantaged (Burbano and Gelli, 2009). Using a statistical data, South Africa uses geographical targeting to give priority to the poorest rural and farm schools (UNESCO, 2004; Bundy et al, 2009). The geographical targeting allows children to start from one footing thereby bringing equality among them as they are learning. However, the use of geographical targeting in Malawi has brought challenges of unnecessary switching of children between schools resulting in overcrowded classrooms in schools that offer school meals. In this case, the neighbouring schools without feeding schemes become almost empty. Furthermore the geographical targeting sometimes leaks out to non poor children in targeted schools rendering the feeding project wasteful.

Despite the adoption of geographical targeting, most implementers of SFPs in Malawi target primary schools and not pre-schools in the rural areas. The argument is based on the thinking that school aged children are more likely to suffer from protein-energy malnutrition and short term hunger than the pre scholars due to extra burdens that life demand of them in the rural

areas (SHN,2009;Andrews et al,2011)). Things like performing household chores, having small breakfast or not eating at all and walking long distances to school lead to loss of energy. Therefore, the food provided at school caters for the loss of energy and nutrients. However it is important to note that the pre scholars, although sidelined require nutrients just as the older children because poor quality and quantity of food consumed in their poor homes could have far reaching effects on brain development which could affect the children's future schooling (Bundy et al,2009).

2.3.2 Individual Targeting

It is regarded as the most cost effective way of helping the needy since it focuses on individual children. Studies reveal that South Africa has adopted individual targeting in other provinces (Buhl, 2012; UNESCO, 2004; National School Nutrition Programme, 2009). However most of the poor countries do not prefer individual targeting as they regard it as being expensive due to data generation and that it is socially undesirable and could lead to discrimination among school children (Dheressa, 2011). Discrimination in schools may lead to absenteeism, non participation or even school dropout among children that are not provided with food. In extreme cases those that are given food would suffer verbal abuse from their friends as a reaction for non provision of food. In addition, poor families may decide to adjust resource allocation among their children through withdraw of resources from the children benefiting from the scheme (Dheressa, 2011). This puts the life of the school children at risk because the food provided at school does not always have the same nutritional value as the one at home.

Targeting has been a contentious issue in Malawi with the government advocating for National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) where each and every child would be provided with food as long as s/he attends primary school. However this is not practical as the government is currently failing to reach out to children that require social support due to financial constraints. In addition,

some of the feeding projects are on pilot phases and therefore it is not known whether the projects will roll out to other parts of the country because that will be dependent on the success of the pilot projects.

2.4 Products used in the school feeding programme

Food has become scarce and expensive for most poor countries. This has led to provision of rations that are below the recommended allowance/intake (WFP, 2012). These countries opt for easily available staple food with less nutritional benefits leading to impacts on the already overburdened health care system. For example, Namibian children are given a ration similar to an Indian ration that yields 475 kilocalories which is below the recommended 555 kilocalories by the WFP (WFP, 2012). The midmorning Corn Soya Blend (CSB) porridge of about 125g provided in targeted schools for 200 days each year is regarded to be high in protein and low in fats (ibid). In trying to improve the quality of the school food, a programme evaluation in South Africa indicated the need to standardize the nutrients in the food served to children to provide 30% of recommended daily allowance (South Africa Policy, 2002). The same scheme in Malawi provides 100g Corn Soya Blend (CSB) porridge every mid morning of school days (Burbano and Gelli, 2009). In addition it also provides THRs of 12kgs flour to girls and orphaned boys as a way of encouraging them to stay in school (WFP, 2006).

The initiative by donor communities to support governments to deliver cost effective SFPs in the Sub Saharan Africa is of great importance. The Trilateral Cooperation Food Security Project in Mozambique is one example of such programmes (Lawson, 2012). The programme's principle is to buy food directly from the local farming community with the idea of boosting local economy. In addition the food choices are also based on nutritive value and shelf life. However, the situation is different in Malawi where the implementers buy the CSB flour from big companies instead of local farmers. The CSB flour is never tested to find out if it is really fortified with

vitamins. Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) which makes schools function as captive markets for local farmers who in turn invest in their land and produce more (Eenhoorn, 2011) would be more appropriate where CSB flour is processed right at the schools to be sure of what goes into the flour. Another advantage of HGSFP is the production of CSB according to need other than the current system whereby implementers buy in bulk to save on transportation costs. This system usually leads to consumption of spoiled/expired food.

2.5 Benefits of school feeding programmes in primary school

SFPs have been highly recommended as social safety net mechanisms that provide both educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children in the developing countries. There is evidence that the programmes are reaching out to about 22 million of school children each year (WFP, 2009). As such, they have become major social programmes responding to MDGs related to hunger in most countries, including low, middle, and high-income countries (ibid). In trying to combat hunger and malnutrition in primary school children, the SFP objectives have effectively addressed poor households problems as follows:

2.5.1 Nutrition and Health

Children performance in school is linked to nutritional and health status of children which the SFP is trying to address (Buttenheim et al, 2011; Bundy et al, 2009). According to Monika (2011: 18) nutritional status is: “*The condition of health of the individual as influenced by the utilization of nutrients*”. The definition therefore entails how access to school food leads to nutritionally sound children expected to perform well in school as compared to children that lack some nutrients such as iron, iodine, vitamin A and proteins which are believed to be added to the food provided at school. Malnourished bodies with effects like stunting, wasting and underweight diminish children’s cognitive development either through physiological changes or

by reducing their ability to participate in learning experiences (SHN, 2009). This makes their bodies prone to illnesses like diarrhoea, malaria and other infectious diseases leading to absenteeism among school children. Relating the importance of school food to school participation, a study conducted in Kenya showed improved Arithmetic scores and tests in non verbal reasoning in children that were given protein foods at school (Buhl, 2012). Further to that, a study in Jamaica revealed that children that were fed at school improved in school attendance, weight gain and achievement in terms of Arithmetic scores, reading and spelling (Ahmed, 2004; Buttenheim et al, 2011).

However, the feeding scheme promotes health and nutrition when the food given is fortified with vitamins and micronutrients. Micronutrient deficiencies affect about 2 billion people worldwide and the most devastating in children are Iron, vitamin A, iodine and zinc (Buhl, 2012; Bundy et al, 2009). Fortification of the local food served in schools with micronutrients improves health/nutrition status. According to Buhl (2012) a study conducted in South Africa demonstrated that fortification reduced anemia and iodine in school aged children. Developing countries like Malawi have failed to reduce stunting and other malnutrition disorders among young children due to lack of food fortification in the school meals and other interventions like promotion of dietary diversification. (MNNP, 2009).

Even though feeding programmes have become a way of fighting short term hunger and malnutrition which are deterrents to school progress, there are no conclusive studies indicating that SFPs have entirely dealt with malnourishment (Nkhoma et al, 2013). A nutritionally sound child consumes balanced food (proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals and vitamins) in required amounts. It is estimated that 60 million school aged children suffer from iodine deficiency disorder and that 85 million are at risk for acute respiratory disease and other infections because of lack of vitamin A (Buhl, 2012). Therefore some studies have concluded that although

SFP responds to nutritional and health needs, it does not do away with all problems to do with poor nutrition, hunger and food security (SA Policy, 2002). A good example is a study of the state of health, nutrition and physical and mental competencies in the rural schools of Uttar Pradesh which found that the problems of malnutrition and ill health could not be overcome by the school meals programme which provided less than 15% of the recommended daily allowance for calories (Kumari, 2005). However, the program did improve school attendance, academic performance and reduced school drop-out rate (ibid).

Lack of nutritious meals at household level to supplement school food due to low income levels also affects the nutritional status of children. As a result, children still suffer from malnutrition regardless of school meals provided. Buhl (2012) reported persistent micronutrient deficiencies which included vitamin A 40%, Anemia 28%, zinc 34% and iodine 97% in Kwazulu Natal 2 years after SFP was launched. Additionally, a study based on qualitative method and a 24 hr recall in Kenya found a positive contribution of school feeding in terms of reduction of hunger among school children (Finan et al, 2010). Provision of lunch according to teachers, improved health of children, reduced the incidence of illness and increased attentiveness and interest of students in the classroom (Finan et al, 2010). Regarding nutritional outcomes, the report indicated that although the school meal provided important access to a nutritional meal, it was deficient in nutrients therefore did not compensate for the inadequate diet intake at home, especially among the rural poor (ibid). This means that food provided in schools which is supposed to be 1/3 of a total day's intake, does not automatically improve nutritional status unless it is supplemented by 2/3 of household food.

Food provision does not always mean that the food eaten is available for absorption in the body because it is dependent on other conditions. A study that was conducted in Ethiopia found that quality and quantity of dietary intake did not guarantee improved nutritional status since

morbidity, feeding practices, parental education and income of the household played a role (Ahmed, 2004). Therefore consumption of food alone is not important unless it is nutritious and that the body is able to absorb it.

Furthermore, food taboos and practices emanating from cultural and religious beliefs put children at awkward positions. In most rural areas in Malawi for example, it is a tradition that children eat when the older members of the household have eaten, and mostly from a communal dish. Children are also forbidden from eating some food like eggs. These practices lead to consumption of non nutritious food resulting in micronutrient disorders which have consequences on health, productivity and mental impairment in children (Fanzo, 2012).

Even though the objective of nutrition and health is debated with some scholars arguing that school feeding impact on achievement and cognition appears to depend on initial nutrition status (MNNP, 2009). It is believed that temporary hunger, common in children who do not eat before going to school can have an adverse effect on learning (Tomlison, 2007; World Bank, 2013). Hungry children have difficulty to concentrate let alone perform multiple tasks even when they are well nourished. Therefore, SFP helps to increase attention and concentration of students. Contradicting the above findings, a study in Chile found no change in short term visual memory, problem solving, attention task in children that skipped breakfast (Ahmed, 2004). The research concluded that as long as children are motivated to do a certain task and that the task follows a certain routine, the omission of breakfast does not affect their cognitive performance (ibid).

Economic hardships and disorganisation in most developing countries prevent the feeding scheme from displaying its effect on nutrition. For example, most of the schools that receive the CSB porridge in Malawi do not take the porridge every other school day of the year due to

financial constraints. Additionally, school children receive reduced daily ration instead of the standardized 100g per day (Nkhoma et al, 2013). Further to that, unplanned holidays due to funerals and emergency school holidays also affect the feeding programme. That is why the study that was conducted in Malawi to evaluate cognitive and anthropometric outcomes in entry-level primary school children concluded that after CSB porridge intake for a year, the children showed increase in weight, height and mid upper arm circumference measurement (Nkhoma et al,2013).The findings showed that SFP in Malawi is associated with an improvement in reversal learning and catch-up growth in lean muscle mass in children and further concluded that the Malawian SFP, if well managed and ration size sustained, may have the potential to improve nutritional and cognitive indicators of the most disadvantaged children (ibid).

2.5.2 Improve education

The majority of literature analysed for this study indicate that there is a positive impact of the school feeding on a scholastic objective of education in terms of class participation, attendance school enrollment and drop out status. However, reports indicate that the positive impact of the SFP on education is noted when the intervention is supported by complementary actions such as deworming and micronutrient fortification or supplementation (Ahmed, 2004; Bundy et al, 2009).Furthermore, most of the findings are based on data from programme schools with effective implementation record and not those with worst experiences. In other instances findings are based on the implementers of projects who would want to see the programmes succeed other than those ordinary community members who are active members as well as beneficiaries of the programme. Therefore, this study tries to unpack the gaps on the views of the community members to confirm the effectiveness of SFP in rural areas.

2.5.2.1 Enrolment

The meals provided in schools attract children who would not have enrolled in the absence of the SFPs. The other interesting aspect is the age at first schooling which is important for future school and labour market success. The parents tend to send young children to school earlier when they realize the increase in household income and the opportunity of attending school (Dheressa, 2011). However, this area has been identified as evidence gap because it has not been demonstrated empirically (Adelman et al. 2008 in Buttenheim et al, 2011). Ahmed (2004) conducted a study in Bangladesh to find out if the SFP increased enrollment. The study found a positive impact on enrollment with gross of 14.2% and a net of 9.6%. Having unobservable characteristics of the households decisions on school enrollment of their children, the findings were therefore considered inconclusive.

Research has shown that female children are mostly at a disadvantage when it comes to school enrollment and attendance due to parents' bias and the belief that boys always have chances to excel in life. It is therefore not strange to have girls at home while boys are attending school. However, engagement of females as managers of the school feeding scheme in Pakistan from 2002 to 2005 found that the involvement of community women in the intervention increased the enrollment of girls (Fowler, 2012).

