COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF MERU

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND ARTS

THE SCHOOL MEALS AND NUTRITION PROGRAM POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ECDE LEARNERS IN PUBLIC PRE-SCHOOLS

SEPTEMBER 2023

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Vision

To create an enabling environment for learning by reducing hunger among school children, optimise their health and nutrition.

Mission

To support the provision of balanced and diversified meals at schools that promotes nutrition and health of learners.

Goal

To provide a framework for improving school attendance and retention, nutrition and health and learning outcomes of all children in Meru County.

Core Values

Consensus: We will engage all stakeholders in every critical process for informed decision-making and follow-ups.

Efficiency: All County resources will be used prudently and for the intended purpose.

Effectiveness: County development will be result oriented to achieve desired outcomes and impact.

Participation: Participation of all key stakeholders in the County Development agenda will be core to our operations for priority generation and development ownership while observing the principles of equity, equality and non-exception.

Accountability: We shall always endeavour to be held responsible, answerable and liable Rule of Law: We shall strive to uphold the legal principles in all decision-making and development process.

Responsiveness: We act with a sense of urgency to address citizens' needs, make qualified decisions in time and provide fiscally responsible solutions.

Transparency: Government operations will be based on openness, accessibility and scrutiny by the residents of the County.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
COHA	Cost of Hunger in Africa
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECDE	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FAO	Food Agriculture Organisation
FNSMS	Food and Nutrition Security Monitoring System
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HGSF	Home Grown School Feeding
MoEAC	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
NSNP	National School Nutrition Program
ECDE	Early Childhood Development and Education
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
SDGs	Strategic Development Goals

Definition of Terms

School Meals

School meals refer to the provision of food and nutrition to children attending ECDE centers or schools during their learning hours.

Nutrition:

Nutrition in ECDE education refers to the study and practice of providing appropriate and balanced dietary intake to support the growth, development, and well-being of young children.

Policy:

Policy in ECDE education refers to a set of guidelines, principles, rules, or regulations established by the relevant authorities or governing bodies to guide decision-making, planning, and implementation in the ECDE sector

Foreword

The County Government of Meru is committed to improving the livelihood of its citizens, as demonstrated by the various policies and legislative steps that have been undertaken by the government in recent years. This commitment is an extension of the Kenya Constitution (2010), whose chapter 4 expressly guarantees all Kenyans their social, cultural and economic rights, including the right to health, education, food and decent livelihoods.

Vision 2030 aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrialized middle-income country, providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by the year 2030. Under its economic and social pillars, Vision 2030 further emphasizes the enhancement of productivity of crops and livestock, incomes, and food security and nutrition.

In view of the above, it is our pleasure as Meru county Government to develop a policy that will guide establishment, implementation and evaluation of a quality, regular and reliable school meals and nutrition for pre-schoolers in Meru County. According to research findings in ECDE centers, we have identified inadequate nutrition and health support service as one of the challenges facing ECDE and therefore the County government of Meru has been liaising with various Education stakeholders over the years, to propose strategies for mobilization of resources to support this school meals and nutrition in line with principles of devolution. Introduction of school feeding programme in Meru County will aim to increase enrolment and attendance in our ECDE centers, Reduce Stunting and Health Issues among learners, provide crucial support to vulnerable families who may struggle to provide nutritious meals for their children, reduce inequalities in access to early childhood education and nutrition among others in line with the governor's commitment to making Meru people happy.

We have been laying emphasis on integrated approach to delivery of quality services, enhance sector governance, promote accountability, and expand county oversight in measuring performance. This approach will be a big step towards initiating and implementing a sustainable school meals and nutrition program to pre-scholars.

Therefore, we are beckoning the national government and county education officials, education stakeholders, development partners, private sector players, faith based organizations and civil societies to support this innovative and integrated policy framework for each child to receive quality and regular nutrition regardless of social stratification, geographical manifestation, cultural barriers and or any other variation in developing a holistic individual through provision of quality and reliable school meals and nutrition in Meru County.

H.E. Hon. Kawira Mwangaza
The Governor
Meru County

Preface

The County Government of Meru is cognizant of the importance of the early years of the child development and the benefits of investing in it, thus the provision of nutritious meals, including porridge, to our ECDE learners in Meru County is a testament to our commitment to their overall development and well-being. We firmly believe that access to proper nutrition is a fundamental right of every child and a key determinant of their educational success.

Through this policy, we aim to ensure that all ECDE centers in Meru County offer healthy porridge as part of their meal program. This will be done in collaboration with the relevant departments and stakeholders, focusing on sourcing quality ingredients, adhering to food safety standards, and promoting balanced nutrition.

Under the visionary leadership of Her excellency Governor Bishop Kawira Mwangaza this policy seeks to fulfil the commitment made in the governor's manifesto to implement a comprehensive school feeding program within Meru County. This commitment is a testament to the government's dedication to nurturing the physical and intellectual growth of our children.

The school feeding program under this policy shall encompass, providing daily nutritious meals to 777 ECDE Centres across Meru County, reducing malnutrition and hunger among students and most importantly enhancing student attendance, engagement, and academic performance. We will closely monitor and evaluate the program's progress and impact using metrics such as attendance rates, academic performance, and health indicators. Regular reports will be generated to assess the program's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

In conclusion, the Meru County government remains steadfast in its commitment to the school feeding program as a pivotal component of our broader educational and child development initiatives. Through this program, we envision a brighter and healthier future for the children of Meru County

Let us join hands and work together to ensure that our ECDE learners receive the nutrition they need to thrive academically and lead healthy lives. Together, we can build a brighter future for our county.

Dr. Kiambi J.T. Atheru
County Secretary & Head of Public Service

Preamble

The ECDE school meals and nutrition Policy Framework for Meru County was developed through extensive consultations with and reflections on experiences and practices of various stakeholders (state & non-state) within the county. The actors consulted included county government directorate of Early Childhood Development and Education as well as representatives of ECDE teachers and parents.

The intended objective of this policy is to reaffirm the commitment of County Government of Meru to provide quality, regular and sustainable nutrition for holistic development of all children, along the continuum, from the pre-primary one and two in all public ECDE centers, to provide an overarching and comprehensive framework that will inform all county government officers, head teachers and teachers on how to identify suppliers and procedures of procurement, distribution, receiving, recording and consumption of food provided through this program, regulate provision of school meals and nutrition services to ECDE learners in public schools in the county with a view of providing broad guidelines for co-ordination and harmonization of quality nutrition to other partners operating in Meru County and to bridge existing gaps of the policy guidelines and legal documents; and provide legal framework on which service provision of school meals and nutrition will be hinged

We sincerely thank the Governor of Meru County HE Hon. Kawira Mwangaza for her tireless effort in ensuring the school meals and nutrition program has become a reality in Meru County. This idea was included in her manifesto as a flagship project. It was later on, one of the planned activities in Meru County CIDP. This policy therefore becomes the genesis of making the program.

DR. YUSUF RUTERE

CECM Education, science, Culture and Arts
Meru County Government

Acknowledgement

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Governor Honorable Bishop Kawira Mwangaza and all the individuals and organizations who played a crucial role in the development of the Meru County School Feeding Policy. This milestone achievement would not have been possible without the unwavering support and dedication of the diverse stakeholders involved in the consultative process at both county and sub-county levels.

The rigorous and inclusive consultative process paved the way for invaluable insights and perspectives from various stakeholders, ensuring that the Meru School Feeding Policy truly reflects the needs and aspirations of the community it serves. The stakeholder validation exercise was instrumental in fine-tuning the policy to ensure its relevance and adequacy in addressing the pressing challenges of school feeding in our region.

We recognize the valuable support and partnership of the Department of Education, headed by the County Executive Committee Member (CECM), in implementing this policy. We are grateful for their dedication and efforts in prioritizing the well-being of our young learners. We also extend our gratitude to Economic planning team whose dedication and expertise played a pivotal role in guiding the policy's development and shaping its implementation strategies.

This visionary policy marks a significant step forward in consolidating the collective efforts of all relevant stakeholders, ensuring a well-coordinated and effective school feeding program in Meru County. It is our earnest belief that through this policy, all learners in pre-primary and primary schools, especially those from vulnerable communities, will receive the essential nourishment they need with a nutritious school meal each school day.

