

# Influence of Undugu Basic Education's Feeding Programme on Vulnerable Children's Participation Rates in Nairobi County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of Undugu basic education's feeding programme on vulnerable children's participation rates in Nairobi County, Kenya. This is in the light of the fact that participation in quality education and training forms the basis upon which economic, social, technological, ethical and political sustainable development of any nation is founded. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The research instruments employed for data collection were questionnaires for teachers and head teachers, interview guide for the director and focus group discussion guide for UBEP pupils. The data was collected from director, headteacher, teachers and students in UBEP programme. A census of 20 teachers, 4 headteachers and 4 directors was considered. The pupils that participated in the study were 100 of which 25 each came from Mathare, Ngomongo, Kibera and Pumwani respectively. The findings indicate that the provision of meals through the program was found to have several benefits, including increased activity and liveliness of students during learning sessions. The study findings showed a large correlation between feeding programme ( $r=0.750$ , P-value 0.000) and participation rates of vulnerable children in education. The study recommends that policymakers and practitioners prioritize and invest in school feeding programs, ensuring the availability of nutritious meals in educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Undugu basic education's feeding programme, Vulnerable children's participation rates.

## INTRODUCTION

Participation in quality education and training forms the basis upon which, social, economic technological, ethical and political sustainable development of any nation is founded. Education and training are considered a useful ingredient to improving economic competitiveness, raising incomes, improving health, accomplishing peace and stability programmes, and achieving sustained growth of nations. The responsibility for providing education is the obligation of government (Rose, 2018) since education is considered both as a social good and a merit good (Wright, 2018). Globally, governments use education as a means for fighting diseases, ignorance and poverty. However, DeStefano and Schuh-Moore (2019) found that the government alone is unable to provide education for its entire citizenry for most countries. DeStefano and Schuh-Moore agreed with Colclough (2019) that the government providing the bulk of basic

education is justified since if left to the free market, the private sector might under invest in it.

The effect is that individuals and societies directly will be affected, and the country in general will suffer economically as there will be dearth of adequately trained workforce. These thus call for the need for alternative basic education avenues to supplement the education provided by the various governments. Alternative Education also known as Nontraditional Education is an education with a philosophy and style which differ from that of mainstream education. Alternative Education does not take place in the normal physical environment guided by normal curriculum. It could be home based apprenticeship or independent style and it is a contrast to conventional school system. Conventional school discourages freedom of thought, personal expression and social development personal expression and social development (Prompona, Papoudi & Papadopoulou, 2020). Alternative basic Education enables out of school vulnerable children to be independent thinkers and future responsible citizens that can give a positive contribution to the economy of their states. Alternative basic education became part of the international discourse on education policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Robertson, 2022). It was at an international conference in Williamsburg USA in 1967, that ideas were set out for what was to become a widely read analysis of the growing “World Educational Crisis” (Hake, 2022). The conclusion of the conference was that formal educational systems had adapted too slowly to the socio-economic changes around them and that they were held back not only by their own conservatism, but also by the inertia of societies themselves. It was from this point of departure that planners and economists in the World Bank began to make a distinction between informal, non-formal and formal education.

In the world Education forum at Dakar in 2000 the ministers in attendance endorsed that all children who are vulnerable and out of school in informal settlements must have access to education. The ministers pledged to meet the needs of the stated education systems affected by conflict, natural calamity and instability. They stressed to conduct educational programmes in ways that promote peace and tolerance (Andrew & Orodho, 2018). In Africa the situation is not any different. Since 1999, enrolment rates in sub-Saharan Africa have been increasing five times as fast as in the 1990s, with countries like Benin, Ethiopia, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania registering rapid advances (UNESCO, 2015). Current trends will leave some 61 million children out of school in 2015 and there are indications that the rate of progress towards universal primary education is slowing. Regional progress has also been uneven. Most of the countries that are off track in achieving universal primary education by 2015 are low-income countries that, having started from a low base, are either increasing enrolments impressively but too slowly, such as in Burkina Faso and the Niger; or stagnating, such as Eritrea and Liberia. Countries affected by conflict feature prominently in this group. Continued inability of many children to access the formal school system could be interpreted as a testimony, not only of the failure of the formal school system, but also of the need for alternative basic education approaches that would address the needs of the out-of-school vulnerable children (De Bruin, 2019). In Zimbabwe and Zambia, the majority of vulnerable street children have homes to go to, however those in South Africa live on the streets or in children’s home shelters (Ainscow, 2020).