2.5.2.2 Attendance and Participation

Well fed children always have the desire to participate when it comes to school activities. In the absence of hunger and morbidity, their activeness extends to the community level. A study conducted in Chimanimani and Muzarabani in Zimbabwe reveals that the SFP improved both school participation and extracurricular activities like sports (Hallfors et al, 2012). The children concentrated in class and they no longer complained of stomach pains and headaches due to

hunger. The findings indicated that school feeding was responsible for active participation among children because it improved their physical health. This project showed an increase in school attendance although it was a marginal during lean period when hunger was at its peak (ibid).

However, the study on impacts of school feeding programme that emphasized on school participation in Ethiopia disregarded the possibility of schools operating without qualified teachers. The programme failed to achieve the intended outcomes because there were standard teacher-pupil ratios for a student to participate and perform well in class (Vermeersch and Kremer, 2004 in Dheressa, 2011). Just as in Ethiopia, school attendance and participation in Malawi is still a challenge among rural primary school children which affect completion of primary circle. The low completion rates in rural schools with SFPs in place are mostly related to the likelihood of poor quality of education, overcrowded classrooms, shortage of teachers and limited resources.

Apparently, it has become obvious that people in the rural areas are subsistence farmers and most of the current primary school children in the villages will be no exceptions. As future farmers, rural children need education with basic entrepreneurial and self employment skills to be more productive (Gasperini, 2006 cited in Tomlison, 2007). For most rural people in Malawi, primary education is the highest level of education they will achieve making it critical to development. As an essential aspect of community life, primary school attendance even for a short period will make the community members 8.7% more productive than those with no education because they would have acquired basic skills and foundation knowledge (SHN, 2009).

2.5.2.3 Student drop out

According to the Malawi 2008 Survey, enrolment in school is common but continuity of school attendance by the enrolled pupils is not (Malawi Demographic and Health Survey, 2008). The survey reported that family responsibilities due to food insecurity are among major reasons for pupils drop out. The introduction of feeding schemes therefore, brought multiple benefits to the school children like increased enrollment rates, reduction in absenteeism and increased school participation (WFP, 2009; Burbano and Gelli, 2009).The scheme increased enrollment by 5%,school attendance by 3% and retention by 10% in rural Malawi (MNNP,2009).

Studies done in several countries indicate high dropout rates which in turn lead to low levels of primary school completion. Examples according to Sabates et al (2010) include Benin which had a completion rate of 62% in 2005, DRC 51% in 2007, Bangladesh remained at 60% since 2000.In Malawi despite the allocation of 42% of GDP towards education in 2007, the dropout rate was at 65% with the SFP already in place, meaning that a lot of money was spent on children who left school without any basic skills (ibid).This represents a waste of the already limited resources on provision of elementary school education.

On the contrary, a cross sectional study report in Zimbabwe indicated significant reduction in school dropout and a positive impact on school attendance with the implementation of SFP. However the evaluation indicated that school enrolment for grades 1-3 did not change much (Save the Children, 2011). The report further indicated that before the commencement of the SFP there was a clear sign of hunger among school children which resulted in drowsiness, sleeping in class and fainting during school time (ibid).

2.5.3 Gender equality

It is evident that children whose parents have received some sort of schooling are more likely themselves to attend school for longer. In particular, a mother's education level often influences length of school access for girls. For example in rural Pakistan, girls whose mothers have some sort of formal schooling are less likely to drop out from school (Sabates et al, 2010). Therefore having girls in school will promote education for future generation girls. Experience shows that fewer girls attend school than boys, therefore the provision of food in schools may increase the enrollment of girls and their abilities to concentrate, learn, and perform specific tasks in class.

A study conducted in Kenya showed that girls dropped out of school at higher rate than boys. Therefore the study concluded that school meals did not bring any change on girls' education, contradicting some earlier findings which concluded that female teacher ratio close to parity did likewise to gender ratio of students (Finan et al, 2010). In some instances, the positive trend in enrollment of girls could be due to other factors like free education and government primary education development programmes other than the SFP.

As a way of improving gender equality, Kenya initiated a feeding programme in 12 schools in 2012 as a viable support towards girls' education and as a way of responding to issues of gender disparity which still remain critical especially in rural areas where poverty is widespread (Hallfors et al, 2012). Another study in rural eastern Zimbabwe revealed that SFP reduced girls drop out by 82% and early marriages by 63% two years after food programme implementation. This reduced the girls' chances of contracting AIDS because with education, they became concerned with the consequences of sex (Hallfors et al, 2012). The study also showed evidence that adolescents who stay in school are protected from early sexual engagement thereby preventing themselves from unprotected sex related risks (ibid).

Gender inequalities exacerbate malnutrition in most of the rural areas even though nutrition education programmes target women and girls due to the fact that men are decision makers in most of the interventions. In addition, men are also favoured when it comes to food and resource distribution at the expense of women and children (MNNP, 2009). Due to this bias, the vulnerable households remove their girl children from school to help out in the fields (Andrews et al, 2011). Therefore, it is doubtful if universal education and promotion of gender equality will be achieved because girls still lag behind in enrolment and completion rates.

Much as the THRs are applauded as a way of keeping the disadvantaged children in school, they sometimes become a way of pulling boy children down instead of putting both girls and boys at par. A study conducted in Malawi established that the THRs had negative effect on the schooling of boys in cases where the families had boy children only (Tomlison, 2007). Parents removed their boy children from school to do piece jobs to earn food. The enrolment of girls increased by 37.7% while the enrolment of boys just rose by 24 % (Roka, 2004 in Tomlison, 2007). The study therefore recommended the need to provide boys with the THRs as well to prevent absenteeism and improve their performance (ibid).

2.5.4 Poverty alleviation.

The SFPs try to address hunger and intergenerational vulnerability. Social and economic deprivation leads to poor dietary quality and quantity and disease in the household. This result in poor school performance and an increase in dropout rates of school going children (SHN, 2009). Children from vulnerable homes are bound to fall back into the economic deprivation state as adults due to social and economic entitlement failure.

Poverty and recurrent food insecurity in developing countries have contributed to a drop in school attendance among primary school children especially during lean season in most poor countries. The SHN baseline survey in Malawi (2009) shows that about 70% of children aged between 7 to 10 years do not regularly eat breakfast before going to school due to lack of food in their homes because income earned per day in their households is lower compared to the cost of their diets. In that hunger state, the children are likely to skip home work, perform poorly and experience difficulties in learning. To fill the cost gap among poor families, social support programmes like SFP are required to control such negative effects.

The THRs provided in some schools improve the standard of living as parents save money meant for buying food for other complementary activities. Reports indicate that Ghana's feeding programme whose objective is to boost domestic food production through sourcing of local food to sustain local farmers market supports HGSFP (Buhl, 2012). This ensures regular demand on local market thereby having a potential to support local agricultural production and local economy. The introduction of the HGSFP has seen the country progressing in terms of local employment in farming, vending and administration (Buhl, 2012).

However, the provision of porridge to children that are in school and sidelining other family members encourages sharing of school food. In cases where the families are in dire poverty, the older children in school are likely to keep some food to share with the young ones at home. In this case the amount of food becomes too little to show positive results to the intended beneficiaries. This encourages poor parents to withhold their children from going to school because priority is given to daily survival and not children education. Such families cannot afford some costs of schooling like books, clothes, transportation even when school is free and food is provided at school. Instead the families encourage their children to go for income generating activities or look after siblings as the parents look for piece work (Dheressa, 2011).

Furthermore, social instability in the vulnerable homes also force children to leave school and look for work to supplement the family income (UNICEF, 2012).A study conducted in India by Rao and Rao in 1998, for example, established that poverty was one of the causes of child labour. Helpless and unemployed parents were supported by their young children who were favoured by employers. This dependency on children to supplement family earnings encouraged school dropout and child employment (Rao and Rao, 1998 in Hamela, 2011).According to ILO Report,20% of children below the age of 14 are engaged in domestic work (Datta and Banik,2012).

Although Malawi Government has made improvements in programmes like SFP it still remains one of the poorest countries in the world. With 65% of the population earning less than US\$2 a day and 82 % of the population living in rural areas, school enrollment and completion is a challenge due to high poverty levels (ESIP, 2009).It is not strange therefore that although parents know that their children eat at school, they still encourage bad practices that would have a negative impact on the children's future like child labour, child marriages, and family responsibilities for monetary gains (ESIP, 2009).The girl child who can turn the poverty levels if educated is mostly the victim in families facing economic difficulties as she is forced to act as an adult and exposed to all types of abuse in the process when boys of the same age enjoy childhood.

2.6 Challenges associated with school feeding programmes

Social Support Programmes (SSPs) like School feeding are crucial if universal education is to be achieved. Although developing countries are working towards improvement of primary school conditions through interventions like SFP, dropout rates are significant and lead to low levels of primary school completion (Sabates et al, 2010).

With SFP in place as one way of making sure children attend school, the beneficiaries are expected to appreciate the intervention by sending children to school and discourage bad practices among children. However, there is a belief that parents' negative attitudes towards education are some of the main reasons for non participation in primary school. This has not been proved by research and therefore regarded as mere hearsay. This study therefore, intends to find out if parents have an attitude problem towards school SFP or schooling of children in general.

The SFP just like the free education policy overlooked the possibilities of enrolling school children that the government could not maintain. Most children in public schools in Malawi learn in overcrowded classrooms, school children of different ages are found in one classroom due to retention making it difficult for the young ones to cope. Further to that there are a lot of unqualified teachers, lack of teaching and learning resources. Such circumstances deny children of their right to meaningful education (Sabates et al, 2010). On the other hand, the primary school pupils in Malawi, whose parents are poor, need to buy school uniform, pens and text books which they cannot afford. These could be some of the reasons for high dropout rates despite the provision of food at school.

According to Andrews et al (2011) school feeding programmes are viewed as interventions that address health and nutritional needs of the school going children and not for education outcomes, hence the conclusion that the aim is to improve the nutritional as well as health status in children, Additionally other studies have indicated that the most effective nutritional intervention is the one that targets a child at age 0 to 2 years because beyond that age the damage is irreversible.(Bundy et al,2009;Andrews et al,2011). The exclusion of the preschoolers from the programme has a negative impact because the children's cognitive development from infancy depends on good nutrition which prevents structural damage to the

brain that impairs motor development and exploratory behaviour (MNNP, 2009). With low nutritional status resulting from earlier malnourishment, the children fail to attend school later in life due to inferiority complex among other reasons.

The timing of meals disrupts learning by taking away hours meant for school activities. The provision of meals early is not easy due to the long distances to fetch water for food preparation, utilizing volunteers and lack of resources. An offsite prepared meal was adopted by countries like Peru, Lesotho and Nigeria to deal with problems associated with time taken from learning and other logistical disturbances (UNESCO, 2004). However the challenge with this arrangement was the monotony of the food provided, quality and hygiene which needed to be addressed (ibid). School feeding has also become a healthy hazard in some countries like Kenya and Malawi which do not order offsite prepared meals but have issues of inadequate dining space, no hand washing facilities and general poor hygiene during meal preparation (Buhl, 2012; Global Child Nutrition Forum, 2011).

Food aid in form of SFP is supposed to uplift living standards of the poor. It is therefore unbelievable as to why the sub Saharan Africa has been lagging in development despite being a priority area for donor countries (Cassen and Associates, 1994). Most primary schools in developing countries including Malawi are very basic and lack resources. Many students learn outside in temporary structures, making teaching impossible during the rainy season (Little, 2008 in Sabates, 2010; Buhl, 2012). These school conditions lead to the common feeling that the SFPs cannot achieve their objectives unless problems of resource allocation and additional qualified teachers that would manage overcrowded classrooms are taken on board.

Most recipient countries of SFPs are required to contribute towards the prescribed developmental interventions put in place by donor communities (Cassen and Associates,

1994). Reports indicate that parents and other members of the community contribute towards the feeding schemes through building of food storage facilities and provision of labour for food preparation (Buhl, 2012; Buttenheim et al, 2011). This practice calls for non corporation amongst poor rural communities (ibid). Malawi as one of the poor countries is also unable to contribute towards the scheme and therefore put a burden on parents and children who fetch firewood, draw water and sometimes contribute money towards the programme instead of participating in other income generating activities. There have been instances where children whose parents do not contribute/participate are either sent home or not allowed to eat the school meal. This is not in line with Malawian school rules and regulations whereby every child is allowed to attend school regardless of parents' reaction towards incentives that are outside learning. Such practices by SFP implementers are bound to bring confusion and make SFP lose meaning.

According to WFP (2012), lack of accountability in schools especially where the bottom up approach is adopted contribute to corruption and theft among food providers in schools. The SFP becomes expensive in the eyes of implementers especially nowadays where they are operating in quite difficult times as compared to when they were just initiated. In the past, schools had fewer children unlike nowadays when a lot of children are attending school due to other interventions like free education. With little funding and corrupt practices by food handlers, implementers are forced to reduce the portions and number of feeding days. School children become victims in this case because they end up receiving inadequate food than the required amount allocated to them just as was reported in the Namibian school feeding scheme (WFP, 2012).

