



Northern Cape Provincial Treasury

Policy Brief: National School Nutrition Programme in the Northern Cape

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1. Introduction

Education is one of the basic rights of each child in South Africa as enshrined in the Constitution (of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996). However, the provision of education in the country has not been without challenges, like in many parts of the world. One of these challenges has been hunger and undernutrition resulting from poverty and unemployment. Children have been found to be highly susceptible to the effects of these plights. According to Statistics South Africa (2018b), children below the age of 15 are likely to experience persistently high levels of poverty and are vulnerable to stay in poverty for a long time. Since 1994, the South African Government has put various measures in place in terms of policies, strategies and programmes to curb the effects of these issues. The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) is one of the programmes introduced to respond to these challenges.

The primary aim of this Policy Brief is to provide an analysis of the school nutrition programme in the Northern Cape Province. An analysis is done on the expenditure related to this programme as well as indicators such as children who benefited from the programme, food gardens established and the number of food handlers in this programme within the Northern Cape. Such an analysis is important as it provides decision makers with an overview of the performance of the programme to date in order to assist with future planning and resource allocation.

2. Background

The NSNP is a programme put into place by Government to provide one nutritious meal to learners in Primary and Secondary Schools (DBE, N.d). This programme was announced in 1994 as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). It was then implemented by the Department of Health, however, in 2004 the implementation of the programme was moved to the Department of Education (Devereux, S., Hochfeld, T., Karriem, A., *et al*, 2018).

The overall purpose of the NSNP is to improve the health and nutritional status of the poorest learners. The programme's objectives are (NCDoE, N.d.):

- *“To contribute to enhanced learning capacity through school feeding,*

- *To promote food production initiatives; and*
- *To strengthen nutrition education for the school community.”*

In light of the prevalence of child poverty and hunger in South Africa, there is a need for a school nutrition programme in all provinces. The programme targets all learners in quintile 1 to 3 public schools, which are the 60 per cent poorest schools in South Africa (DPME & DBE, 2016).

There are two implementation models that are followed. The first model is the centralised model, where Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) appoint service providers and enter into service level agreements (SLAs) to procure and deliver food to schools. The PEDs then transfer funds to schools to purchase fuel and pay Volunteer Food Handler (VFH) stipends. The second model is the decentralised model which operates in the Eastern Cape, Free State, North West, and Northern Cape. In this model, PEDs transfer money to schools and the schools appoint service providers and enter into SLAs with them (DPME & DBE, 2016).

3. The Important Role of a School Nutrition Programme

Nutrition is an essential factor regarding the development of a child. Children require proper nutrition in order to succeed in school and through providing a proper diet, the child is assisted to function properly in school. When a child is still growing, a good diet is especially of importance, where the child’s mind is still undergoing development and their bodies are growing at a fast pace. If a child does not receive proper nutrition at such an important time, the child will not get all of the vitamins and minerals that they require to facilitate normal growth (Myers, 2016). This emphasises the importance of providing growing and developing children with at least one nutritious meal per day.

4. Legislative and Policy Framework

The NSNP finds its basis from various legislative and policy documents in the country. Some of these are described in this section.

4.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No.108 of 1996)

The Constitution is considered to be the highest law in the country, providing legislation on various aspects relating to the people of South Africa. Chapter 2 of the

Constitution, The Bill of Rights, outlines the rights that every citizen is entitled to. According to Section 27, everyone has the right to have access to, amongst others, adequate food and water and that Government should take rational legislative and other measures, within its resources, to realize this right (SA Government, 1996).

4.2 The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)

The RDP was brought into action in 1994 to address some of the key socio-economic challenges faced by the nation. The NSNP emanates from the RDP under the primary school nutrition scheme. The aim of the scheme is to alleviate hunger as well as contribute to the general health of pupils. Other aims of the scheme were to address and improve the quality of education by enhancing primary school pupils' learning capacity, school attendance and punctuality (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 1994).