Let us work together to ensure the successful implementation of the ECDE meals and nutrition policy. By doing so, we are investing in the future of our county and empowering our young learners to reach their full potential.

Thank you for your dedication and contributions to the education sector in Meru County.

Joyce Kaaria

Chief Officer - Education, science, Culture and Arts

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School Feeding Policy provides a framework that will strengthen the efficient and effective management of school feeding in Meru. The guidelines and the clarification of different roles and responsibility articulated in the policy will improve communication, coordination and overall programme delivery.

The goal of this policy is to provide a framework for improving access to quality and inclusive education for all children in Meru, delivered by a school feeding programme that promotes the consumption of locally produced food from smallholder producers; enhances health and nutrition of learners while providing social protection to beneficiary households. This policy seeks to contribute to food security, poverty reduction and local economic development and provides guidance on how to address short-term hunger among school children. To ensure sustainability, the policy provides for linkages between school feeding and smallholder farmers in order to access locally produced foods, supporting not only the beneficiary children but also the development of markets and the livelihoods of smallholder producers.

As school feeding becomes increasingly engraved as one of the important safety net programmes in Meru, the department will seek to integrate innovative means of improving its delivery and management. A sustainable school feeding will require that we work together with all actors to optimize respective expertise and resources in order to ensure a better learning environment and provide equal opportunity for our children to attain quality education.

The policy also emphasizes multi-sectoral collaboration specifically by education, agriculture, health, nutrition, etc. On basis of their technical expertise and comparative advantages; partnerships with all stakeholders including the community in order to multiply the school feeding benefits; and coordination of efforts to strengthen consistency and efficiency towards a common goal.

Monitoring and Evaluation systems shall be developed with a view to (i) provide regular information on the implementation of the programme; (ii) detect any malfunctions to identify corrective measures; and (iii) provide feedback on the general outcome of the programmes. A set of indicators have been identified to measure the progress of implementation within the five-year period.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

1.0 Concept Definition

The Meru County School meals and nutrition program policy is a set of guidelines and rules established to govern the provision of nutrition to young children enrolled in ECDE programs. This policy outlines the objectives and strategies for ensuring that these children receive adequate and healthy meals while they are at school.

It also provides the mandate and goals of school feeding in Meru County. It establishes the principles governing the planning, implementation, monitoring and management of the Meru School Feeding Programme (MSFP), and sets out the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in government, private sector, and the local communities. The policy situates MSFP within National best practices and agreements and within national strategic frameworks in particular, KENYA Vision 2030 and other national policies especially those relating to education, poverty and social safety nets, food and nutrition and vulnerable children.

The policy aims to improve the equitable access, improved learning and education for all children in Meru. It provides guidance for addressing short- term hunger among school going children and emphasises the role of school feeding as a social safety net particularly for food insecure households. Further, the policy provides guidance for improved health and nutrition of learners through the provision of a diversified nutritious diet, which contributes to improved school attendance, participation and completion. To ensure sustainability, the policy provides for linkages between the MSFP and locally produced foods, supporting not only the beneficiary children but also the development of markets and the livelihoods of smallholder producers.

1.2 History of the concept

The Meru School meals and nutrition policy draws on the extensive national and regional support for school feeding which is provided for in various policies and declarations. Internationally, these include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1990) Article 24 that states every child's right to good quality health care, clean water and nutritious food while article 28 explains every child's right to an education.

Studies have shown that School feeding has its origins in the 1930s, when schemes were introduced in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) with the explicit aim of improving the growth of children (Sweetnam, 1978; Moningka, 2000; Richter, 2000; Morley, 2006). In the United Kingdom, a program that subsidized milk for school children was initiated in 1934 and milk was provided free from 1944 onwards (Sweetnam, 1978). In the late 1960s and early 1970s this benefit was withdrawn from all, except for those children considered to be particularly needy (an early example of the targeting approach in school feeding).

The Education for All (EFA) declaration of the Dakar Framework for Action, which was signed at the 2000 World Education Forum and endorsed at the 2007 Dakar High-Level Group on

Education for All, calls for intensified efforts towards school feeding as an important multi-sectoral approach and safety net for building inclusive education systems. In addition, school feeding addresses the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2, 4 and 5 on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture; ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, as well as promoting gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

The development of this policy also fulfils one of the internationally agreed standards of good practice deemed essential for effective school health and school feeding programmes, laid out in the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). In 2003, the Comprehensive Africa Development Programme (CAADP) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme raised the importance of linking school feeding to local production and purchases through Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF). In this way, school feeding has potential for stimulating local economies and providing local farmers and businesses with a structured market for their goods and services.

The Malabo declaration signed by the African Union in 2014 through one of its goal "Ending hunger in Africa by 2025" also promotes the consumption of locally produced foods and school feeding programmes that source foods from local farmers and producers. Further, in January 2016, African Ministers of Education adopted the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025), as the framework for transformative education and training system in Africa and endorsed the adoption of Home Grown School Feeding as a "strategy to improve education, boost local economies and smallholder agriculture and advance the SDGs." As such, March 1st of each year was instituted as the Africa Day of School Feeding by the Assembly of Heads of State and government during the 26th AU summit in 2016.

This policy is also informed by the findings of Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) studies led by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency and supported by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP). COHA was initiated to raise the profile of malnutrition in Africa by demonstrating the social and economic impact of child undernutrition on health, education and labour productivity. As part of other government interventions, this school feeding policy will contribute to addressing undernutrition and thereby assisting in reducing the costs to the health and education sectors and the Kenyan economy in general.

1.3 Problem statement

The School Feeding Programme (SFP) is a worldwide initiative aimed at providing nutritious meals to schoolchildren, enabling them to access education while simultaneously improving their health. This endeavour enhances their productivity and, through education, equips them with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for a well-rounded life. In Kenya, the World Food Programme (WFP) has partnered with the government to implement a school meal program. This program is specifically targeted at all primary schools in regions facing severe food insecurity,

characterized by low enrolment and completion rates. These areas include Kenya's marginalized arid and semi-arid counties, as well as informal settlements in Nairobi (WFP, 2017).

However, literacy levels in the Arid and Semi-Arid lands of Kenya have been hindered by pervasive poverty, which has eroded household purchasing power in the region. The youth dependency ratio in Kajiado County for example is particularly high, standing at 78%, which places a significant burden on the working population (Kenya National Adolescents and Youth Survey 2017). Nevertheless, there is a gradual reduction in the dependency ratio over time. The retention levels of pupils in Kajiado County has also increased as a result of the school feeding programmes according to available data records at the Ministry of Education and within selected public primary schools at Kajiado County.

According to the Rwandan government, the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) is specifically aimed at improving school enrolment and attendance, reducing the number of out-of-school children, and improving the nutritional well-being of the students who benefit from it. Official estimates show that when the school feeding programme was expanded to pre-primary, primary, and secondary school children in 2021, over 3,500,000 students had access to the school feeding programme that served one square meal. Since its launch in October 2021, the feeding programme has reduced malnutrition rates in the country from 32.4 percent while targeting to reach 20 percent by 2030.

Meru County therefore being among the Arid and semi-arid (ASAL) counties, is facing numerous challenges that hinder the well-being and development of its residents. Food security is a critical concern in the county, with many families lacking access to nutritious meals on a regular basis. This lack has severe implications for the health and livelihoods of individuals, particularly vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and those living in poverty.

In light of these challenges, previously, the county rolled out the milk feeding programme with the objectives to tackle malnutrition, increase school enrolment rates and provide farmers with access to market their milk. Plans were put in place to measure the impact of the school milk programme in order to validate progress. The impact of the programme was felt with enrolment rates increasing by 20 percent in the county. Other benefits included more motivated and alert children, improved rates of transition from home school to formal school, less sickness on milk days and more active participation in field activities. However, it was faced with various challenges with the primary challenge being resource constraints, including funding, milk supply, and unsustainability.

Consequently, there has been duplication, poor utilization and gaps in the provision of nutrition hence compromising the provision of quality, reliable and regular nutrition to learners in public schools.