Apparently, the world has seen people from very poor background excelling in school. This may lead to a conclusion that there is a possibility that hungry children do adjust to their 'hungry'

situation. So provision of food to such children cannot change their learning abilities or remedy the nutritional deficiencies associated with learning difficulties (Ahmed, 2004). Although some reports indicate that nutritional disorders are irreversible Buhl (2012), a study conducted in South Africa revealed that micronutrient deficiencies can be easily reversed through supplements and fortification (SA Policy, 2002). An example was the provision of fortified biscuits that reduced prevalence of anemia and iodine deficiencies among school children aged between 6 and 11 (ibid).

It has been argued that most school feeding interventions lack political will (GCNF, 2011). Reports show that the countries where such interventions are part of the national plan have no setbacks. Madagascar is one country that has adopted such a plan and has a National Board that overlook the implementation of SFP (GCNF, 2011). This political will promotes balancing of objectives, accountability as well as monitoring and evaluation (ibid).

2.7 Attitudes/beliefs of people about school feeding programme

The feeling that the children are fed at school motivates parents to enroll their children and see to it that they attend school regularly. This improves performance and related educational outcomes. It gives a chance to the poor households to save on allowances given to children to buy meals or use the money for some other productive purposes in the home (Andrews et al, 2011). A study conducted in Ghana showed reduced overall rates of dropout because it achieved the removal of parents' burden on cost of buying food thereby attracting many children to enroll (Ricardo, 2010).

On the other hand, a study using qualitative method in Togo revealed that parents would have loved to see the school food being consumed by everyone around the school and not restricted

to school children (Andrews et al, 2011). Further to that, the parents resorted to either providing the school children with small amount of food or completely withdrawing them from family meals claiming that food portion provided in school was by far bigger than the one at home (ibid).

Even though developing countries are improving standards of education through interventions like SFP, there are other factors affecting motivations and decision-making relating to educational outcomes. The rural community members have their own perceptions of how education will influence lifestyle, career possibilities and chances in the labour market (Fowler, 2012). These are shown on the factors that lead them to withdraw their children from school at an early age. According to Bundy et al (2009) perceived quality of education and the ability of children to make progress through the schooling system can affect the priority placed on schooling within the household.

Additionally, a study that used qualitative longitudinal method on the perceptions of stakeholders on SFP in Ghana (Fowler, 2012) reported that the programme met the expectations of stakeholders in reducing absenteeism and improving classroom behaviour. In addition, the impact in their households included increased disposable income. However, it has been established that the studies on SFPs do not touch on people's perceptions in most cases but rather nutrition and health (Fowler, 2012). The perceptions of the communities help to shape and advocate for the programme even beyond donor funding so as to meet the people's expectations (ibid). Furthermore, perceptions and day to day shared experiences are crucial to development (Fowler, 2012), and therefore allow implementers to take care of cultural values of the beneficiaries. These are some of the issues this study is hoping to highlight so that it helps to improve implementation of future projects.

It is important to note that rural communities have knowledge and can ably identify their problems and possibly come up with the course of action to solve such problems. Therefore the implementers of programmes should not assume that communities are homogenous. The local people are bound to support a programme when they feel it is important. That is why in Cape Verde community education is part of the feeding programme (GCNF, 2011).

There is a general feeling that although SFPs are often placed purposively in schools that require them, they rarely target vulnerable children within schools due to the use of geographical rather than individual targeting criteria. In Chile the individual selecting has been effective where allocation of food is provided to those vulnerable children in the classroom (Buhl, 2012). In cases of geographical targeting, the well-nourished children who would attend school in the absence of the SFP still receive food. The cost of school feeding programs might therefore be better spent on other sustainable interventions like deworming, uniform and book purchasing or teacher training (Fowler, 2012; Butteinheim et al, 2011).

2.8 Community participation

Community participation in SFP is important for ownership among the community members. The local people are influential on the running and success of every programme. Therefore, it is important to involve the community members in all areas of the SFP implementation. According to Shaad (2010) community members in Osun state participated as cooks and members of the Parents Teacher Association (PTA) as a way of strengthening the opportunities for income generation and community development. However this report revealed that community participation was just up to a certain level as it did not involve community members in funding committee and community leaders in retrieving land for school gardens (ibid).

Additionally, a review of the SFP in Pakistan by the Department of Community Health Sciences at the Aga Khan University in Karachi found that the involvement of community members improved the outcomes of the school feeding intervention (Fowler, 2012). Another qualitative study that used focus group discussions and interviews at Malembe Primary School in Malawi revealed that community members were actively involved in the running of the programme because it was a community driven SFP (Nyongani,2012). The community initiated the school feeding programme because the school was not a target for implementers even though it is in the rural areas. However this study tries to find out if community members' participation is not restricted to food storage and preparation in the fully funded programme schools.

Home Grown School Feeding Programmes (HGSFPs) have been introduced to mitigate impacts of food insecurity on schooling outcomes as well as responding to the shocks of the global food, fuel, and financial crises (MNPN, 2009). According to WFP (2009) local procurement of school food increases local farmer incomes through regular demand on local market. The local farmers therefore, have potential to expand their businesses as well as support their families in terms of supplementing their diet with a complete meal that is adequate in nutrients (Burbano & Gelli, 2009; Tomlison, 2007).Involvement of the local farmers is important because it is not easy to have community members' commitment in poor countries when monetary gains are minimal. Further to that, lack of communities involvement from the beginning of the project/s often lead to lack of ownership because people are not able to communicate the interventions that would serve them better.

A study conducted by WFP recently demonstrated that if local farmers from potential area for maize in Kenya were to sell their produce to the feeding scheme, the income of 175,000 farmers would increase by US\$50,000 per year (Buhl, 2012).Although the figures show an improvement of economic status for poor farmers, the reality is that food aid from donor countries prevent the

local farmers from prospering. In Bangladesh for example, wheat that comes in form of aid for biscuit production could have profited the local wheat farmers if wheat was bought locally (Ahmed, 2004). This contradicts the arguments that SFPs are beneficial and sustainable when the targeted poor people get involved in the running of the programme activities (Nyongani, 2012).

Lack of support to local farmers exacerbates poverty in developing countries. An assessment conducted in 2005 in Kenya showed deterioration in food security due to drought in most of the farming households (Ahmed, 2004). This meant suspension of SFP for sometime as the farmers could not supply food to schools (ibid). According to the researchers experience, Malawi is likely to face challenges if HGSFP is to be adopted as a way of improving the people's livelihood. Most rural farmers cannot afford to produce food to take them through the year. Economic hardships faced by the country have affected prices of farm inputs making it impossible for the local farmers to produce enough food for sale. Unless these farmers are supported with resources and best farming techniques, HGSFP remains a dream for Malawians.

In development thinking, the SFP has extended beyond the school child as it represents a relief to the already stressed household budgets. It therefore contributes to building of other assets for the wellbeing of both the household and the community (Finan et al, 2010; Bundy et al, 2009). According to a study conducted in Zimbabwe (Finan et al, 2010), community ownership of the SFP led to the construction of kitchens, provision of resources such as plates, spoons, and preparation of food. However, food availability at household never improved during this period and results show that the households that depended on food purchases increased from 40.3% at baseline to 74.8% at evaluation (ibid). Community members with no children in school wanted their children to feed on the food provided in school and those preparing meals expected their families to benefit from the programme.

Recently, food sovereignty approach has been favoured due to the realization that although food security and nutrition security are necessary, they are not sufficient to uplift people's living standards (Tomlison, 2007). Food sovereignty has therefore been defined as:

“The right of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies, which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies”(Campesina, 2003 in Tomlison,2007: 20).

The principles of food sovereignty are bound to develop and stimulate local farmers as they supply locally produced food to be used for SFPs. Coupled with training from experts in Agriculture, the local farmers can ably blend foods and become a cheap source of food for SFP. However it has been established that the nutrition content, food safety and quality of the locally blended food are not guaranteed (GCNF, 2011).

2.9 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed literature on benefits, challenges, and levels of community participation in general. The chapter has also provided an analytical base for this research by highlighting that most of the SFPs do not touch on community members' views and perceptions but nutrition and health. Furthermore the chapter has provided a theoretical base for the research by highlighting Sen's (1981) transfer entitlement concept of giving food to the poor people affected by food insecurity. It has been argued that the Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) is critical to local farmers in low resource countries .However, the HGSFP is failing to take off in most poor countries due to financial constraints that prevent the local

farmers to produce food for the SFP and lack of community members' involvement in planning and implementation.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The study aimed at assessing the benefits, challenges and levels of community members' participation in the SFP. In addition it also explored the community members' perceptions of the school feeding programme in order to provide a deeper understanding of the meanings that community members attach to the intervention. In so doing, the study provided deep insights on how the community members understand the programme in relation to the stipulated objectives of the programme which include: to improve nutrition among primary school children; to achieve equality in nutritional as well as educational outcomes; to ensure decreased morbidity and school dropout; to increase access to basic education through enrolment, attendance, class participation and retention rate; to increase gender equality in terms of enrolment ratios between girls and boys in primary schools and decrease HIV/AIDS prevalence among the youth; and to improve poor households by directly reaching out to them in terms of Take Home rations (THR).

This chapter discusses the research methodology and methods that were used to obtain data for the study. It provides details of methods employed, sampling procedure, data sources and instruments for data collection, data analysis techniques and justifies why particular techniques were chosen. It further discusses piloting, validity and reliability issues during the course of the research. It finally discusses limitations of the methods employed and the ethical considerations taken during the course of conducting the research.

3.2 The study area

The study was conducted in Chimutu (a rural part of Lilongwe District), Malawi. Chimutu area was purposively selected because it has two schools namely Chata and Therezi (see plates 1 and 2 below) that have been beneficiaries of the school feeding programme since 2009 and

2011 respectively. The researcher therefore, specifically chose Chimutu area with the expectations of collecting relevant data from the community members around the schools while minimizing costs of the research process.

According to NSO (2008) Chimutu area which lies to the east of Lilongwe city has 15 group village chiefs, a total of 42, 940 adults of whom 21, 084 are males and 21, 856 are females. The dominating tribe in the area of study is Chewa which constitutes 99% of the population and 60% of the people are subsistence farmers (Msiska, et al, 2008). The majority of the households are poor leading to severe wasting in young children due to malnutrition which is one of the health problems in Malawi (ibid).

Plate 1: Chata Primary School



Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

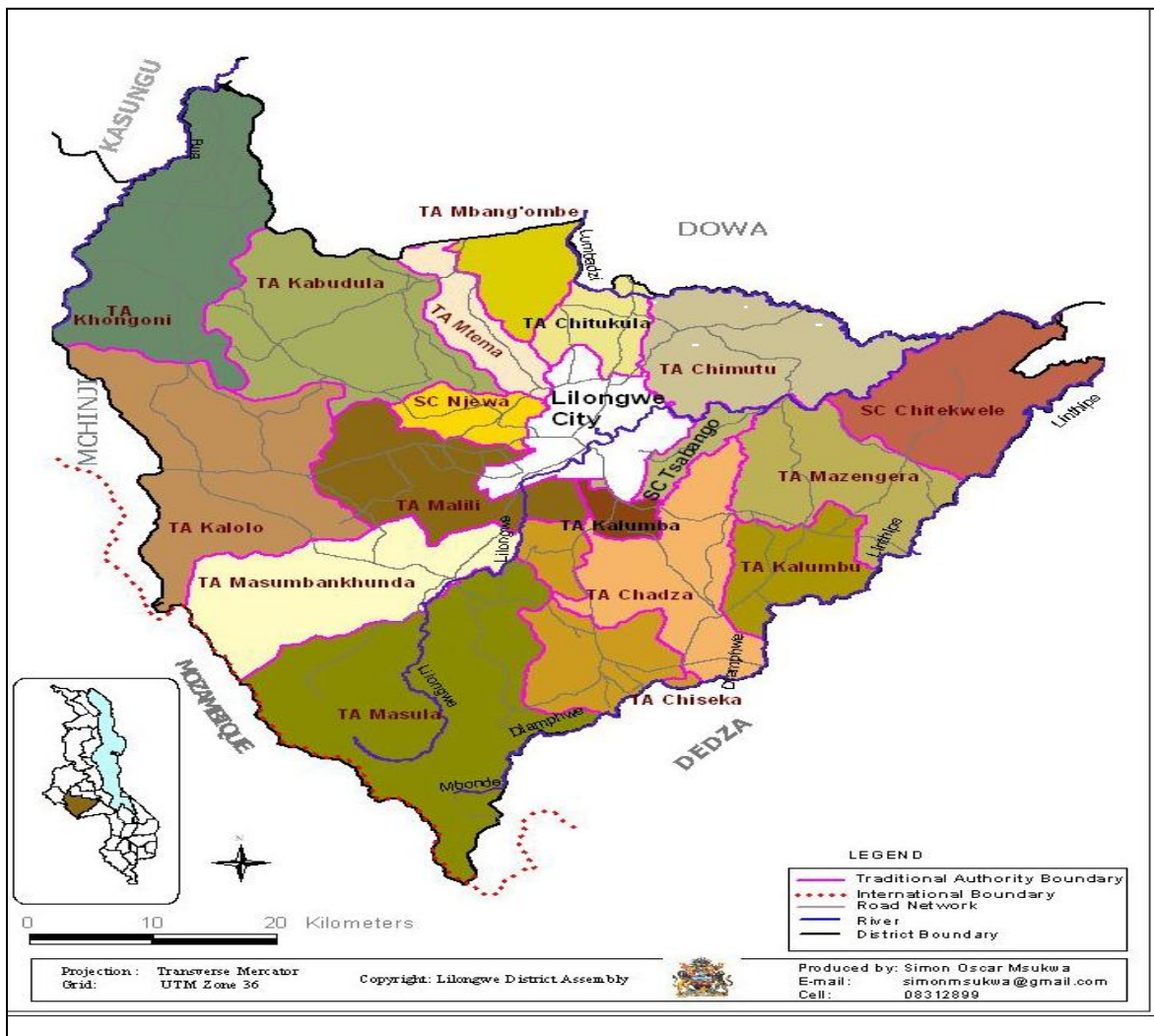
Plate 2: Therezi Primary School



Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

Lilongwe district which is the capital city of Malawi has 18 traditional authorities with a population of 1,228,146 (NSO, 2008). The district borders Dowa District to the north, Salima to the north-east Dedza District to the east, Mchinji District to the west, Kasungu to the north-western and the Republic of Mozambique to the south-west (Lilongwe District Assembly, 2006). Plate 3 below shows the Traditional Authority under study.