4.3 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

South Africa is part of the global community and as such it has been ensuring that its policies and programmes are linked to and contribute to those of the world. As a member of the United Nations, the country should report progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are building on the objectives and achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that came to an end in 2015. The School Nutrition Programme relates to Goal 1 (No Poverty) (UNDESAD, N.d.(a)), with one of its targets being to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, and achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable by 2030. Another goal that is relevant to delivery on the NSNP is Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) (UNDESAD, N.d.(b)). A target under this goal is to bring an end to hunger and to make sure that everybody (especially the poor and people who find themselves in vulnerable situations) have access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food throughout the year. Another target is to bring an end to all forms of malnutrition, which includes the achievement of the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age by 2025 as well as addressing the needs, by 2030, of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons. This goal is in line with the objective of the NSNP of feeding children that are in need and in the poorest communities.

4.4 National Development Plan (NDP), 2030

The South African Government implemented the NDP from 2012 as the country's long-term plan to respond to major socio-economic challenges including reducing inequality and eliminating poverty by 2030. One of the targets is the eradication of child undernutrition. The plan is that in 2030, feeding systems in schools should cover all children in need, as well as offer food that are nutritious and rich in vitamins particularly vitamin A (NPC, 2011).

4.5 Division of Revenue Bill, 2021

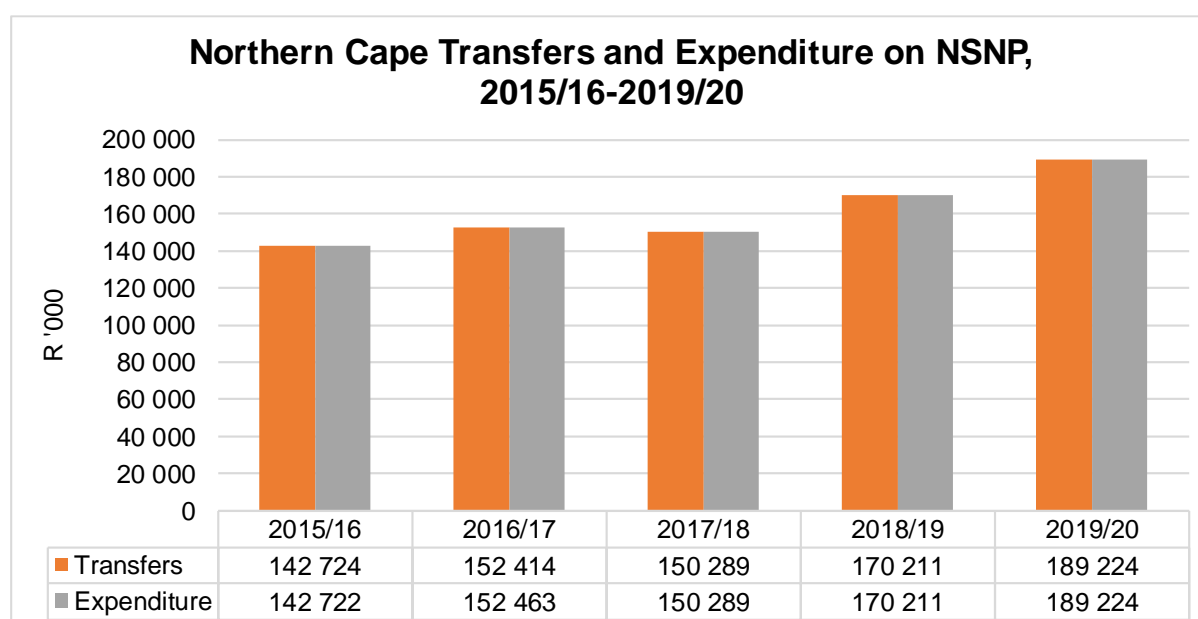
The Bill gives effect to the National School Nutrition Programme Grant. The strategic goal of the grant is to enhance learning capacity and improve access to education, while the grant purpose is to provide nutritious meals to targeted schools. The outcome statements of the grant are enhanced learning capacity and improved access to education, with an output of 21 000 schools that prepare nutritious meals for learners. The priority of government that this grant primarily contributes to is Priority 3: Education, skills and health (Republic of South Africa, 2021).