The school meals and nutrition program therefore, being one of the flagship project of the governor will have a profound impact on the educational landscape. Adequate nutrition is closely linked to cognitive development and academic performance. Children who are well-nourished

tend to exhibit better concentration, perform better academically, and have an improved chance of reaching developmental milestones. By instituting an ECDE feeding program policy, Meru aims to create a nurturing environment where its young learners can thrive academically and personally.

Moreover, some of the intervention measures to be put in order to successfully run this program include Increased Funding Allocation, Food Safety Training, Infrastructure Upgrades, Community Engagement, development of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, Nutrition Education and sustainability planning.

1.4 The Purpose of School Meals and Nutrition Policy

1. This policy framework reaffirms the commitment of County Government of Meru to provide quality, regular and sustainable nutrition for holistic development of all children all public ECDE centers.
2. It lays down the way forward for an integrated and comprehensive approach towards ensuring a sound, regular, reliable and nutritious school meals sand nutrition program, with focus on child holistic development.
3. The policy provides a comprehensive framework that will inform all county government officers, head teachers and teachers on how to identify suppliers and procedures of procurement, distribution, receiving, recording and consumption of food provided through this program.
4. It delineates the County's focus in regard to relationship between county government and partners on guidelines that are to be followed when it comes to the issues of providing school meals and nutrition programs to preschool learners' within Meru County
5. This policy will form the springboard from which other sector policies may be strengthened, developed or reviewed, particularly in areas of child rights, participation, protection, health, nutrition, early learning, play, stimulation, water, sanitation and social services. These sector policies are crucial in providing standards and guidelines for ensuring provision of quality services for all children in their early years.
6. It will help regulate provision of school meals and nutrition services to ECDE learners in public schools in the county with a view of providing broad guidelines for co-ordination and harmonization of quality nutrition to other partners operating in Meru County.
7. It will bridge existing gaps of the policy guidelines and legal documents; and provide legal framework on which service provision of school meals and nutrition will be hinged.

1.5 Objectives of the policy

The policy guideline is aimed to provide a framework to achieve the following:

1. To provide a guideline to provide nutritious meals to all learners especially those from vulnerable backgrounds

2. To Provide a guideline to improve learners' health, nutrition status and cognitive abilities through balance and diverse meals
3. To enhance attendance and participation in educational activities by addressing the impact of hunger and malnutrition
4. To foster partnerships with other stakeholders to support the implementation of the school meals and nutrition program

1.6 Justification

The international community through various international conventions and declarations has laid a lot of emphasis on provision of free, quality and inclusive education. It was realized that if parents were to provide school meals and nutrition to learners then a certain levy was to be charged which denied some learners an opportunity to get free, compulsory and inclusive basic education. One of such conventions is the convention on the rights of the child held at Dakar Senegal in 2000. It was focusing on Education for All (EFA) especially to learners at risk from deprived backgrounds. The declarations from this convention committed most world governments and especially Sub – Sahara Africa and other developing countries to eradicate malnutrition to enable learners to receive quality education. This was partly possible through provision of meals and nutrition in schools. Currently, The National School Nutrition Program (NSNP) in South Africa is a large government sponsored program reaching over 8 million learners in primary and secondary schools. The emphasis of the program was on the provision of the daily balanced and diverse cooked meal, with nutrition education and sustainable food production being the other two pillars of the program.

Kenya the first universal feeding program was provision of school milk program which was initiated in 1980 by the then President Daniel Arap Moi. The program was fully funded by the Government. However, it was stopped when it became unsustainable.

Meru County in 2018 introduced school milk program as part of school meals and nutrition in 776 public ECDE centers which was fully funded by the county government of Meru. The program was to supplement the program provided by the parents in order to ensure learners were getting the right nutrients to eliminate malnutrition levels among preschool learners. The program was a step forward towards providing free basic education and increased enrolment. However, the program became unsustainable and was stopped. This reversed the gains of ensuring learners in marginalized areas received proper nutrition. Children Act 2001 Part 2 safeguards the rights and welfare of the child. The key address here is the best interest of the child. This can partly be realized by providing learners with free meals and nutrition in schools above provision of school milk. The Basic Education Act, 2013 part iv provide for free and compulsory Basic Education which further states that no public school shall charge or cause any parent or guardian to pay tuition fees for or on behalf of any learner in the school. The government must therefore implement the guidelines of this act by providing meals and nutrition to ECDE learners to avoid parents being charged levies to cater for the same.

Meru County has some areas which are marginalized and are classified as areas suffering abject poverty. These areas require immediate intervention through provision of meals and nutrition at home and in schools among others. In the year 2013 the nutrition status survey for children below five (5) years in Meru County indicated that children who had stunted growth were 25% for the whole county but Tigania and Igembe Region being 45%, the underweight children i.e. less weight compared to age was 8.1 % and wasting i.e. children's whose weight was less compared to height was 2.9%. (Department of Health Meru County Government, 2013.)

The introduction of porridge as part of school meals and nutrition in all public ECDE centers will lead to child friendly school environment which is a step forward towards providing free basic education and increase in enrolment. This because basic education Act 2013 emphasis is education free of charge and if school meals and nutrition is provided there will be a significant reduction in school levies which is a great milestone towards achievement of free pre-primary education. The government also in cognizant of Children Act 2001 Part 2 safeguards the rights and welfare of the child. The key address here is the best interest of the child. The nutrition provided must be of quality, safe, regular and have the essential nutrients. Once this is done there will be improved health of learners, performance, enrolment, retention, transition and completion rates.

The above statistics was a prove that there were cases of malnutrition which require immediate intervention. It is on the basis of this understanding that the County Government of Meru is planning to initiate provision of porridge as part of school meals and nutrition in all public ECDE centers.

1.7 Significance

The School Meals and Nutrition Policy in Meru, like in any region, holds significant importance due to its multifaceted impacts on the well-being and development of students, the education system, and the community as a whole. Here are some key significances of implementing such a policy in Meru:

i. **Improved Student Health and Nutrition**: A School Meals and Nutrition Policy ensures that students have access to nutritious meals during the school day. Proper nutrition is essential for physical and cognitive development in children. By providing balanced meals, the policy can contribute to better overall health among students, reduce malnutrition, and improve their ability to focus and learn in the classroom.

ii. **Enhanced Academic Performance**: Well-nourished students tend to perform better academically. Adequate nutrition supports cognitive functions, memory, and concentration. By addressing nutritional needs, the policy can lead to improved academic outcomes, higher test scores, and increased graduation rates, ultimately contributing to a more educated and skilled workforce in Meru.

iii. **Increased School Attendance and Enrolment**: A School Meals and Nutrition Policy can act as an incentive for parents to send their children to school regularly. Knowing that their children will receive nutritious meals during the school day can encourage parents

to enroll their children in school and ensure their consistent attendance. This, in turn, can help reduce absenteeism and dropout rates.

iv. **Reduced Health Costs**: By promoting better nutrition and overall health, the policy may contribute to lower healthcare costs. Students who receive proper nutrition are less likely to suffer from diet-related health issues, reducing the burden on the healthcare system and families.

v. **Support for Vulnerable Populations**: The policy will be designed to prioritize vulnerable or marginalized students who may face food insecurity at home. This includes students from low-income families, orphans, and those living in challenging circumstances. It can serve as a safety net, ensuring that these students receive at least one nutritious meal each day.

vi. **Community Development**: A School Meals and Nutrition Policy doesn't just benefit students; it also has positive ripple effects on the wider community. Healthy and well-nourished students are more likely to grow into productive, economically active adults who contribute to the local workforce and the development of Meru.

vii. **Promotion of Local Agriculture**: Such a policy will support local farmers and food producers by sourcing food locally. This promotes agricultural development within the region, stimulates the local economy, and ensures a steady supply of fresh, locally-sourced ingredients for school meals.

viii. **Alignment with National and Global Goals**: Implementing a School Meals and Nutrition Policy aligns with national and global goals related to education, health, and nutrition. It can contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and Goal 4 (Quality Education).

A School Meals and Nutrition Policy in Meru is significant for its potential to enhance the health, education, and overall well-being of students, reduce educational disparities, and contribute to the broader socio-economic development of the region. It reflects a commitment to the future of Meru's youth and the prosperity of the community.