Plate 3: Map of Lilongwe district showing Chimutu Traditional Authority area



Source: Lilongwe District Assembly, 2006

3.3 Research methodology

This study uses qualitative techniques. “Qualitative research is research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss and Corbin cited in Golafshani, 2003). Qualitative researchers become main instruments in a

research because they immerse themselves in the research (ibid). There are three main categories of sourcing data in a qualitative study and these are observations, artifacts and documents and interviews (Henning, 2004). The researcher used observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews during the data collection process.

The study uses a qualitative approach because it is suitable for the investigation that seeks in-depth understanding of the school feeding programme. The qualitative approach gives focus to both the collection of facts and interests as well as perceptions of community members of Chimutu area without controlling and measuring competing variables which become difficult in some instances (Ulin et al, 2005). The qualitative approach is viewed as better suited to a study that seeks an in-depth understanding of a situation and addresses the challenges a particular group may face given a particular problem (ibid). Additionally, qualitative research focuses on the meanings that people attach to a specific situation unlike quantitative approaches which often fail to elicit meanings (Ulin et al, 2005). Due to employing qualitative techniques, parents and other community members whose involvement is restricted to porridge preparation were able to express their views. This allowed the researcher to identify their experiences in the school feeding programme. The qualitative approach may thus potentially be a guide towards knowledge of how the community members in their natural settings communicate their beliefs and experiences in relation to the feeding programme as an incentive that helps them break the poverty circle.

In agreement with its aims and objectives, this study adopted qualitative studies with the primary aim of describing the benefits, challenges and community participation in the SFP. The qualitative approach is argued to be a liberating tool to marginalized groups (Neman cited in mkandawire-Valhmu, 2010) which include the beneficiaries of school feeding programme. In relation to the entitlement theory's concept of giving food to the poor people affected by food insecurity, the beneficiaries of the school feeding programme were able to explain how the

intervention reduces poverty and vulnerability among the poor people. Therefore the approach empowered the poor people and gave them freedom to express their views on whether an adopted intervention is effective in terms of poverty alleviation and food security. Its relevance relate to the realization that this study does not only describe the situation of poor people but may potentially be a guide towards the liberation of vulnerable people given the assumption that there are other factors apart from food shortage that are known to poor people that may lead to starvation among certain groups in a society.

3.4 Research methods

3.4.1 In-depth semi-structured interviews

In-depth interviews are defined as interviews that are used when seeking information on individuals and experiences from the respondents about specific issues (Hennink et al,2011).They are commonly used for collecting data in qualitative research because they help to uncover deep insights due to the repeated face to face encounter between a researcher and respondents (Taylor and Bogdan cited in Kumar, 2005).The understanding therefore is based on the respondents perspective on their life experiences. Even though some authors argue that in-depth studies are less rigorous than survey methods due to their inability to capture a large population, they have a positive side of looking at actual patterns of social interaction and a concern with interpretative understanding of social action as well as causal explanation from the actors point of view to provide some account of the actors subjective definition of the situation(Bulmer,1984).In this study, the 32 in-depth semi-structured interviews help to explore the meanings that rural people attach to interventions put in place to help the poor like the school feeding programme.

Furthermore, the in-depth interviews which are regarded as conversations with purpose (Hennink et al, 2011) aimed at capturing views/stories from community members on the benefits

of the school meals programme. This would not have been possible with other tools like questionnaires. Due to the ability of the in-depth interviews to allow flexibility and high response rate from respondents (Bailey, 1993), the researcher was able to uncover real issues both positive and negative in relation to the school feeding scheme in the area under study.

3.4.2 Non-participant observations

Observation is a research method that enables a researcher to systematically observe and record people's behaviour, actions and interactions (Hennink et al, 2011). It further allows a researcher to obtain a well-detailed description of a social setting and events in terms of what people do and say (ibid). There are two types of observation namely participant and non-participant observation. This study used the latter which refers to conducting an observation without participating in the activities being observed (Hennink et al, 2011). In this case the researcher collected data on school attendance, social and economic status of community members, porridge preparation and its challenges in the schools under study.

One of the advantages of observation in a qualitative study is that the studied behaviour is captured firsthand as compared to when interviews or other methods are used (Welman, 2005). In this study, non-participant observation provided supplementary data to in-depth interviews. In addition, observation helped the researcher to observe community members' actions such as body language and interactions while also observing the hygiene and sanitation in the school kitchens.

However, one of the setbacks of the observation method is that the behaviour of the observed might be influenced by the presence of the observer (Hennink et al, 2011). The researcher therefore, took note of what to wear and selected an appropriate place to conduct

observation(ibid).Furthermore, the research questions guided the researcher on what to observe.

3.4.3 Key informant interviews

The selection of 14 key informants that include government officials, school heads, Good Neighbours officials and teachers was necessary to provide information based on their specific experiences and expertise. The use of key informants produces productive results since the key informants are information rich when it comes to school feeding programmes. They also have deep insight and understanding of the school meals programme.

The choice of the above research methods was also based on their suitability to collect data in addressing the research questions. Therefore, table 1 below summarises the methods used to collect data and justification for the choice for each of the methods in addressing the research questions.

Table 1: Relationship between research questions and research methods used

Research Question	Methods and Data Sources	Justification
What are the benefits of the school feeding programme in Chimutu community, Lilongwe?	In-depth interviews with teachers, parents and other community members	In-depth interviews helped the researcher to capture information on the benefits of school feeding programme as a social safety net mechanism
	School registers and report books	Registers and report books revealed attendance, absenteeism and performance of students

Research Question	Methods and Data Sources	Justification
<p>To what extent do Chimutu community members participate in the school feeding programme?</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with teachers, parents and other community members</p> <p>Key informants interviews with experts in the school feeding programme area (Teachers, government employees, programme representatives)</p>	<p>The in-depth interviews helped the researcher to engage the parents, teachers and other community members on their participation in the school feeding programme.</p> <p>Face to face interviews helped the researcher to access views on how the perceptions of people relate to the community participation requirement of the school feeding programme</p>
<p>What are the challenges facing the school feeding programme and how can these be addressed?</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with community members</p> <p>Key informant interviews with teachers, government employees, programme representatives knowledgeable in school feeding programmes</p>	<p>Interviews with community members helped the researcher to collect people's views on how challenges faced in the school feeding programme can be addressed</p> <p>Interviews with key informants helped the researcher to capture information challenges affecting the school feeding programme and how the challenges can be addressed</p>

Adapted from Akpan and Olivier (2009 cited in Alufandika, 2010)

3.5 Sampling

The research participants for this study include both females and males from Chimutu Traditional Authority and key informants from government departments and nongovernmental organisations that deal with school feeding. The study interviewees were 32 community members and 14 key informants (see Tables 2 and 3. below). The community members from T.A Chimutu include those from 30 Chata villages and 9 Therezi villages that surround Chata and Therezi schools respectively.

Table 2: Study respondents (community members)

Targeted community members	No. of respondents
Community leaders	4
Parents	23
Good Neighbours committee members	3
School committee members	2
Total	32

Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

Table 3: Study respondents (key informants)

Targeted key informants	No of respondents
Good Neighbours central office	2
Ministry of Education	4
Ministry of Economic planning and Development	2
Teachers	6
Total	14

Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

Purposive sampling was used to select the 46 respondents. Purposive sampling is an example of non probability sampling with deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses (Tangco,2007).In addition, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can willingly provide information by virtue of knowledge or experience (ibid). The technique can also be more efficient than the popular random sampling when used appropriately in field circumstances because random community members would not be as knowledgeable as an expert informant (Tangco, 2007).

However there is need for assurance of informants' competence and reliability because the quality of data gathered will be dependent on them. According to Baker (1994) purposive sampling is most effective when studying interests, values and cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within as this enables the researcher to capture rich description of the issues at hand. It further reduces the danger of losing efficiency and failure to recognize the existence of other types of information that can be extracted from a community in more than one way (ibid).The use of purposeful sampling in this study helps to recognize the existence of different types of information like levels of community involvement in the feeding programme.

Furthermore, purposive sampling is especially useful when there are inadequate funds and other resources for data collection since it can be more realistic than randomization in terms of time, effort and cost needed in finding informants (Tangco, 2007).Against the forgoing, the researcher therefore, purposefully selected participants that are knowledgeable to give detailed information relating to benefits and challenges of school feeding programmes. The selection of school heads as key informants was helpful in obtaining data on porridge preparation, cleaning and safe keeping of the kitchen utensils. The researcher also made it a point to have representation from both sexes so as to appreciate views from both sides.

3.6 Data collection

Using the above mentioned research methods data collection was done in June and July, 2013 (refer to Appendix 3). When making appointments prior to the interviews, respondents were asked to select a suitable place for the interviews. Selection of suitable place by the interviewees makes them feel comfortable and therefore able to talk freely (Hennink et al, 2011). So the choice of interview places by respondents included the two schools, homes and offices for the key informants. All the interviews except three were conducted in the local language (Chichewa). All interviews were tape recorded.

3.7 Data analysis

The study uses descriptive qualitative analysis to bring structure and meaning to the collected data (Babbie, 2004). According to Babbie (2004) qualitative analysis discovers underlying meanings and patterns of relationship through non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations. On the other hand, description in qualitative analysis is an important tool in developing powerful and engaging accounts of processes and social phenomena in the analytical data (Hennink et al, 2011).

In qualitative studies, it is allowed to sort and format data into themes or stories simultaneously with data collection, which may not be possible with quantitative research (Ulin et al., 2005). The same approach was adopted in this study whereby the preliminary analysis was done at the same time with data collection to save time and allow the researcher to identify issues to be further explored in the subsequent interviews. Transcription (verbatim) which involves reading, and re-reading texts and reviewing notes followed (Ulin et al, 2005). Transcription in this study included listening to, and the verbatim typing of the recorded data to capture both the words spoken by the participants and the researcher. The researcher then removed identifiers to

preserve anonymity of respondents. According to Hennink et al, (2011) removal of identifiers helps to maintain ethical principles during data analysis.

Coding which is considered as a key process in the analysis of qualitative research data (Babbie, 2004) was then done after the transcription process. Coding process is based on key terms raised by respondents in the process of answering questions from the interview guide (Hennink et al, 2011). According to Hennink et al, (2011) codes allow the researcher to identify issues raised in the data as well as understand the meanings attached to those issues from the participants' point of view. Memo writing which involves writing notes that describe and define concepts, theoretical ideas, preliminary conclusions and other useful thoughts (Babbie, 2004), was done simultaneously with coding in this study.

The last step in data analysis is interpretation. This is the act of identifying and explaining the data's core meaning with the intention of communicating the study's essential ideas to a wider audience (Ulin et al, 2005). In this study, interpretation was based on the themes that emerged from transcribed interviews.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are crucial elements to ensure trustworthiness of research (Ulin et al, 2005). According to Baker (1994) validity is the assurance that an instrument is measuring what it was intended to measure while reliability means the dependability of a particular technique to yield the same result each time it is applied on the same object. However, reliability is not a concern in qualitative research because of the belief that the same method does not yield same results considering that reality is subjective (Ulin et al., 2005).