5. Provincial Performance on the NSNP

This section provides an analysis of the transfers and expenditure on NSNP as well as how the Northern Cape has delivered on this programme. There is also an analysis of the beneficiaries of this programme for all nine provinces.

For any programme to be able to achieve its objectives and to be effectively implemented, it needs the necessary resources. Figure 1 gives the transfers and expenditure allocated to the NSNP in the Northern Cape for the 2015/16 to 2019/20 financial years.

Figure 1: Northern Cape Transfers and Expenditure on NSNP, 2015/16-2019/20



Source: NCDoE Annual Reports, 2015/16-2019/20

The graph above shows how much money has been transferred over the 2015/16 to 2019/20 financial years for this programme. The transfers increased from R142.7 million in 2015/16 to R189.2 million in 2019/20, which is a 32.6 per cent increase over the period. The budget for the programme was slightly under-spent in the 2015/16 financial year, while there was over-spending in the 2016/17 financial year. In 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 the resources were spent according to what was allocated. From the data above, it is clear that there was no significant over- or under-spending in this programme, indicating that the department used almost all of the funds allocated for this purpose.

Table 1 provides the number of learners having access to meals, the number of food handlers, the number of food gardens and the number of schools providing nutritious meals for learners under the NSNP in the Northern Cape for the 2015/16 to 2019/20 financial years.

Table 1: Northern Cape NSNP Data, 2015/16-2019/20

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Learners	258 983	258 555	261 879	265 458	-
Food Handlers	1 587	1 615	-	1 615	-
Food Gardens	225	224	217	225	-
Schools	-	-	-	505	505

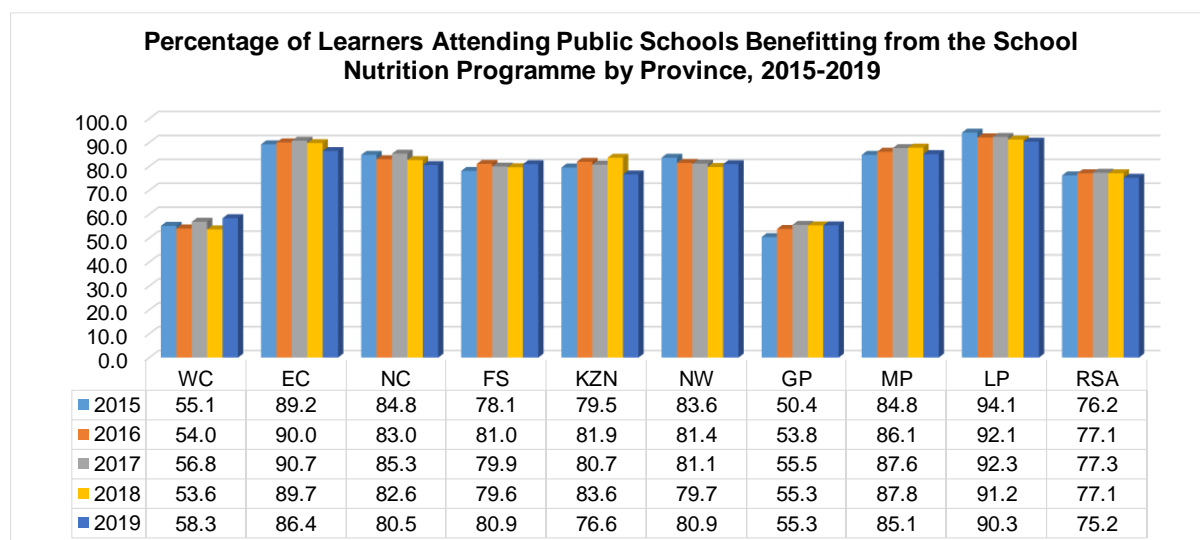
Source: NCDoE Annual Reports, 2015/16-2019/20 and Annual Performance Plan, 2020/21