1.8 The scope

The school meals and nutrition policy applies to all learners in public ECDE centers within Meru County. The primary aim is to provide nutritious meals to all students, with a particular focus on those hailing from vulnerable backgrounds. This ensures that every child, regardless of their circumstances, has access to nourishing food while at school.

Additionally, we aim to create an environment where hunger and malnutrition are addressed comprehensively, thereby enhancing school attendance rates and promoting active participation in educational activities. By addressing these fundamental issues, we ensure that no student is hindered in their pursuit of knowledge and learning.

Lastly, we are dedicated to building collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders. These partnerships are vital for the successful implementation and sustainability of the school meals

and nutrition program. By working together with others, we can secure the necessary support and resources to make the program effective and far-reaching.

1.9 Limitations and De-limitations of policy challenges

Limitations	De-limitations
Budget Constraints: One of the most pressing challenges is the limited financial resources allocated to ECDE feeding programs. In many instances, inadequate funding hampers the ability to provide nutritious meals consistently.	**Increased Funding**: Meru County recognises the critical importance of ECDE feeding programs, and therefore will actively seek additional funding sources. These resources will be secured through government budgets, external donors, or public-private partnerships, aiming to enhance meal quality and consistency.
Food Insecurity: High levels of food insecurity in certain regions make it difficult to ensure a stable supply of nutritious food for ECDE programs. This puts children at risk of malnutrition due to the scarcity of quality food.	**Food Security Initiatives**: To address food security concerns, Meru county Government is implementing initiatives focused on agricultural development, support for local farmers, and the establishment of food distribution programs. These efforts aim to ensure a reliable food supply for ECDE program.
Food Safety Concerns: Ensuring food safety practices, including proper handling, storage, and preparation of meals, is of paramount importance. Inadequate food safety measures can lead to foodborne illnesses, posing a serious health risk to young children.	**Food Safety Training**: To mitigate food safety concerns, training programs will be conducted for food handlers and kitchen staff. These programs emphasize the importance of hygiene, proper storage, and safe cooking practices.
Nutritional Expertise: Developing well-balanced menus that meet the nutritional needs of children requires expertise. Shortage of trained nutritionists or dietitians can result in suboptimal dietary plans.	**Nutritional Education**: The department of Education will work hand in hand with Department of health to be involved in training teachers and caregivers in basic nutrition principles. This equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to support children's nutritional needs beyond mealtime.
Community Engagement: Failure of involvement of the community in implementation of the policy especially on the importance of the programme.	**Community Engagement**: Meru County government will actively involve parents and local communities. This will encompass participation in menu planning, volunteering in school kitchens, and raising awareness about the significance of ECDE feeding programs.
Lack of monitoring and evaluation to ascertain quality assurance	**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are established to assess the impact of feeding programs. Regular assessments of children's nutritional status and program effectiveness help identify areas in need

	of improvement.
Supply Chain Challenges: The policy's effectiveness may be affected by challenges in the supply chain, such as procurement, storage, and distribution of food items. Ensuring a consistent supply of high-quality ingredients for porridge preparation may pose logistical challenges.	**Supplier Diversification**: The County will diversify the supplier base to reduce dependency on a single source. This mitigates risks associated with supply disruptions from a particular supplier. We will also establish feedback mechanisms to gather input from stakeholders about supply chain challenges and potential improvements. Regular reviews will be done and feedback acted upon.

1.10 Assumptions

1. Access to Sufficient Food: The policy assumes that sufficient food resources, including porridge ingredients, will be available to meet the nutritional needs of all ECDE learners. It assumes that there will be no significant food scarcity or interruptions in the supply chain.

2. Acceptance and Participation: The policy assumes that parents and guardians will support and encourage their children's participation in the porridge program. It assumes that there will be a high level of acceptance and cooperation from the community, ensuring regular attendance and engagement of children in the ECDE centers.

3. Policy Compliance: The assumption that schools and relevant stakeholders will adhere to the policy's guidelines and regulations consistently to ensure its successful implementation.

CHAPTER TWO: CASE EXAMPLES AND SCENARIOS

Food insecurity is a threat to education, not only in Kenya, but also in Africa as a whole. Before COVID-19 struck, 60% of African learners from low-income households admitted to going to school hungry, on several occasions if not often (No Kid Hungry, 2023). In Kenya, 23 million children go to school without their day's first meal (Wanyonyi, 2020).

Apart from provision of physical energy, food is vital in a student's life for reasons like concentration, memory, mood and social life. It goes without say that food is key to a learner and necessary measures should be put in place to keep more children in school. Earlier on in Kenya, there was a feeding program dubbed 'Maziwa ya Nyayo' under president Moi that took to account heavily, the nutrition of school-goers; it was a success. This policy discusses a feeding program that will not only enhance schools' attendance, but also provide nutritious meals to vulnerable learners.

2.1 Case Scenario One

Nairobi County, like many urban areas in developing countries, faces a stark contrast between affluence and poverty. Regardless of the rich and affluent who call Nairobi home, there is another cadre of Nairobians who live in shackles and do afford basic amenities. Children from these marginalized communities often go to school hungry, hindering their ability to learn and grow. Recognizing this dire situation, Food 4 Education in collaboration with Nairobi County government established to provide a feeding program for daily meals to schoolchildren in need, with the belief that proper nutrition is a fundamental right for every child.

Food 4 Education is targeted to reach 33,000 children in 30 schools every day. It targets schools in Nairobi, Kiambu and Mombasa counties. The meal in context is a varied lunch menu of 650g of high proteins and carbohydrates. The program has garnered attention for its innovative approach to addressing childhood hunger and improving educational outcomes. It not only focuses on providing food for learners but also creates job opportunities to over 170 individuals; 75% being women and it will increase local sourcing from small scale farmers.

2.2 Case Scenario Two

The Murang'a County Porridge Feeding Program is a vital initiative aimed at addressing the nutritional needs of young children. Regardless of Murang'a being in the wetter parts of the country, there has been escalating cases of hunger in schools in areas like Ithanga Constituency. In response to this pressing issue of food insecurity in schools, the Murang'a County government launched the Porridge Feeding Program, which aims to provide a daily nutritious meal, usually in the form of porridge, to young children attending early childhood development centers (ECDCs) and primary schools. The program is aimed at impacting children between 3 and 6 years old.

This program has made a significant impact by not only improving the nutritional status of children but also increasing school attendance and concentration levels. However, it faces certain challenges, including limited resources, difficulties in sourcing high-quality ingredients, and ensuring a consistent supply of porridge to all the beneficiaries. To address these issues, the program seeks to enhance collaboration with local farmers to ensure a stable supply of

ingredients, explore public-private partnerships for funding and sustainability, and implement stringent quality control measures to maintain the nutritional value of the porridge. For safety purposes, each ECDE centre has a Uji champion who is a parent to one of the pupils that is responsible of tasting the porridge to ensure its safety.

2.3 Case Scenario Three

The Kajiado Feeding Program, initiated in 2018, has grown significantly to become a lifeline for students facing severe nutritional challenges in Kenya. Originally established at a single school in the Kwa Njenga slum of Nairobi, serving 160 students, the program's mission has been to provide school meals to underprivileged children. By 2022, this noble initiative had expanded to encompass 7,240 primary school students, offering them daily school breakfast and lunch. The program's rapid growth is a testament to its impact on addressing the pressing issue of malnutrition among school-going children in impoverished communities.

Kajiado county being in the ASAL regions, access to education is compromised by the dire food scarcity. To address this issue, the Kajiado Feeding Program requires increased funding, resources, and support to ensure that it can continue to provide a lifeline to these vulnerable children. By expanding its reach and intensifying efforts to combat malnutrition in famine-affected regions, the program has made a profound difference in the lives of these students, helping them not only survive but thrive in their educational journey, breaking the cycle of malnutrition and poverty.

2.4 Conclusion

In summary, these three feeding programs in Nairobi County, Murang'a County, and Kajiado County, Kenya, exemplify vital initiatives aimed at addressing food insecurity and childhood malnutrition, which are critical issues affecting many communities in the region. Each program recognizes the fundamental link between nutrition and education, acknowledging that when children have access to nutritious meals, they are better equipped to learn, grow, and break the cycle of poverty.