In this study, research instruments were validated through the pilot visit. The necessary corrections and amendments to the instruments were done at that point. In addition, as it is indicated that the authenticity of a research is supported by the use of multiple sources to collect data (Nyongani, 2012), this study used observation, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews as primary data sources that helped to triangulate the data. Furthermore, the researcher took pictures throughout the data collection process. According to Nyongani (2012) photographs are used by qualitative researchers as one way among several other techniques to consistently record observations.

Lastly, the researcher conducted the interviews without any research assistants because in-depth interviews require special skills to establish rapport, listen and react to interviewees and use motivational probes (Hennink et al, 2011). The researcher also recorded data both manually and electronically.

3.9 Limitations

The study had a number of limitations. Although the process of getting permission from the Ministry of Education was not complicated, there were limitations experienced that included postponement of interviews by key informants from the Ministry of Education and Good Neighbors NGO. Top government employees from the Ministry of Education were not comfortable to be interviewed and therefore kept on referring the researcher to some other officials that had no relevant information. It was later discovered by the researcher that there was a knowledge gap amongst the key informants on how school feeding programmes operate in the area under study.

The Implementing NGO (Good Neighbors) respondents had their reservations as well. The top official in the NGO indicated that the researcher could not go to the schools without being

escorted. It was later discovered by the researcher that the organisation had issues that were not addressed and they did not want the researcher to pick these up during interactions with community members. In addition, the researcher failed to get school feeding documents from the NGO implementers since they indicated that all the documents are in Korean (the implementers are from Korea) and they were yet to be translated into English.

Another limitation is that the sample is relatively small as it was collected from one area which benefits from Good Neighbors NGO. The researcher could not manage to include other rural areas within the district that benefit from other school feeding implementers like WFP and Mary Meals due to the limited resources and time. Despite these challenges that limit the generalization of this study, the findings offer helpful insights from a specific community context.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Approval was sought from the Lilongwe District Education Office and the Community Leaders in the area under study before commencing the study. The University of Fort Hare (UFH) data collection letter detailing the study and its purpose was supplied to the District Education Office and to Community leaders. Permission was then granted by both Lilongwe District Education office and Community Leaders. The researcher sought consent from adult members of the community to participate in the study. Due to the large number of illiterate respondents, verbal consent was sought because it is unethical to study people without their consent ((Taylor and Field, 2003).

The purpose and process of the study was explained to all possible study participants. All participants were assured of their right to participate or decline or indeed withdraw from the study at any time should they feel uncomfortable. Participants were also assured of anonymity

and confidentiality of their participation. Given the nature of the research, the study participants did not perceive the research threatening at all. Furthermore the research did not cause any harm to the respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR: SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES IN CHIMUTU: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

4.1 Introduction

This study set out to answer the following research questions:

- What are the benefits of the school feeding programme in Chimutu community, Lilongwe?
- To what extent do Chimutu community members participate in the school feeding programme?
- What are the challenges facing the school feeding programme and how can these be addressed?

In answering the above questions, this chapter describes and analyses feeding programmes in Chimutu schools, their impacts on children nutrition, school enrolment and completion. It further analyses, community members' participation in the feeding programme , challenges affecting the school feeding programme and perceptions about the effectiveness of the school feeding programme in improving enrolment and completion of primary school by children in the area under study.

The findings documented here use descriptive mode of communication. Descriptive mode of communication is a mode of communicating research results by setting up a stage whereby the reader is free to make own analysis alongside the researcher and puts the reader in the picture of what is happening without bias (Wolcott,1994).The researcher's role includes grouping data and provide evidence using interviewee's own words.

4.2 Socio-demographic and economic characteristics of respondents

A total of 46 respondents were interviewed. These include community members (chiefs, parents, and school and Good Neighbours NGO committee members), teachers, government

and Good Neighbours representatives (NGO Implementers). Out of the 46 respondents, 33 were females and 13 males. Females (71%) dominated the sample especially in community members' interviews. Low participation of males was firstly due to the reason that males were rarely at home during the home visits despite being notified of the interview before hand. Secondly, they related the feeding programme to women since women in this area volunteer to cook for the children at school. Some men (45%) suggested that their wives respond to the questions thinking the wives would be in a better position to give detailed information on the project while others (26%) could not give valid reasons for non participation. However, the few male (29%) respondents provided tangible information as regards to the initiative's benefits and challenges.

During the home visits it was observed that the economic status of the respondents was low. Most (80%) of the respondents' houses were built with mud bricks, had earth floors and thatched with grass with one or two chairs and a table while 20% had standard houses . Mats and radios were owned by almost everyone in the villages. Pigs given out by the NGO implementers of the school feeding programme in the area were also possessed by most (76%) households while 24% of the households were waiting for their turn to receive pigs. Only one household had cattle. This is an indication that people in the area under study are poor subsistence farmers. The economic conditions they are in could be related to low education levels. Literacy levels were generally low and among those that could read and write, very few (7%) people managed to attain secondary school education. Household sizes were relatively large with almost all the people interviewed having more than three primary school going children. This shows how the poor parents struggle to take care of their school going children since the cost of schooling is an inhibiting factor for the households with low income considering that very few are in formal employment.

4.3 School feeding programmes at Chata and Therezi schools

Chata and Therezi schools are situated in Lilongwe rural east in a community of very poor villagers who definitely needed the project to help keep children in school. The area was isolated from feeding programmes that target rural schools until 2009 when it became an impact area for an NGO called Good Neighbours. This is in line with the theoretical framework guiding the research (entitlement approach) which emphasizes on how poverty and food scarcity are equated (Sen, 1981) and further highlights on how poverty and vulnerability can be handled through the interventions like school feeding programmes. The NGO Implementers provide food willingly to poor school children with the theory's concept of "giving" without expecting anything in return. So analysis of the applied theoretical framework indicates that school feeding programmes have desirable effects. When asked about the impact of the programme in the area, one of the teachers had this to say:

Most of the children were not attending school in the past because they were not provided with food before coming to school. The few that were coming could not concentrate and they usually looked pale. There were times when children could faint due to hunger right here at school. Hunger in their households contributed to low enrollment, absenteeism and school dropout among the primary school children. The main problem that prevented the parents from cooking food for their children before going to school was poverty (Teacher 6, interviewed at Therezi School, 28/06/2013).

The struggle with hunger is genuine among the populace in this community which is a danger to young children as lack of nutritious food can lead to stunting and wasting which have negative impact in both mental and physical development. The implementers (Good Neighbours) in the area therefore provide additional foodstuffs which include fortified milk to the vulnerable children to improve nutritional/health status of the poverty stricken households (see plate 4 below).

When village chiefs were asked to explain how they feel about school feeding programme in the area, one village chief said:

We are very thankful to the implementers because apart from giving our children porridge, these children get materials like notebooks, pens, umbrellas, book bags, soap, colgate, sugar, blankets and uniforms to make sure that poverty does not hinder the children from continuing with their education. The children that have been registered also get milk at least once a year. However, I have to explain here that giving a child a packet of milk once a year does not change nutritional status because unlike porridge which is eaten at school, the milk is taken home and the child is obviously going to share it with siblings. So if they could have done something on provision of milk (Chief 2, interviewed at Chata School, 28/06/2013).

Plate 4: A parent holding a packet of milk



Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

4.4 Community participation in the schools feeding programme

Coordination, communication and actual involvement of the community members during the initial stages of the programme was through the village chiefs. The chiefs are powerful gatekeepers as they are well respected by the community members. They are also able to mobilize and assign duties to people around the schools because they control and influence most of the decisions in the communities. As one woman respondent noted:

We all look up to the chief and follow whatever he says so when he indicated that the implementers were ready to help us if we agreed to provide labour, we accepted so that our children could have a meal at school. Feeding our children at school is a relief to us because we fail to provide food for our children due to scarcity of food (Respondent 23 interviewed at Mtchaya Village, 28/06/2013).

This participation of women in the feeding programme is in line with current community development practices. These emphasize that the poor people themselves must be key actors in identifying and addressing their livelihood activities while the NGO implementers respond to the poor people's needs (Ashley and Carney, 1999).

One positive thing about the feeding programme in the area is that people around the schools have accepted the programme. Women and other school committee members are always around during feeding days. The women prepare, serve and make sure that the children wash their hands before taking porridge (see plates 5, 6 and 7 below). Chiefs are responsible for choosing women that cook porridge and provide firewood for porridge preparation. Men are responsible for cutting trees meant for firewood. Community members are dedicated to the extent that some (25%) women respondents complained that their chiefs deliberately leave them out when it is their turn to prepare porridge. This shows that people in the area are willing to offer services on voluntary basis.

Plate 5: A Woman volunteer cooking CSB porridge



Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

Plate 6: A woman volunteer serving CSB porridge



Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

Plate 7: Volunteers washing up dishes



Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

4.5 What are the benefits of the school meals to the children and local community?

According to the people around Therezi and Chata schools, the school feeding programme has many benefits which include improving nutritional status, hunger relief, improvements in school attendance and high pupil enrollment.

4.5.1 Improving nutritional status

The study observed that most (87%) parents believe the porridge has improved the nutritional status of their children. According to some (64%) respondents, children were not attending school in the past due to poor health resulting from poor nutrition. One of the teachers from Therezi explained:

This porridge builds up the school children's bodies in terms of nutrition because the soya beans added are proteins for body building. So the children whose bodies are well built are not prone to malnutrition making it possible for them to attend school regularly. Before the school meals programme the children looked

weak and pale especially in lean months from January to March (Teacher 5, interviewed at Therezi School, 28/06/2013).

It was interesting to note that parents know the importance of raising well nourished children. Elements of nutrition were also prominent in participants' explanations of nutritious food as they described the porridge as being balanced.

However, looking at the ingredients of the porridge which are Soya/Corn Blend just as indicated earlier on for other countries (refer to page12) ,one would question if the school feeding is really responsible for the improvement of the nutritional status of the children in the area under study. As already indicated earlier, most of the children go to school on an empty stomach and eat nothing when they return from school which is against the recommendation by the Malawi government that at least 2/3 of food consumed per day should be from their homes. This means that the 1/3 that the school meal provides is not adequate to improve the nutritional status of the school children. In that case it could be premature to conclude that the school meals alone do improve the nutritional status of the primary school children because there could be other areas of nutrition in the area that have the impact on nutritional improvement.

As much as the parents give credit to the intervention that it provides nutrients, it was surprising to note that a good number of them (42%) do not know the actual ingredients of the porridge as the response below shows:

The porridge is said to contain maize flour, soya beans, milk, groundnuts, cowpeas and sugar. These ingredients are very nutritious and help the children to concentrate in class. The upper class children benefit more because they are required to stay in school until afternoon for extra lessons. All this happens because the porridge gives them energy. (Respondent 12, interviewed at Mzambwe Village, 22/06/2013)

The reality is that this porridge lacks some nutrients and this has partly contributed to the country's failure to reduce stunting (MNNP, 2007). This is why the Malawi government insists that the porridge should be an additional meal to the balanced food eaten at home which is not the case in the area under study. Food diversification as a way of promoting good nutrition is imperative for optimal mental and physical development, learning and school performance (MNNP, 2007). Research shows that under nutrition affects cognitive development resulting in poor performance on cognitive tests in older students (ibid).

It is also important to note that the introduction of porridge has eased the burden of preparing home lunch for the children. Most (92%) of the respondents indicated that there is no need to prepare lunch for their children because they eat porridge at school. One parent said that:

We believe that the porridge has all the necessary nutrients and once our children have eaten at school they don't ask for lunch at home. In that case, we just have to look for supper and in so doing we save on food (Respondent 20, interviewed at Lundu Village, 28/06/2013).

Parents confidently indicate that the porridge is enough to satisfy hunger as well as provide the children with required nutrients for growth and body building.

4.5.2 Hunger Relief

School children in the study area ate porridge at around 9am. Eating at this time was meant to relieve short term hunger to those that came to school without breakfast. According to key informants (Good Neighbours Field Coordinator and School Feeding Coordinator), the 9 am time was set to prevent the feeding from disrupting learning and to make sure that the children stay in school up to knock off time which is 12 noon in most of the schools. The relief from hunger improves the children's concentration in class thereby achieving equity among students

because they start from one footing (Nyongani, 2012). However, sometimes the children in Chimutu do not take porridge at the stipulated time. One respondent explained as follows:

The children eat towards lunch time meaning that they still attend school while hungry. Eating after school means we do not have to prepare lunch for them because they come home full (Respondent 2, interviewed at Chata School, 20/06/2013).