* No value indicates no data was found in the Annual Report

The programme has grown from providing meals for 258 983 learners in 2015/16 to providing meals for 265 458 learners in 2018/19. Job opportunities have been created in the process for 1 615 food handlers in 2018/19, up from 1 587 in the 2015/16 financial year. Food production is also key in the programme and a number of food gardens have been sustained over the years, with 225 food gardens reported in the 2018/19 financial year. In the 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years, the department reported that there were 505 schools that prepared nutritious meals for learners.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) also reported on learners in public schools benefitting from the school nutrition programme. The following graph depicts the percentage of learners who were attending public schools and benefiting from the school nutrition programme in all of the provinces from 2015 to 2019.

Figure 2: Percentage of Learners Attending Public Schools Benefitting from the School Nutrition Programme by Province, 2015-2019



Source: Statistics South Africa, General Household Survey, 2015-2019

Looking at the learners of the Northern Cape, a decrease in the share of learners who benefitted from this programme was recorded in 2019 when compared to the previous years. The percentage of learners in public schools benefitting from the school nutrition programme decreased from 84.8 per cent in 2015 to 80.5 per cent in 2019.

Limpopo had the largest percentage of learners who benefitted from the school nutrition programme for the period under study, with the percentage decreasing from 94.1 per cent in 2015 to 90.3 per cent in 2019. In 2015, Eastern Cape had the second largest share, followed by Mpumalanga and Northern Cape. In 2019, Eastern Cape

still had the second largest share of learners benefiting from the programme, followed by Mpumalanga. Gauteng had the smallest percentage of learners benefitting from this programme in most years during the review period. Western Cape, Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga recorded an increase in the share of learners who benefited from the nutrition programme in 2019 compared to 2015, while the other provinces recorded a decrease. Nationally, the share of learners in public schools who benefitted from the school nutrition programme decreased from 76.2 per cent in 2015 to 75.2 per cent in 2019.

6. Challenges

Like many Government programmes, the NSNP is faced with various challenges. These include the stigma attached to eating the meals and infrastructure challenges such as poor access to water that schools are faced with (DBE & DPME, 2016). In their research, Mafugu (2021) identified other challenges that include the poor provision of the required quantity of protein; non-compliance of the required quantity of fruits and vegetables; high prices of food; delays in payment of food suppliers; lack of training of stakeholders and poor kitchen facilities.

7. Conclusion

A large number of learners have benefitted from the programme within the province and it has also led to job creation over the period reviewed. According to the data published by the Department of Education in the Annual reports of 2015/16 to 2018/19, there has been an increase in the number of learners benefiting from the NSNP in the province between 2015/16 and 2018/19. According to Stats SA, there has however been a decrease in the percentage of learners who attended public schools who benefitted from the school nutrition programme. Expenditure on the programme has been mostly on par with what was transferred although there was some over-spending in 2016/17, and slight under-spending in 2015/16.

8. Recommendations

- More research is required to determine the reason for the decline in the percentage of learners in public schools benefiting from the school nutrition programme.

- More research is required to determine if the challenges as identified above are also the case in the Northern Cape. If it is indeed so, a plan should be formulated to ensure that these challenges are addressed.
- Teachers should be encouraged to bring their own food and eat with the learners to deal/assist with abolishing stigmatisation attached to eating the meals.
- Other Government Departments and Non-Governmental Organisations should be asked to assist schools with boreholes so that schools can have water for their food gardens.
- Government should promote internal and external stakeholders' participation (including from non-government organisations) for the success implementation of the NSNP.
- The private sector should be engaged to determine if they can assist with the provision of boreholes or the development of the food gardens to lessen the financial burden on Government.
- Government should continue to implement this programme to assist in the fight against hunger.
- Government should do continuous research in improving the efficiency of delivering this service to the schools. It should critically look at the programme, identify shortcomings or challenges and find innovative ways of addressing these in order to improve on the programme. This includes negotiating with service providers for better prices in order to reach more learners with the available budget.

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