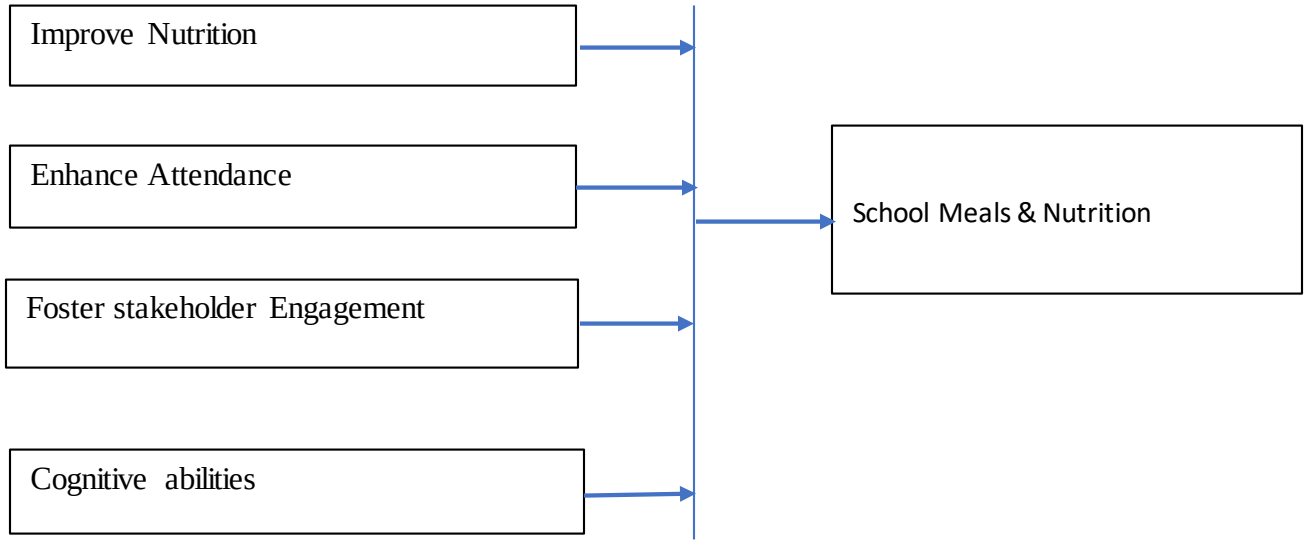
The best-case scenario that can be identified from these programs is one of holistic collaboration and sustainability. By combining their strengths and learning from each other's successes and challenges, these programs can form a regional network dedicated to combating childhood hunger and malnutrition. This cooperative approach would involve sharing resources, best practices, and funding opportunities to ensure that every child in these counties has access to nutritious meals on a daily basis.

To achieve this best-case scenario, several key solutions can be implemented. Firstly, robust partnerships between government entities, NGOs, private sector organizations, and local communities should be forged to secure sustainable funding and logistical support. Secondly, an emphasis on local agriculture and food production can reduce costs and ensure the quality of ingredients used in the feeding programs. Finally, community engagement and education initiatives can promote sustainable farming practices, nutritional awareness, and food security,

creating a self-reliant ecosystem where children not only receive daily meals but also grow up in communities equipped to provide for their nutritional needs.

In conclusion, the food feeding programs in Nairobi County, Murang'a County, and Kajiado County serve as beacons of hope in addressing childhood malnutrition and improving educational outcomes. The best-case scenario lies in their collaborative efforts to create a network that ensures no child goes to school hungry. By combining resources, investing in local agriculture, and fostering community engagement, we can create a brighter future for the children of these counties and, by extension, contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and malnutrition in the region.

2.5 Conceptual Framework of the policy



Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Guiding Principles

The Meru School Feeding Policy upholds the principles of:

a. **Accountability and transparency at all levels;** The school feeding programme will be implemented in a transparent manner and all stakeholders will be accountable for their role and inputs into the programme. Essential information about the programme will be accessible to all people including those from poor and marginalized areas and communities The MSFP monitoring and evaluation system will be strengthened as a means of ensuring accountability transparency in the implementation of the programme at all levels. The information that the MSFP Monitoring and Evaluation system generates will be used for raising awareness and promoting transparency and deficiency of the programme.
b. **Efficient and quality delivery of school feeding services;** Efficiency in delivery and provision of school feeding services will be the responsibility of all stakeholders involved in the school feeding programme. The quality of services will be based on health and nutrition standards that are aligned to the national policy frameworks related to health, nutrition, food safety, water and sanitation and environment.
c. **Social equity and gender considerations;** The school feeding programme will contribute to social equity and address gender and social inequalities in education through communities, parents and teachers. Special attention will be paid to marginalized and poor communities making sure the most disadvantaged children get most of the benefits. School feeding will be sensitive to the needs, rights and entitlements of the most disadvantaged children including children living with disabilities, those affected by HIV and AIDS, pregnant children and Orphans and Vulnerable Children. School feeding will be based on the principles of non-discrimination and inclusivity.
d. **Community participation and ownership;** Communities will play an active role and have a significant degree of influence, involvement and decision making in the implementation of the school feeding programme. The policy will support interventions that promote community ownership of the school feeding programme in order to develop their confidence and skills to sustain the services delivered. This policy advocates for infrastructure development in schools and raises awareness of school feeding in order to generate income to complement school feeding activities.
e. **Adequate staffing and capacity building;** The policy seeks to ensure that adequate staff is available for the implementation of the school feeding programme at all levels. It supports government and its partners to engage in robust capacity development initiatives and regular training in order to ensure that policy objectives are achieved. Institutional capacity development will strengthen the management of the school feeding programme and enhance service delivery.

3. 2 The Meru School Feeding Model (Policy Strategies)

The school feeding policy objectives will be attained through numerous strategies as outlined below. These strategies will be implemented in close collaboration and coordination with relevant stakeholders within Government, donor agencies, Civil Society, the private sector and the school community. The policy implementation action plan will guide the execution of the policy provisions. The DoEAC will take a lead in coordinating the implementation of these strategies and in ensuring robust systems to monitor, account and report on the progress of implementation of these strategies to stakeholders. Different entities in their respective mandated sectoral and technical capacities will support the execution of these strategies through collaborative efforts and arrangements with the DoEAC.

3.2.1 Policy Objectives and Strategies/ statement

3.2.1.1 Policy Objective 1

Enhance access, retention and learning outcomes through timely provision of diverse nutritious food in schools. Provide a guideline

Strategies

a) ***Ensure timely delivery of food to schools:*** Timeliness in delivery of food to schools is fundamental because it ensures availability of food for learners throughout the term. The food supply chain will be strengthened through rigorous monitoring of procurement and food delivery processes resulting in timely delivery of food to schools.
b) ***Expand and upgrade school feeding infrastructure:*** This strategy will ensure that all schools are equipped with the ideal school feeding infrastructure which includes: a kitchen equipped with adequate cooking stoves, eating utensils and a storage facility. The use of fuel saving stoves/techniques or other forms of energy that are environmentally friendly is encouraged. Schools are expected to have school feeding infrastructure that meets the basic food safety and hygiene standards.
c) ***Scale up School Feeding Programme to Secondary Schools and Early Childhood Development centres (ECDs):*** This policy recognizes the significance of expanding school feeding to ECDs primary level and JSS in the long run. As such, assessments will be undertaken to establish the viability of the expansion. Schools in food insecure areas will be prioritized as most learners and children have limited access to food all year round.

3.2.1.2 Policy Objective 2

Enhance nutrition and health of learners through provision of balanced and fortified meals.

Strategies

a. ***Ensure/explore means of diversifying school meals:*** Diversification of school meals will contribute to increased dietary nutrition intake by learners, hence contributing to better health. This strategy will include the introduction of school gardens, purchasing of locally

produced food and engaging the private sector and the local community to supplement the school meal.

b. ***Enhance health, hygiene and nutrition education in schools:***

This strategy will include;

- Integration of school-led total sanitation programme in all schools benefiting from school feeding. This will contribute to increased awareness and adoption of good sanitation and hygiene practices in schools and in the surrounding community.
- Integrate deworming into school feeding programme as a means to address worm infestation among learners especially in areas where prevalence is high.
- Enhance HIV/AIDS Education at the school level in order to increase awareness among learners. This is particularly critical given the high rates of teenage pregnancies in Meru
- Education and sensitization of learners on alcohol and drug abuse in order to increase the awareness of learners on the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse at an early stage thereby improving the decisions they make in that regard.
- Integration of psychosocial support to learners that are faced with different forms of trauma. This will help address cases of children that are from abusive families or those affected by family discord.
- Improve food preparation and hygiene standards in schools through continuous training of cooks and regular monitoring of the quality of food prepared for learners.
- Ensure availability of clean and safe water, and adequate sanitation facilities in schools.

c. ***Promote and strengthen food quality and safety:*** Systems that track and report on food quality and safety will be enhanced. This will be complemented with regular monitoring and testing of the quality of food at the supplier warehouses and at the school level to ensure that the food meets the required quality specifications.