Staying up to 11 am or 12 noon without eating is something very normal among the children. As one of the respondents said:

We are fine with the time the children eat porridge because in the past they would still go to school without food. It is different now that they get porridge whether it is early or late during school time. These children are used to staying all morning without eating because that is how we live. So having porridge at school is just a plus and they don't mind eating at any time (Respondent 16, interviewed at Chata School, 22/06/2013).

However, it was observed that sometimes porridge was served as late as one o'clock in the afternoon. While some children were queuing to get their share others especially the older students were going home. The explanation was that it takes time for them to get the porridge since they start dishing out to grade ones. Sometimes they wait for the porridge only to be told that the porridge is not enough to dish out to everyone. So to save themselves unnecessary waiting, they just go home without waiting for the porridge.

4.5.3 Improvements in school attendance

The two schools studied have many children as compared to the surrounding schools with no feeding programmes. The days when porridge is prepared attract more children. This finding shows that children's school attendance behaviour is partly influenced by the schools feeding programme. One of the teachers at Chata School said:

Some of the children especially those in the lower classes just come for the porridge because we usually see a lot of children on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays as they are assured of eating porridge at school. These children opt to stay at home on Tuesdays and Thursdays because they know there is no food at school. Although some of the children could be coming to school with wrong reasons, they are at least achieving something through participation in class. However high enrollment has got its drawback because progress of work in class is a challenge as not all the children that come on Mondays will come the following day considering that no porridge is offered on Tuesdays.(Teacher 2,interviewed at Chata School,20/06/2013).

Poverty induced absenteeism by pupils especially in the rural areas will prevent Malawi to reach the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for education. Some key informants (School Nutrition and Health Coordinator in the Ministry of Education, School Feeding Coordinator in the Ministry of Education and Social Support Programme Coordinator in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development) rightly indicated that pupils, especially girls, still struggle to finish primary school. Despite rising female enrolment numbers, absenteeism and dropout rates though improving, remain high in the upper classes (Williams, 2012). It has also been observed that lower participation in education and poorer educational outcomes in rural areas in Malawi could be as a result of factors such as weaker educational provision/poor education service for rural children, less interest in school by rural children due to lack support from home in terms of parental encouragement to go to school (Mulkeen, 2005). Parents in rural areas often have a lower level of education, and may attach a lower value to schooling compared with agricultural tasks (ibid).

4.5.4 High pupil enrollment

The programme has attracted a lot of children not only from the villages around the schools but even those that live far away and have schools very close to their villages. Some of the children

have to walk long distances like 10km to these schools. As one of the teachers from Chata School noted:

We now have a lot of children. In the past we used to have a maximum of 800 but now we have more than one thousand children and I know that in September when we open the next school session the numbers will have increased. The only set back with this arrangement is that teachers are not enough to teach and control all those children. We are just 12 teachers and to teach one thousand plus children is not a joke. The other issue is that for the past two years we have experienced higher enrollment on the part of girls than boys and we don't know if we are on the road to achieving gender equality in schools (Teacher 1, interviewed at Chata School, 20/06/2013).

The increased attendance rates (see plates 8 and 9 below), result in chronic shortages of both teachers and classrooms. The average class size is over 90 during the feeding days at Chata School compared with 40 recommended by the Global Campaign for Education. This is not in line with the Child Labour Policy which states that unavailability of teachers, limited school infrastructure, scarcity of learning aids and lack of academic support influence drop-out rates from schools and encourage child labour (MOL, 2010).

Plates 8 and 9: School enrollment at Therezi and Chata Schools

Plate 8: Therezi School enrollment

CLASS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
STD 1	33	27	60
" 2	25	45	70
" 3	30	60	90
" 4	25	34	59
" 5	24	32	56
" 6	13	14	27
" 7	15	16	31
" 8	5	12	17
	170	240	410

Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

Plate 9: Chata School enrolment

The image shows two handwritten tables on a wall. The first table, titled 'SCHOOL ENROLMENT', lists classes 1 through 8, with columns for Boys, Girls, and Total. The second table, titled 'ORPHA', lists classes 1 through 8, with columns for Boys and Girls. The total enrolment for the school is 1196, and for orphans, it is 71.

SCHOOL ENROLMENT			
CLASS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
1	79	67	146
2	99	142	241
3A	55	50	105
3B	54	50	104
4	77	83	160
5	78	59	137
6	54	53	107
7	64	64	128
8	34	32	66
TOTAL	587	607	1196

ORPHA		
CLASS	BOYS	GIRLS
1	4	
2	10	
3A	7	
3B	7	
4	11	16
5	9	8
6	9	4
7	9	6
8	3	4
TOTAL	69	71

Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

4.6 Challenges affecting the school feeding programme

Despite high satisfaction levels with the school meals programme, the intervention has got disadvantages that require improvement according to community members' views. The challenges range from problems during programme inception, inadequacies in operational decision making and implementation as outlined in the sub-sections below.

4.6.1 Decision making challenges

Results from the study show that some community members were not happy about being excluded from the decision making process. Traditionally the chiefs are the ones that meet the NGO implementers in the communities. This becomes a problem when the incentive is not in line with what the people in the community believe. It looks like in the area under study the chiefs just accepted the feeding programme without consultations with the local people as they

were desperate to have the children eat porridge at school. It was then discovered too late that the feeding programme had hidden costs. If the local people were consulted and made part of the decision making process, there could have been no resistance because everybody could be part of the decisions made. In the words of a male participant:

We wonder who makes the decisions because I believe as beneficiaries we were supposed to be consulted on issues to do with money. At first we were told the programme was free and that we only had to provide labour. We were then told to contribute money to show ownership. We now contribute 10% and yet we don't know how they came up with the 10% because we just hear this information from our chiefs who seem to accept whatever the implementers say (School committee member 1, interviewed at Gulule Village 02/07/2013.)

Supporting the above finding, a key informant said:

We cannot really say that the community members are part of the decision makers. It is like the programme in Malawi just follows stipulated rules from other countries where the feeding programme has been successful. I do not think following such rules can be called participation because what works in one country cannot automatically work in another (Social Support Programme Coordinator, interviewed at area 25, 29/06/2013).

It is unfortunate that most NGO project implementers have structured project cycles which tend to be rigid, prescriptive and top-down (European Commission, 2001). The top-down approach only helps to meet the accountability requirements of donors but lacks local ownership of projects, with negative implications for sustainability of benefits (ibid). The school feeding programme in the area under study used the top-down approach which did not take into account local people's ideas. The good thing with taking into account local people's ideas and dreams (bottom up approach) is that it makes both NGO implementers and local participants aware of what is required in terms of activities, timing, methods and tools during each phase, i.e. it communicates to all involved as to what needs to happen where, when and how

(European Commission, 2001). It also ensures projects are feasible, meaning that objectives can be realistically achieved within the constraints of the operating environment and capabilities of the implementing agencies (ibid).

4.6.2 Porridge purchase expenses

The meal provision in the area has monetary attachment of 100 Malawi Kwacha(K100) per child per term which was raised from K30.This did not go well with some community members as they believe they buy the porridge and indicated that had they known at first, they could not have allowed to have this feeding programme in the area. One respondent argued that:

We are not happy to pay for the porridge because the initial communication was that the scheme was meant to help poor parents keep children in school. We now wonder as to why the same targeted poor people should contribute money towards the scheme .They indicated the contribution would make us have the feeling of ownership and that part of the money would be used for transportation of corn/soya blend to this school (Respondent 8,Interviewed at Chadza Village,21/06/2013).

Another respondent revealed that:

The feeding scheme is very expensive on our part because we also have to look for firewood, draw water and prepare porridge. The contribution prevents some women from coming to school to cook because it happens that you have been chosen to cook for the children and yet your child is not entitled to take the food because you were unable to pay contribution fee. Some of these children are very young therefore cannot understand why their own mothers do not give them porridge (Respondent 23, interviewed at Mtchaya Village, 28/06/2013).

Commenting on the contribution being used for transportation, a respondent from Therezi School said:

I don't think the money is for transport because when we go to Chata School where we collect the flour from, we have to find means of transporting the flour. So we end up using the same flour as payment for the people that carry the bags because the committee does not have hard cash. This affects the number of feeding days (Respondent17, interviewed at Therezi School, 28/06/2013).

The above quotations are reflections of people's perception on the contributions they pay towards school feeding and it is obvious that these people do not understand why they have to pay a certain amount of money for their children to get food. The amount looks so minimal but it can eventually change the way people in this area view the programme. To make things worse the children that were supposed to be targets (the ultra poor) are the ones not eating porridge because their parents cannot afford to contribute. On the other hand the line Ministry (Ministry of Education) does not encourage monetary contribution from the local people but rather labour and firewood. According to a government key informant (Director of Poverty Reduction and Social Protection in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development), it is not recommended to overburden the targeted people as they have their own livelihood activities that would also require money.

The stories related above also reflect on how the school children are supposed to be given food free of charge to necessitate the programmes intentions of sustaining the affected poor families and their dependants. However, based on the realisation that the school going children are supposed to get free food which often forms part of the transfer entitlement (Sen, 1981), the study inquired as to why the parents have to make financial contributions towards the scheme. The theoretical framework guiding the research highlights on how poverty and vulnerability can be handled through interventions like school feeding programmes where NGO implementers are supposed to provide food willingly to poor school children.

4.6.3 Inconsistencies in feeding frequency

These are challenges in the number of meals fed to children per week. The porridge is served only three times a week and sometimes it can take the whole week or weeks without being served. One respondent argued that:

Despite paying for the porridge, the children are not given the porridge on a daily basis. Even on the agreed three days per week, it is rare to follow those days because like the whole of last month there was no porridge served at this school. This is painful because we expect the children to eat at school as per agreement (Respondent 15, interviewed at Mzambwe Village, 22/06/2013).

Even though the emphasis is on the need to have porridge everyday because it is paid for, the truth of the matter is that the programme fails to do this. The 3 days per week provision of porridge is not enough in such a poor community. As a result absenteeism is increased because the children choose to go to school on the days when porridge is served. This practice may lead to failure of exams, repetition and eventually result in high dropout rates among children who do not go to school regularly. Commenting on class attendance during the days when porridge is not provided one of the teachers said:

If you come on Tuesday and Thursday you would be surprised to see that classes are half empty especially in the lower grades. On the other hand feeding days attract a lot of pupils to the extent that teachers fail to move around when teaching in class (Teacher 6, interviewed at Therezi School, 28/06/2013).

Discussions with the NGO implementers on the possibility of feeding the children on a daily basis at school yielded nothing as the Good Neighbours Field Officer indicated that their budget line could not accommodate such changes. Considering that the community members are contributing towards the feeding scheme in the area, other community members (62%) were not in favour of volunteerism and therefore indicated the need to pay those that participate in the

school feeding especially the women who prepare porridge. This is to make sure that porridge is at least served on the prescribed days as one respondent said:

We know that we cook porridge for our own children, but a little amount of money given to the women could have motivated them. I am saying this because I see lack of commitment as sometimes porridge is not served because women do not turn up or they come very late to prepare porridge making it impossible for the children to eat three times per week. This is painful to some parents because they contribute towards the feeding scheme (Respondent 10, interviewed at Chata School, 21/06/2013).

Further to that it was also revealed that sometimes the women do not come to prepare porridge due to lack of communication from the committee through the chief. According to the school committee members, messages are sent to chiefs but due to some reasons the chiefs do not pass on the message to the women on time. Such circumstances force the committee members to postpone porridge preparation. Practically women are supposed to be told the previous day so that they go to school as early as 6am to make sure that the porridge is served on time.

Concurring with the committee member another woman respondent argued that:

If we do not come here to cook it is usually the chief's fault because whenever we are told to come and prepare food we always do. However, there are some incidences when the chief does not communicate or we get communication very late when we have made other plans. Sometimes we go to the chief's house and find no firewood and it is impossible to look for firewood on the same day because we also have to draw water. In short we usually wait upon the chiefs instructions to come to school for porridge preparation (Respondent1, interviewed at Chata, 20/06/2013).

This shows that people in the area do not entirely blame NGO implementers on the inconsistency of porridge preparation. Although the feeding days are not in line with government recommendations and that flour is sometimes not available for porridge preparation, the local

people especially the chiefs are also to blame on the inconsistency of porridge provision to school children. There is need for coordination amongst the people involved so that they do not have a negative impact on the school feeding programme.

4.6.4 Hygiene and sanitation

Some of the requirements for a school to qualify for school meals include the availability of kitchen and dining space. However the criteria used in the selection of the schools in the area under study is not known since they had no kitchens in place and the implementers had to build. These schools have no dining spaces and most children sit under trees when eating. Some children eat on their way home making it impossible for the school authorities to control them. Some of the respondents (63%) indicated that as long as the children eat the porridge they do not have problems with how and where they eat. This is the case because building of dining space will require the community members to provide labour. The implementers of the school meals programme help in the building of school structures at the schools and the parents are supposed to play their part in terms of brick making. So far the NGO implementers have built kitchens (see plate 10 below), school blocks and teachers' houses.

Plate 10: Kitchen built by Good Neighbours (Implementers)



Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

According to the parents, it is not easy to make bricks considering that they have to attend to some other livelihood activities that require their effort and time. Women need to draw water and collect firewood for burning of bricks and one of the community members commented:

We hear of brick making machines that some construction companies' use. If only we could have access to that machine, things could have worked well on our part. You can see that we have to collect firewood for both the school meals and the brick burning (Respondent 4, interviewed at Chata School, 20/06/2013).

Furthermore, the kitchen is not managed well as it was observed that empty pots were left unattended attracting flies, pigs and dogs to look for leftover food. A clean environment is vital as it contributes to people's health, comfort and happiness which were not the case in the schools under study because dogs were actually seen loitering around kitchens as shown in plate 11 below. Emphasis on hygiene is important in this area as careless handling of food and poor hygiene practices make the environment easily contaminated and become unhealthy. This can result in disease outbreaks where microorganisms like bacteria may breed and cause diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, food poisoning, diarrhoea and dysentery (Nyamanda et al, 2003). This could have dangerous effects to the children as diseases could be difficult and expensive to treat as already indicated in the literature review (page 26).

Plate 11: A dog roaming around the school kitchen



Source: Yasin, 2013 (Field data)

The other problem is lack of effort among some women volunteers to keep good personal appearance and hygiene. One would expect that all the women as well as those committee members that handle food should be clean and wear clean clothes. According to Nyamanda et al (2003), dirty clothes carry germs that spread diseases and produce bad body odours. Unfortunately most of the women at the schools visited do not see the importance of good grooming since they had dirty clothes on with uncovered hair. A good number (70%) of them had breastfeeding babies which is against the rules followed when choosing women volunteers. Most of the women (88%) said they just wiped their faces because it was too early to take a bath while others (12%) indicated lack of soap as the reason for not bathing and washing clothes. Condemning low hygiene standards, a woman school committee member said:

People that are handling food need to look nice to be appreciated. I know that money is a problem to most of the people here but it is not fair to say they do not have toilet and laundry soap. I think it just goes with personality because there are some few women that are always smart. The chiefs are also at fault because we complained that those women that are breastfeeding are not supposed to cook but for obvious reasons we see them coming and once they are here it is

difficult to send them back because it looks inhuman (School committee member 2, interviewed at Chata School, 21/06/2013).

Another respondent added:

They also do not cover their heads to prevent loose dirt like hair from falling into the porridge so we often find hair in the porridge. This is the reason why the Ministry of Education officer who came a few weeks ago indicated that there is need to buy a uniform for these women so that they put on uniform when preparing porridge (Respondent 6, interviewed at Chata School, 21/06/2013).

However, one of the chiefs (Chief 1) explained that the breastfeeding women do come due to lack of free women in the villages who are willing to volunteer. It appears most energetic women in the area are either pregnant or breastfeeding. Therefore the chiefs do not have a choice but to send anyone who is willing to prepare porridge regardless of her maternity condition.

As indicated earlier on (page 31), there are challenges associated with community participation where gains are minimal. Therefore the issue of volunteerism that is promoted by government has to be looked into as a certain key informant (District Education Officer under the Ministry of Education) indicated that it would be proper if the women were paid honoraria which could make them abide by the rules of the programme in the area. It could also be a way of helping the women to practice family planning methods to avoid losing out on honoraria. The current situation is faced with a lot of hiccups because volunteerism among the community members is optional.

4.6.5 Precarious livelihoods: Are school meals sustainable?

School meals did not address household livelihood problems in the area under study as people remain in dire poverty. A lot has to be done to improve the wellbeing of the people in the area.

Community members suggested that the government needed to come in and put other initiatives that could work hand in hand with the feeding scheme instead of leaving everything in the hands of the current NGO implementers. One of the community members commented:

We could have benefited if the feeding programme was totally dependent on us in terms of supplying flour for porridge. In that way the children could have been eating very nutritious food at home, they would have clothes because sometimes they do not go to school because they lack other necessities. So what we need here is the help for fertilizer like the way it used to be during Kamuzu Banda (the first president) era when people were given agricultural inputs during the growing season to pay back after harvesting. If this government was to adopt that practice, I can assure you that we would not be wondering as to what will happen when the project implementers pull out because we would be able to sustain the programme on our own (Respondent 20, interviewed at Lundu Village, 28/06/2013).

Concurring with the above respondent, a government key informant (Director of Poverty Reduction and Social Protection in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development) indicated that there is not much being done on the improvement of livelihoods because of central procurement of the flour. In this case the big companies are the ones benefiting instead of the local farmers. It is hereby recommended that the programme be decentralized so that the district staff is able to control who does what in the district and eventually trickle down to the individual schools.

Some community members (20%) in Chimutu do get loans from the NGO implementers of school feeding programme in the area but the payment mode leaves them with almost nothing. However the NGO implementers are not to blame entirely because in one way or another they also have to make profits therefore the intervention of government is of paramount importance to help these poor people. One of the beneficiaries of the loans had this to say:

We are hopeless because we are left with almost nothing after paying back the loan and it is not possible to do business with the little money left on us. People need the hand of government in this area if our lives are to be uplifted. You have to remember that we also have other children that are not registered therefore do not benefit from the food at school and as parents we have to make sure to provide food for those children(Respondent 1,interviewed at Chata School,20/06/2013).

The Ministry of Education respondent (District Education Officer in the Ministry of Education) had a contribution on the Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) which has been piloted in one of the districts in Malawi where community members were asked to find land around the school and plant maize and soya for school feeding. In addition to that, the children with the help of parents and teachers are having school gardens where they also learn agriculture as they are growing food for the scheme. This type of home grown feeding programme is not in line with the one stipulated in policies (WFP,2009:Draft National School Health and Nutrition,2013) where local farmers and producers are supposed to benefit by generating a structured and predictable demand for their products thereby enabling local farmers to boost their economies. In this way, school feeding programmes provide both opportunities to invest in the long-term development of children, and greater economic development of the community (ibid).Therefore the current pilot home grown feeding scheme according to a government key informant (District Education Officer in the Ministry of Education), only encourages parents to feed their children at school without the help of implementers. In the long run, this could be a draw back on the community members as they would be having less time to concentrate on other developmental and income generating activities making it impossible for the households to get out of vulnerability circle.

4.6.6 Monitoring and evaluation inadequacies

The government through the Ministry of Education is not doing its part well because the programme has multiple NGO implementers with no uniform coordination. According to a government respondent (School Health and Nutrition Coordinator in the Ministry of education) the huge number of different development projects, funded by different donors each with their own management and reporting arrangements, has resulted in large (and wasteful) transaction costs for the recipients of school feeding programme. Adding to observations above, another key informant said:

The Ministry of Education has failed to deliver as a coordinating Ministry. The Ministry has limited human capacity which is slowing down uniform implementation by interested parties. Due to lack of coordination from Ministry of Education, implementers have different implementation modalities. A good example would be the targeting of urban schools that are not prone to hunger (Social Support Programme Coordinator, interviewed at Area 25, 29/06/2013).

Monitoring of school feeding activities by government officers is a challenge. Lack of supervision has led to other NGO implementers charging fees and some hidden costs just as it is the case with the area under study. On visits by government officials, one member of the school committee said:

Government supervisors just came once. I believe some of the challenges could have been tackled if the supervisors were to be coming here regularly. Like the day those people came they indicated that it was a burden for the women who come to prepare food to look for water and firewood. They also stressed the need for the women to be using a uniform so that those from very poor homes should be able to participate in the preparation of porridge instead of shunning away due to lack of clean clothes. They also cautioned the head teacher at Therezi for using school children to dig a pit for left over porridge. Since that time we have never seen any government official coming to this area (School Committee member1, interviewed at Gulule Village, 02/07/2013).

It was also interesting to note that government officials who are supposed to guide the NGO implementers do not know some NGO implementers like the ones operating in the study area. Upon hearing from this researcher about financial contributions towards the feeding scheme at Chata and Therezi schools, the District Education Officer in the Ministry of Education wondered as to why the implementers make poor people pay money. Yet an interview with the coordinator at Good Neighbours revealed that the implementers have been inviting the government officials whenever they have meetings and other activities but they do not turn up. This could mean that the government officials do not take the feeding project seriously as compared to other school programmes.

4.6.7 Sustainability

It is still not known if the people in the area will be able to sustain the feeding scheme after the NGO implementers' withdrawal because community members do not have both economic means and skills to support the programme. On maintaining the project after implementers pull out one respondent said:

This project will die naturally when the implementers stop providing porridge to the children. We are very poor to run the school feeding programme. We do not even know how and where the porridge flour is bought, they just tell us it is expensive. The other problem is that we are not sure if these children will be eating the soya/maize blend processed right in the community. I can tell you that when we have soya in the homes we try to prepare porridge for our children but surprisingly, these children do not like the soya porridge prepared in the homes. They say it does not taste the same as the one provided at school. So it could be that they add some expensive ingredients that we cannot afford (Respondent1, interviewed at Chata School, 20/06/2013).

It has been established that social safety nets like school support programmes that target orphans and vulnerable children have been found to be ineffective due to donor funding

dependency (MOGCCD, 2006). In this case when funding is no longer there, sustainability is a challenge since there are no strategic plans by government ministries responsible for such programmes. This implies that children, who were determined to go to school but lack food, could easily drop out of school due to hunger. One committee member had this to say on sustainability:

As Good Neighbours committee at school we tried to sensitise the people on the importance of monetary contributions as a way of making the programme sustainable. The Implementers clearly indicated that they will pull out after 10 years and go to some other areas where they will be needed. According to them, 10 years are enough for people to realize the importance of the scheme and be able to run it by themselves. But looking at the way we are moving, we will not be able to sustain the project in future because four years down the line, we have not managed to save enough money to take us even two weeks of feeding. We also touched on contributing maize and soya towards the last years of donor food provision. People here have land and they are hard workers in the field but as you know farming nowadays requires a lot of money for one to realize a lot of yields that could feed the families as well as save for feeding scheme. So it will not be easy to contribute maize and soya if the yields will not improve by then (Good Neighbours committee member 1, interviewed at Chata School, 21/06/2013).

However some community members (62%) had ideas that if they were involved in making decisions on how best the programme could be run beyond NGO implementers, they would have suggested economic empowerment activities such as promotion of small scale businesses so that the profits realized from these businesses will be ploughed back into the school feeding programme.

4.6.8 Corruption

The community members feel there is corruption among members of the school committee as well as Good Neighbours committee at the schools. The CSB is believed to be sold to people around the schools as noted by one respondent:

We usually see people coming out of the Good Neighbours Office with small plastic bags filled with flour every other time the flour is delivered at school. It is very unfortunate that the people that were entrusted to take lead do steal from their own children. Therefore, it is better to change office bearers maybe every year so that the corrupt members are removed and that the new members will be afraid to misbehave since they will know that they will be removed once they are discovered (Respondent 19, interviewed at Jaya Village, 28/06/2013).

Showing disappointment on the corrupt practices, one Good Neighbours key informant said:

I don't understand as to why the people steal from their own children. This committee was set aside to specifically take charge of the feeding programme in these two schools even though there is a school committee. We trusted these people but to hear that they sale the flour it is very disappointing. However there is nothing much that can be done from the central level but rather the chiefs could take charge of what course of action to be taken (Good Neighbours School Feeding Programme Officer, interviewed at Good Neighbours Office, 27/07/2013).

Such malpractices are the reasons why some NGO implementers withdraw before the stipulated completion time of the project because it only shows how ungrateful some local people are. On the other hand school children become victims since they do not receive the required amount of food allocated to them. It was discovered that the children did not take porridge the whole month of May 2013 because there was no flour and yet discussions with the NGO implementers revealed that the implementers supply flour to the schools on demand. This is in line with WFP (2012), observation that lack of accountability which leads to corruption is very common in school feeding programmes.

4.7 Conclusion

The findings of this study show that community members acknowledge the benefits of the intervention as it has improved nutritional status and school attendance among primary school children in the area under study. It has also relieved short term hunger, increased enrolment and encouraged participation community by members. However, the community still has reservations on how the programme is run. For example, there are challenges in decision making, inconsistencies in feeding frequency, hygiene and sanitation, monitoring and evaluation inadequacies, corruption and sustainability issues. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that porridge purchase expenses are not in line with the theory guiding the research which highlights on provision of food to poor school children willingly.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study has shown that the Malawi government and its main cooperating partners in school feeding programmes did not target the area under study until Good Neighbours NGO came in to respond to short term hunger among the school going children. The introduction of the school feeding programme at Chata and Therezi Schools in 2009 and 2011 respectively was an attempt to increase enrolment and attendance of primary school children especially girls so that they participate in school activities without any hindrance from their poor households. The sub-sections that follow reflect on the benefits and challenges of the school feeding programme.