3.2.1.3 Policy Objective 3

Foster partnerships with other stakeholders to support the implementation of the school meals and nutrition program

Strategies

a. ***Promote the diversification of school meals through sourcing of locally produced and available foods:*** Based on available secondary data there is potential in smallholder farmers to supply schools with a variety of fresh food. This strategy will support the development and implementation of a pilot project on linking schools to smallholder producers in line with recommendations from the feasibility study. Additionally, school meal menus will be tailored to local and nutritious food preferences.

b. ***Strengthen the capacity of smallholder producers to supply locally produced and available foods to schools:*** This strategy will support capacity strengthening of smallholder farmers to produce a variety of surplus food that can be supplied to schools. Capacity strengthening activities will include training of farmers in good agricultural

practices, adoption of appropriate technology and marketing. Farmers will also be facilitated to access Azura fund as a means of strengthening their financial strength to supply.

3.3 Meru county School Feeding Program Infrastructure

Ideal standards of MSFP facilities include adequate enclosed cooking shelter; covered eating shelter and well ventilated separate enclosed storeroom. The policy on school infrastructure will be as follows:

a. School feeding infrastructure shall be constructed using the specifications provided by Ministry of Works and Transport.
b. Schools will be supported by the Department of Education, Arts and Culture and partners to upgrade the specified facilities in as soon as possible and with the participation and support of communities.
c. The Department of Education, Arts and Culture with support from other Departments will continue to explore alternative fuel sources as a long-term strategy in environmental conservation.
d. The Department of Education, Arts and Culture will endeavour to improve food storage facilities in an effort to minimise food losses and waste. In situations of carry over stock, arrangements will be made with other food-based programmes to ensure no food is wasted

3.4 Porridge capitation management guidelines

a) The porridge capitation management committee shall be appointed by the Chief Officer Education Arts and Culture.
b) The committee shall be composed of; The head teacher, ECDE teacher, BOM chair, One ECDE parent representative and the Sub County Education Officer.
c) The committee shall open a bank account at any commercial Bank within Meru County.
d) The bank account shall be operated by four signatories i.e., the headteacher, sub education officer and the ECDE teacher, BOM chair who can alternate with Parent Representative.

NB:

- The account should not be receiving any other money.
- The account should not be receiving any other money.

Mandate of the Committee

- Open a bank account for the program at any Comercial Bank within Meru County.
- Source for the supply of porridge flour.
- Ensure the right quality and quantity of flour is supplied

3.4.1 Monitoring of the Programme

The programme shall be managed by the Directorate of ECDE.

Monitoring shall be done by three departments;

i. Education department,
ii. Monitoring and evaluation department
iii. Public health department.

Food Storage, Handling and Preparation

In order to optimise child nutrition in schools:

a. The Department of Education, Arts and Culture shall promote good food safety measures to minimise contamination and nutrient losses during preparation.
b. The school management will ensure the food handlers comply with public health requirements

The management and handling of school porridge shall focus on:

1. The inspection and acceptance committee handling porridge in the school shall ensure safety and security of delivered porridge flour

2. School management must prepare good storage facility which has to be safe, dry and pest free.

3. The packaging must comply with public health guidelines

4. The storage facility has to be approved by the public health officers.

5. The store management procedures must be followed from the deliveries, receiving and records keeping

6. In case of disposing off the porridge flour due to any valid reason the public health procedures will apply.

3.4.1 Storage Requirements and Conditions of Porridge Flour Stock:

3.4.1.1 Security

a) The storage room must be secure with windows fitted with strong metal grills.

b) The doors must be lockable and secure

c) Only authorized person (s) should have the access store.

d) The public health guidelines will apply

3.4.1.2 Room Requirements

a) The storage room should have cement floor.

b) Walls should not allow dampness and the roof should not leak.

c) Porridge flour stock should not be exposed to wet environment.

d) The porridge flour container should be placed on rackets that are at least 15 centimetres from the ground and at least 15 centimetres from the wall.

e) The room should be highly ventilated to allow free air circulation.

f) The room should be clean and free from pests e.g (arthropods, rodents etc).

3.4.2 Porridge Flour Deliveries Modalities

1. Monitoring of school porridge program at school will be done regularly to confirm compliance to the set standards.

2. The Department of Education, science, Culture, and Arts will train personnel responsible for handing porridge.

3. The department will also provide and train personnel on required documents like porridge handling protocols, delivery schedules and data collection schedule to the persons responsible in the school.

3.4.2.1 Porridge Flour Preparations Quantities

1. Every day of learning week in the Public ECDE centers, the teacher responsible for the center will ensure porridge is prepared to all present learners.

2. The amount of porridge flour for each day must ensure all learner who are present in school that day are given a mug of porridge.

3. The teacher must always present a class attendance and consumption data collection form.

4. The porridge given to learners must be in good state and should be free from any form of contamination

3.4.2.2 Porridge Consumption Procedures.

1. The teacher should first explain to the learners on importance of porridge to their health and why they should drink it.

2. The teacher should enquire from parents or guardian weather there is any one of them who does not take porridge due to medical or cultural reasons.

3. The teacher should also practically explain on table manners during porridge consumption to the learners.

4. Each learner must take porridge under supervision of the class teacher.

5. All learners should drink porridge from the identified area to avoid soiling the compound. The porridge taking time should be between 10:00 am – 11:00 am.

3.5 Emergency Procedures

In case a learner falls sick during porridge consumption, the following should be done:

1. He/She should stop taking porridge immediately and first aid to be administered by the teacher.

2. The parent of the learners should be informed immediately and the learner should be taken to the nearest recognized health facility.

3. Report on the events should be prepared and the same submitted immediately to the Department of Education, science, culture and Arts.

3. 6 Disposal Procedures of Unhealthy Porridge Flour.

- It should follow public health guidelines under the guidance of the public health officer.

3.7 Complementary Services

This policy recognizes that school feeding is most effective when implemented with other services that support quality education, health, hygiene and nutrition. When combinations of complementary services are delivered as a package, they can maximise benefits on a child's education achievement. Among the objectives of the National Policy for School Health is to ensure that schools are implementing the Health Promoting Schools Initiative (HPSI), to provide education towards healthy behaviour, to increase awareness, prevention and treatment of childhood diseases and to ensure regular health surveillance.

3.7.1 Health, Hygiene and Nutrition Education

Nutrition, health education and promoting good nutrition practices in schools are known to have significant effect in fostering healthy eating habits. Schools provide an ideal setting to promote good nutrition as they reach a high proportion of children and adolescents and provide opportunities to demonstrate and practice production of nutrient rich foods, proper storage, handling and preparation. The knowledge and skills children acquire at school trickles down easily to households and community levels. Schools can contribute to reducing all types of nutrition problems by integrating nutrition in the school curriculum and integrating health interventions such as de-worming, vitamin A supplementation into routine school activities. In order to promote nutrition and health education in schools, the County Government Meru will:

a. Ensure nutrition information is integrated in the curriculum of each grade to impart knowledge and skills to children on the importance of good nutrition in line with the School Health Programme and the Health Promoting School Initiative (HPSI).

b. Promote the setup of nutrition demonstration gardens such as kitchen/back yard gardening at schools. This shall enhance children knowledge and skills on growing and consumption of micro-nutrient rich foods.
c. Promote the production of diversified foods in school gardens and encourage participate on of the children in the production of the food.

3.7.2 Water and Sanitation

Proper hygiene and sanitation coupled with access to clean and safe water is vital in proper growth and development of children. Compromised WASH in schools encourages the spread of infections and parasites that affect the health and nutrition status of the children.