5.2 Nutritional status improvement and hunger relief

A large proportion (87%) of parents indicated that the school feeding programme has benefits in terms of nutrition improvement although some (42%) of them could not explain the nutritional content of the porridge. Teachers also pointed out that the children do not look pale anymore as was the case before the meal provision in schools. In addition to improving nutritional status, the porridge relieves short term hunger. However, even though the school children were supposed to eat porridge at 9am which is break time to avoid class disruptions sometimes this time was not followed. There is thus a possibility that children sometimes learnt while hungry because parents indicated that they don't prepare breakfast for the children.

5.3 Improvements in school attendance

The findings also show acknowledgement by parents that the programme encourages school attendance and high pupil enrollment. Chata and Therezi schools have registered a lot of pupils (since the feeding programme began) some of whom come from far away villages. The study has further shown that the enrolment of girls is higher than that of boys in both schools. The community members indicated that the high enrolment was due to school meals and that

although some of the children just come to school for porridge, they at least participate in class which is a positive thing. However, high enrolment rates in the schools have not gone without challenges. School teachers indicated having overcrowded classrooms because the schools have the same school blocks, teachers and teaching/learning materials, rendering the government accepted teacher-pupil ratio impossible.

5.4 Community participation in the school feeding programme

The findings also reveal that community members (especially women) participate in the school feeding programme even though their participation does not go beyond porridge preparation. The community members indicated that there is need to participate at all levels in the feeding project, from project formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They were against having chiefs as decision makers at all levels since this contributes to the acceptance of interventions that are not priorities in their area.

The study also found that inability by the NGO implementers to involve community members in decision making positions has prevented the smooth running of the project. Active participation by beneficiaries is important in achieving sustainable development because it is the poor people themselves that can understand well their economic and social conditions and the problems they face (Long,2001).Therefore the community members must be key in identifying and addressing their livelihood challenges. Such involvement may lead to a sense of ownership thereby preventing issues to do with the current optional participation and corrupt practices in the programme under study.

It was further established that chiefs are regarded as links between community members and NGO implementers hence their involvement during the initial stages of the programme. However, the involvement of chiefs who are regarded as crucial role players in local

development projects put local people in an awkward position because traditionally, the local people are not supposed to question the chief's decisions. In this case, the people in the area around Chata and Therezi schools ended up following what they were instructed to do for fear of chiefs who have powers to punish villagers who do not abide by rules. This might be an indication that some local people do not participate in the feeding programme from their own free will but due to the respect for chiefs who enjoy loyalty from their subjects.

The study has also established that parents are subjected to tough work in terms of labour provision in the actual preparation of porridge and other developmental activities at the schools. The expressed reservations on both participation and financial contributions could be as a result of non involvement of the community members during the problem identification phase. This phase is very important as the information provided by the recipients and ownership of the intervention is essential to the development of a project that will address their needs (Long, 2001).

5.5 Challenges of the school feeding programme

5.5.1 Socio-economic status of parents

One of the shortcomings of the school feeding programmes has been failure to focus on the socio-economic factors that influences withdrawal of children from school. This study found that parents of the children are not well educated. This on itself is a problem and has consequences because some parents do not see the importance of sending children to school. Furthermore, parents clearly indicated that they do not prepare lunch for children when they knock off from school. This means that parents do not understand that porridge provided at school is a supplement to food eaten at home.

5.5.2 Porridge purchase expenses

It was also established that community members were disappointed with the financial contributions towards the school feeding programme despite their practical involvement in the preparation of porridge. The study has shown that the issue of financial contributions was not mentioned during the inception of the programme. The parents therefore indicated that it was unfair to provide porridge to only those that have contributed because other children come from ultra poor families who cannot afford the contributions. Furthermore, parents wondered as to why the NGO implementers stick to the “no financial contribution no porridge” rule while on the other hand they fail to honor the agreement of providing porridge three times a week. This inconsistency in feeding frequency has put the community members off especially because the chiefs who are supposed to speak for them have not done anything about it.

5.5.3 Hygiene and sanitation

It was also established that Chata and Therezi Schools do not have dining facilities which makes it difficult for the committee members to control the children as well as observe proper hygiene standards. The kitchens do not have fences to keep away dogs and pigs that roam around to eat leftover porridge. Failure to observe hygiene in meal preparation can have dangerous effects like disease outbreaks among school children. Furthermore, some of the women who prepare food do not keep good personal appearance which according to some community members is a result of poverty. Some of the community members indicated the need to pay the women volunteers as a way of motivating them to come for porridge preparation clean in order to observe hygiene standards.

5.5.4 Unintended outcomes of the project

The findings also reveal unintended outcomes of the school feeding programme which include:

5.5.4.1 Dependency

Some parents in the area have become dependent on the programme. These parents do not prepare food during the day for their children indicating that the porridge provided at school is enough to relieve hunger and prevent child malnutrition. Some parents were even asking for extension of CSB flour distribution to households so that every household member benefits as opposed to the provision of porridge at school. This suggests that some of the villagers want to be spoon fed instead of working hard to supplement what is being given to their children. Relying on hand outs prevents people from participating in developmental activities in rural areas resulting in inability to break the vulnerability/poverty circle.

5.4.4.2 Deforestation

The study found careless cutting down of trees for porridge preparation which has resulted in deforestation in the area. Human activities like deforestation result in higher carbon dioxide in the atmosphere hindering trees to act as carbon sinks (Ringler, 2007). This could induce climate change leading to increased intensity and frequency of storms, drought, flooding, altered hydrological cycles, and precipitation variance resulting in implications for future food availability especially for the most vulnerable groups (ibid). Careless cutting down of trees is therefore one of the challenges for agriculture, food security and rural livelihoods. School feeding in the area under study is somehow encouraging deforestation which will defeat the livelihood promotion objectives of the programme because poverty reduction and climate change have a direct relationship (Ringler, 2007). Therefore, the NGO implementers together with the local community and other agencies need to join hands in protecting trees to prevent deforestation and its consequences.

5.6 Policy Implications

The Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) proposed by the Malawi government has policy implications that need to be considered. Even though the Malawi Government

through the Ministry of Education emphasizes its desire to have HGSFP in place, there are no deliberate efforts to encourage local farmers to produce food for school meals. People in the area under study indicated that land for cultivation is not a problem but rather lack of inputs like chemical fertilizer and hybrid seed. However the involvement of government in input distribution is yet to materialize in a poor country with donor driven projects.

The findings of this study might hopefully stimulate serious policy dialogue concerning the rolling out of the school feeding programme to all districts in Malawi. Furthermore, school feeding requires infrastructure such as kitchen and storage space as indicated by the Ministry of Education. Presently, these two structures are not part of the minimum infrastructure requirements for establishing a public primary school in Malawi (Nyongani,2012), a situation that has led to introducing school feeding in schools that do not have such structures thereby forcing community members to construct temporary kitchens and storage space. This suggests that there is need for policy makers to re-visit policy on infrastructure requirements by emphasizing the responsibility of government in kitchen and storage room construction.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

CONSENT

My name is Janerose Yasin. I am conducting a research on school feeding programmes at Chata and Therezi Primary Schools for my Masters Course (Rural Development) at Fort Hare University. This research is conducted to find out the benefits, challenges as well as participation of community members in the programme in the area under study. Your participation in this study is highly appreciated. The information collected in the study will be used to understand the community members knowledge and involvement in the programme and this information may be shared with the Ministry of Education and other implementers to improve the running of school feeding programmes in Malawi .However, you have to know that Participation is voluntary and you can choose not to answer any individual question or all the questions. The questions I will ask you will take 40 to 50 minutes. Everything you tell me will only be used for the research project and will not be shown to any other people outside the research. Your name will not be used to make sure that no one can identify you with your answers. I would also like to indicate that the interview will be recorded so that important information is not lost when analysing data. Do you have any questions related to the interview before we start the interview? Are you willing to participate so that we start the interview?

If respondent agrees to be interviewed, continue with the interview.

If respondent does not agree to be interviewed, end the interview

KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview number.....

Name of interviewee.....

Gender.....

Position.....

Name of department.....

Venue.....

Date.....

1. What is included in the menu?(Probe on quantities per child per day)
2. What is the nutritive value of the food given to the school children?
3. How often is food given to the school children?

Benefits of the school feeding programme

4. What are your views about the school feeding programme?(Probe on positive and negative views)
5. Do you know the criteria used to select school children for take home rations?
What is your comment about this criteria?
6. Do you think the community is in agreement with this criteria?
7. What are the food access and food security benefits of the school feeding programme for children?
8. Do you think the school feeding programme has any nutrition and health benefits for children from this community?
9. Do you think the school feeding programme has any effect on school attendance and school completion by children from this community?

Community members' involvement in the school feeding programme

10. What are the main objectives of the school feeding programme?
11. Are these objectives in line with community expectations of the feeding programme?
12. Is the school feeding implementation arrangement in line with people's views in the community?
13. Are the community members involved in the running of the school feeding programme?
14. Is the community involved in the monitoring of school feeding programme?
15. Are there other programme areas included in school feeding programme in your community (e.g. Nutrition education, gardens, deworming)?
16. Are there any efforts by the government to encourage local farmers to supply food for the feeding project?

Challenges of the school feeding programme

17. Do you think the feeding programme is meeting people's expectations?
18. Are people's perceptions taken into account in the design and implementation of the project to improve delivery of the feeding scheme?
19. How can the observed perceptions and policy objectives affect delivery of the feeding programme?
20. What type of community structures, businesses, or efforts could be tapped into the feeding programme for processing or sourcing the food for the programme?
21. Are there other areas of implementation that can be improved to have a sustainable feeding programme?

22. Is there any reporting system of the progress of the school feeding programme?

23. What roles do the local people take in the design and implementation of the programme?

APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY MEMBERS INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview number.....

Name of the interviewee.....

Gender.....

Position.....

Venue.....

Date.....

1. What is included in the menu?(Probe on quantities per child per day)
2. What is the nutritive value of the food given to the school children?
3. How often is food given to the school children?

Benefits of the school feeding programme

4. What are your views about the school feeding programme?(Probe on positive and negative views)
5. Do you know the criteria used to select school children for take home rations?
What is your comment about this criteria?
6. Do you think the community is in agreement with this criteria?
7. What are the food access and food security benefits of the school feeding programme for children?
8. Do you think the school feeding programme has any nutrition and health benefits for children from this community?
9. Do you think the school feeding programme has any effect on school attendance and school completion by children from this community?

Community members' involvement in the school feeding programme

10. What are the main objectives of the school feeding programme?
11. Are these objectives in line with community expectations of the feeding programme?
12. Is the school feeding implementation arrangement in line with people's views in the community?
13. Are the community members involved in the running of the school feeding programme?
14. Is the community involved in the monitoring of school feeding programme?
15. Are there other programme areas included in school feeding programme in your community (e.g. Nutrition education, gardens, deworming).
16. Are there any efforts by the government to encourage local farmers to supply food for the feeding project?

Challenges of the school feeding programme

17. Do you think the feeding programme is meeting people's expectations?
18. Are people's perceptions taken into account in the design and implementation of the project to improve delivery of the feeding scheme?
19. How can the observed perceptions and policy objectives affect delivery of the feeding programme?
20. What type of community structures, businesses, or efforts could be tapped into the feeding programme for processing or sourcing the food for the programme?
21. Are there other areas of implementation that can be improved to have a sustainable feeding programme?
22. Is there any reporting system of the progress of the school feeding programme?

23. What roles do the local people take in the design and implementation of the programme?

APPENDIX 3: DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Activity	Date	Venue
In-depth interviews for community members	20 th	Chata School
Key informant Interviews for teachers	June,2013	
In-depth interviews for community members	21 st	Chata School /Villages
	June,2013	
Non-participant observation	21 st	Chata School
	June,2013	
In-depth interviews for community members	22 nd	Chata School Villages
	June,2013	
Key informant Interviews for government employees	26-27 th	Capital Hill, Lilongwe
	June,2013	
Non-participant observation	28 th	Therezi / Chata
Key informant Interviews for teachers	June,2013	Schools
In-depth interviews for chiefs	28 th	Therezi/Chata Schools
	June,2013	
Key informant Interviews for government employees	29 th	Area 25,Lilongwe City
	June,2013	
In-depth interviews for community members	2 nd July,2013	Therezi School Villages
Key informant interviews for		Chata and Therezi School
In-depth interviews with community members	3 rd July,2013	Chata Schools Villages
In-depth interviews with community members	5 th July,2013	ThereziSchools Villages

Activity	Date	Venue
Key informant Interviews for Good Neighbors NGO	27 th July,2013	Good Neighbours offices, Lilongwe