To promote proper hygiene and sanitation in schools, the Government will:

a. Ensure that every school has access to safe water and sanitation facilities to prevent the spread of infection and intestinal parasites.
b. Ensure the training of teachers and children on proper hygiene and sanitation. The information on hygiene and sanitation will be integrated in the school curriculum to enhance an in depth understanding of the concepts.
c. Ensure promotion of hand washing activities in schools.
d. Promote establishment of hygiene clubs in schools to foster children participation in hygiene and sanitation related activities.
e. Expand the School Led Total Sanitation Programme (SLTS).

3.8 Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Department of Education Arts and Culture

The Department of Education, Arts and Culture has responsibility for the policy implementation and management of the MSFP from the County to the school level and the coordination of other stakeholders.

The Department of Education, Arts and Culture is the designated institution in charge of the overall management of the school feeding programme in Meru. The specific roles and responsibilities of the Department are to:

a. Provide overall strategic guidance and management of the programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
b. Serve as the primary channel of communication on all issues related to the MSFP.
c. Lead the multi-sectoral coordination on issues of school health and feeding at County, regional, and school levels.
d. Contribute to programme sustainability through the efficient management of essential resources.
e. Provide non-food items as prescribed by this policy.
f. Compile and analyse routine MSFP reports on a term and annual basis, collecting data on programme beneficiaries, food deliveries and utilisation, and any food losses and disparities.

g. Establish and apply effective control measures on food production, food distribution and food quality and prevent any irregularities in the MSFP.
h. Ensure the implementation of this policy and coordinate and provide guidance implementing and controlling the MSFP at central, Sub county and school levels.
i. Facilitate annual medical exams to ensure each cook is healthy and physically fit to prepare the food.
j. Continuous training, induction and sensitization of the MSFP and School Health Programme and other related programmes.

Department of Agriculture, Water, Environment and Natural Resources

The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry shall:

a. Support efforts to link the school feeding to smallholder farmers (this may include training of farmers, provision of agriculture inputs, aggregating farmers etc.), to ensure a regular supply of food for the MSFP.
b. Provide needed infrastructure including installation and construction of water and sanitation facilities.
c. Provide technical assistance and advice to schools on the establishment of school gardens.
d. Enforce food safety regulations at production and primary handling level, including silos, pack-houses and slaughter houses.

Department of Health

The Department of Health and Social welfare shall:

a. Ensure that health and nutrition education and de-worming activities are undertaken.
b. Ensure medical checks are made on cooks and diseases such as diarrhoea and suspected sicknesses linked to food poisoning are investigated.
c. Ensure nutrition screening of learners is undertaken.
d. Regulate consumer health relating to food safety. This will relate to regulations and standards on school meals and school feeding facilities.

Roles at Decentralised Levels

Community and Parents

The community shall:

a. Nominate community members who will attend at least three meetings per annum (one per term), chaired by the School Feeding Sub- Committee to sensitise community members on issues related to the MSFP and to provide a forum for information exchange.
b. Provide construction material when possible and physically construct and provide routine maintenance on the school cooking shelter/ kitchen and storeroom, in coordination with the School Board.
c. Report to school officials any suspicious behaviour observed on and around the school premises and storeroom facilities.

d. Participate in fundraising activities to support programme sustainability and to improve school facilities, such as storerooms, kitchens, water and sanitation, cooking fuel and other projects.
e. Practice environmental conservation such as recycling, waste management etc.
f. Assist with the school vegetable garden.
g. The following additional activities will be supported by the community as requested by the School Board:
    i. *Assist with the supervision of hand washing before and after meals.*
    ii. *Assist with the distribution of daily meals.*
    iii. *Assist with storeroom cleaning.*
    iv. *Provide additional support to monitoring and evaluation as decided at school level.*

Head Teacher/Teacher in Charge of School Porridge Program Within the School.

1. Ensuring that the porridge flour store meets the Public Health standards.
2. Inspect and receive porridge flour stock delivered by the supplier
3. Record the received porridge flour in accordance to the available tool.
4. Record porridge flour supplies from stores to the kitchen in the school porridge ledger (form) as prescribed.
5. Ensure all learners take porridge based on daily attendance.
6. Collecting the classroom attendance and consumption data collection tool (form).
7. Compile the monthly school porridge consumption report from the data collection tools.
8. Participating in porridge procurement procedures.
9. Secretary to the committee and keep the relevant documentations.
10. Provide storage for the flour.
11. Accounting officer of the program charge of the store.
12. Keep all crucial documents i.e. tender adverts i.e., opening, evaluation and awarding minutes, letter of awarding, signed letter of acceptance by the qualified binder, signed agreement between the school and the successful binder, invoices, delivery note which must be signed by the receiving officer, receipts, minutes, payment voucher which should have the cheque no, receipt or acknowledgement letter from the supplier and monthly consumption report which include form A, B and C.

Role of ECDE Teachers in Implementation of Porridge Program.

The ECDE teachers will be responsible for:

1. Provision of the daily attendance data of learners
2. Ensuring all learners take porridge.
3. Supervise the consumption of porridge by the learner in the designated area.
4. Keep a record of learners who take porridge every day

Roles of the Sub-County Education Officer

1. Monitoring of the usage of the money and implementation of the program.
2. Ensuring that all procurement process is followed.
3. Ensure all the crucial documents i.e., tender advert, invoices from the supplier, delivery note, receipts, minutes and consumption reports are well kept.
4. Ensure the flour is delivered before payments are done.
5. Conduct training and continuous capacity building concerning the programme.
6. Hold community engagement sessions in collaboration with the school feeding committee, community members and other stakeholders to ensure support and ownership of the feeding programme.
7. Collect, collate, compile and share the learners' data, porridge consumption data, porridge consumption rate and stock balance for proper planning.
8. Conduct termly impromptu monitoring.

Roles of parents and BOM

1. Participate in procurement procedures
2. Inspection of the received porridge flour
3. Ensure all learners take porridge every day
4. Support the program for sustainability
5. Act as the oversight

Cooks

The Cook shall:

a. Prepare and serve meals daily to the learners at school.
b. Keep the kitchen and work areas clean.
c. Wash the cooking equipment (pots, measuring devices, etc.) after serving food.
d. Ensure cleanliness of self and that they practice good hygiene in food preparation and serving of the learners.
e. Ensure enough fuel is available for the next day's food preparation.

School Learners

The School learner shall:

a. Demonstrate orderly conduct (proper behaviour while queuing and during meal time), to ensure timely serving of food and consumption of the meal within the 30-minute break.
b. Wash their hands before and after consuming the meal.

c. Wash their plate/bowl and spoon after the meal (primary school children).

Private Sector

The private sector has supported a number of MSFP services including provision of donations of food and construction of facilities among others. Nevertheless, the support will be informal without clearly defined mechanisms and mode of engagement. The policy on private sector partnerships will include but not limited to:

a. Development of innovative technology and products for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the MSFP (e.g. energy saving stoves).
b. Contributions in cash and kind towards food and non-food MSFP items including support to essential services and infrastructure in areas of agriculture, health, nutrition, water and sanitation. This shall ideally be provided on a regular basis for enhanced sustainability of the programme.
c. Technical and financial support to smallholder farmers and producers to promote local production and processing of food items.
d. Expanding smallholder farmer opportunities and know-how (new products, agricultural inputs, food, energy components) that could be used in school feeding.
e. Supporting school feeding advocacy and awareness campaigns.

4.0 Philosophy and Approach of Public Participation

This policy was developed based on a rigorous desk review of documents ranging from national, regional and international frameworks and policies around food security, hunger and social protection. It also entailed extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders at the county, and school level in which public participations were held with various Department, Government institutions, School Boards, parents, learners and the private sector in all the 9 sub counties of the Meru country, to establish what they wished to be addressed in the school feeding policy. The methods used to gather information included an inception meeting with key stakeholders, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observation

4.1 Target Beneficiaries

The study population of the study was the head teachers, deputy head teachers; the teachers in charge of SFP, education officers and SFP programme managers in all the 9 Sub Counties. Meru county has 777 ECDE centers as of September 2023. The budget implication will be pegged on learner's enrolment. Each learner will receive a capitation of kshs. 400 per term translating to kshs. 1,200 per child per year. Currently the enrolment in ECDE centre is approximately 60,000. this translates to kshs.72M per year. The monitoring of the program will require the initial cost of launching and other overhead cost will not be beyond 30% of the total cost but the following years it will not go beyond 10% of the total cost.

4.2 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation is a very important management function for ensuring that programme goals and objectives are fully achieved and that implementation process remains on course.

Monitoring of the programme will be done through the Sub County Education Officer; who shall be giving monthly report to the Officer in charge of the programme. He/she will be giving compiled report of all Sub Counties to the Director ECDE.

4.3 Project sustainability

Sustaining the Meru County School Meals and Nutrition Policy is a crucial endeavour that involves various strategies and considerations to ensure its long-term impact on learners, the education system, and the community. Some of the key strategies and considerations that will be used for achieving sustainability include;

i. **Engaging the local community** is a fundamental step in this process. By involving parents, teachers, and community leaders in the policy's development and implementation, a sense of ownership and responsibility can be fostered. This involvement helps create a strong foundation for ongoing support and sustainability. Community participation in education can support and uphold local culture, tradition, knowledge and skills and create pride in community heritage. The studies on community involvement have been explored in other areas from the reviewed literatures.

ii. **Securing stable and diverse funding sources** -Relying on a single source of funding can make the policy vulnerable to financial instability, therefore the County Government of Meru will Explore government support, partnerships with NGOs or businesses, and contributions from the community to provide the financial stability needed to sustain the program.

iii. **Investing in capacity building** -Training and developing the skills of local stakeholders, including school staff and community members, empower them to take on important roles in policy implementation, food preparation, and program monitoring.

iv. **Local food production**-. This approach not only benefits local agriculture but also reduces transportation costs and promotes self-reliance. It ensures that fresh, seasonal, and culturally appropriate ingredients are used.

v. **Infrastructure and equipment**- Meru County government will ensure Schools have the necessary infrastructure, such as kitchens and storage facilities, along with well-maintained equipment for efficient and safe meal preparation and service.

vi. **Nutrition education** will be integrated into the curriculum to equip students with knowledge about healthy eating habits. This education fosters lifelong behaviours that support the goals of the policy.

vii. **Implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation** system allows for ongoing assessment of the policy's impact and the identification of challenges. Regular assessments will be done to assist in maintaining the quality and effectiveness of the program.

viii. **Advocacy and awareness** efforts play a key role in sustaining the policy. Meru County will Continuously advocate for its importance among policymakers, parents, and the broader community helps build a network of supporters and ensures ongoing commitment and support.

ix. **Policy integration** within the broader education and health policies is crucial. Meru County in Collaboration with relevant government authorities will help secure long-term commitment and support for the program.

x. **Legal compliance and adherence** to regulations related to school nutrition and food safety will also provide stability and accountability.

xi. **Regular feedback** from parents, and school staff is invaluable. Soliciting feedback helps make necessary adjustments and improvements to the program based on their needs and preferences.

xii. Considering the environmental impact of the program and implementing sustainable practices, such as reducing food waste and promoting eco-friendly food sourcing, aligns with broader sustainability goals.

xiii. Documenting successes, challenges, and lessons learned is essential. Sharing this knowledge within the education community and with other regions promotes best practices and contributes to ongoing improvement.

Lastly, developing a clear long-term vision for the policy's sustainability is crucial from the outset. Focusing on how the benefits of nutritious meals and nutrition education will continue to positively impact students and the community over time ensures the enduring success of the policy.

4.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical concerns were maintained throughout the process by ensuring Inclusivity and representation through inviting a diverse range of stakeholders and community members to the table during the public participation. By doing so, we prevented the exclusion of marginalized or underrepresented groups, ensuring that all voices are heard. The process was also transparent and voluntary with the participants having a clear understanding of the goals, methods, and potential outcomes of the public participation effort. This built trust and fostered an environment in which participants felt comfortable contributing.

Feedback to participants on how their input was used and the outcomes of the process was also given for it's in the mandate of the County government to incorporate public input into their decisions. Further, we ensured that the process was fair, just, and responsive to the needs and perspectives of the community, promoting trust and legitimacy in policy development.

4.5 Legal and policy framework

The Meru County School Meals and Nutrition Strategy provides a framework for implementing school meals and nutrition initiatives in Meru County. It is in line with various national and international legal and policy obligations to which Kenya is signatory. Such international protocols relating to education and human rights include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals. While Sustainable Development Goal 4

explicitly focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning for all, goals 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 have direct implications for school meals and nutrition.

The Kenya Constitution (2010) obligates both the state and parents to facilitate quality basic education by all children. Specifically, Chapter 4 expressly guarantees all Kenyans their economic, social and cultural rights, including the basic rights to health, education, food and decent livelihoods. Article 43 (1)(c) states the human right to be free from hunger, to have adequate food of acceptable quality and (1)(d) the right to clean and safe water in adequate quantities.

Vision 2030 aims to transform Kenya into an industrialized, middle-income country, providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by the year 2030. Under the economic and social pillars, Vision 2030 further emphasizes enhancement of agricultural productivity, incomes, food security nutrition and expanded access to education and training.

In addition, the second medium-term plan (2013–2017) of Vision 2030 emphasizes the need to expand school meals to all early childhood development education centres and increase coverage of vulnerable children. Altogether, these documents commit the Government to setting aside resources for school meals.

The National Education Sector Plan (2013– 2018) acknowledges that health and nutrition are crucial to the overall achievements of school-age children. Therein, school meals are recognized for their contribution to addressing nutritional requirements, which helps children to concentrate on their studies. They are viewed as a tool to address specific micronutrient deficiencies (particularly iodine and iron) in school-age children, which directly affect cognition and can impact school performance.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: ECDE PORRIDGE PROGRAM MONITORING TOOL

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF MERU

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SCIENCE & ARTS

ECDE PORRIDGE PROGRAM

When replying please quote
Email:merucounty@meru.go.ke

Meru County Headquarters
P.O Box 120-60200—
Meru

ECDE PORRIDGE PROGRAM MONITORING TOOL

1. School Details

School Name …… Sub County ……..…….

Ward …… Address ……..……

ECDE Teacher ……Personal No……..…Mobile ……..……

Center Enrollment (Register) Boys ……. Girls ……..… Total ……

Today Attendance Boys ……. Girls ……Total ……..……

Has the ECDE Porridge Program affected enrollment? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Give remarks……

2. Porridge Storage

I. Where is the flour stored? Store [ ] Htrs Office [ ] Other [ ]
Specify ……..……

II. Has there been a case of spoilt flour? Yes [ ] No [ ] (Note number of kilograms if any)
Comment on how the case was handled
……..
……..……
……

III. Any other comment on Porridge flour storage
……..

……

3. Porridge taking observation

a. Does this center take Porridge during the set time? Yes [ ] No [ ]
   Comment
   ……..……

   ……
   …….
b. Are there children who do not take Porridge? Yes [ ] No [ ]
   If yes, how many …….. Give reasons
   ……..
   ……
   ……
c. Do Porridge records tally? Yes [ ] No [ ]
d. Are Porridge records up to date? Yes [ ] No [ ]
   Comment on the records
   ……..
   ……
   ……
   ECDE Teacher comments
   ……...
   ……
   …….

4. Head Teacher's Office Visit

Head teacher's comment on the Porridge program
……
……
……
Name ……... Mobile ……. Sign …….

SCHOOL
STAMP

5. Monitoring officer

Name ……..……Designation …….……..

Mobile …… Date …… Sign ……

OFFICIAL
STAMP

ANNEX II **SCHOOL MILK LEDGER**

STORE LEDGER

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF MERU

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE & ARTS

When replying please quote
Email:merucounty@meru.go.ke

Meru County Headquarters
P.O Box 120-60200—Meru

SCHOOL MILK LEDGER

SCHOOL .....

NO. OF LEARNERS .....

HEADTEACHER .....

ECDE PORRIDGE PROGRAM

Date	Stock At Store(Kgs)	Quantity Received(Kgs)	Date Milled	Quantity Used Today (Kgs)	New Stock Balance (Kgs)	Issuing Officer	Signature