In the Kenya Vision 2030, Kenya recognizes that education and training of all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the Vision. The Vision by which the country hopes to become a middle-income country by the year 2030 recognises that education equips citizens with understanding and knowledge that enables them to make informed choices about their lives and about the society. The education sector is, therefore, challenged to provide skills necessary to steer Kenyans to the economic, political and social goals of Vision 2030. Through education and the Vision 2030, Kenya endeavours to provide globally competitive quality education, training and research to her citizens for development and enhanced individual well-being. The overall goal for 2015, for instance, was to reduce illiteracy by increasing access to education, improving the transition rate from primary to secondary schools, and raising the quality and relevance of education. Other goals include the integration of out of school vulnerable children into learning and training institutions, achieving an 80% adult literacy rate, increasing the school enrolment rate to 95%, and increasing transition

rates to technical institutions and universities from 3% to 8% by 2015. The study sought to establish the influence of Undugu basic education's feeding programme on vulnerable children's participation rates in Nairobi County, Kenya.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The out of school vulnerable children phenomenon creates the main loss of human capital development. As noted by Orodho (2018), out of school street children are potential criminals. These are human beings who will live a life of depending on other people. When they grow into adulthood, they will create a huge social and economic destabilization factor and a definite cause of political instability (Oketch & Somerset, 2019). Their existence in the urban informal settlement and the streets of major cities and towns definitely indicates drop in primary school participation in education and training and an increase in dropout rates (Lewin, 2017).

Capitalizing in the poor out of school vulnerable street children is key to ensure that they can be responsible individual members of the society. To this point education and training is fundamental. For this reason, several alternative basic education programmes have developed to complement participation in education and training and therefore assisting to bridge the existing access to education gap. This is not an easy task. Undugu Basic Education Programme of Kenya is the pioneer provider of education to street children and therefore it has introduced a feeding program for the school pupils. However, the previous studies have not established how this program influence the vulnerable children's participation rates. It is against this background that the researcher wishes to establish the influence of Undugu Basic Education's feeding programme on vulnerable children's participation rates in Nairobi County, Kenya.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of Undugu Basic Education's feeding programme on vulnerable children's participation rates in Nairobi County, Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Globally, school feeding programmes were introduced as early as in the 1940s in South Africa and large-scale school feeding programmes were implemented in China in the 1970s and 1980s. Various alternative basic education programmes have been working in collaboration with the UN over the past two decades to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) relating to health, hunger and poverty (Josiah & Jacob, 2021). In Bangladesh, (Bell, 2019) revealed that, alternative basic education school meals schemes contributed 9.6% of total basic education enrollments. These alternative basic education school meals schemes are managed by Non-governmental organizations rather than individuals and are financed by the NGOs themselves or by intercontinental donors through the NGOs. Food provision in schools in Bangladesh started in 2002, when the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee Food Scheme collaborated with the government to launch the school feeding programme in less food-secure areas of the country. This programme aimed to deal with short-term hunger to improve performance in classrooms, and reached 1.2 million pupils in 33 upazilas<sup>1</sup> by distributing fortified biscuits.

In Tanzania the ministry of education has continued to emphasize the enrolment of vulnerable out of school children through the alternative basic education programmes school meals schemes. The ministry's target is to make sure that all out of school vulnerable children and youth are phased out from the streets by providing them with alternative basic education. In Tanzania, the alternative basic education programme enrolment includes Cohort one which consists of ages eleven to thirteen and cohort two composed of ages fourteen to eighteen. During the period under review, the enrolment of alternative basic education programme learners in Tanzania (Cohort one) stood at 49,321 (male 26,646 and female 22,675) compared to

2009 where enrolment was 53,093 learners (male 29,713 and female 23,380) (Jabiri, 2020). Various studies on relationship between school meals schemes and pupils' enrolment have been conducted.

A study in Tanzania by Alderman et al. (2018) for instance, indicated three elements of nutrition which have an influence in class attendance. Particularly, these are; (i) meals that are provided help in alleviating short term hunger of school children during school hours; (ii) provide a child with meals when he/she would not have otherwise have had one and (iii) replacing meals that would have been received after school with one during school hours ((Jabiri, 2020). These aspects of food provision by alternative basic education programme permits a child to concentrate and learn more. Rector et al. (2021) did a study on alternative basic education school meal schemes in Tanzania and found out that there was an increase of 30% pupils' participation in schools after the inception of school meals schemes by the alternative basic education programme. Similarly, a study that was conducted in Uganda indicated that the alternative basic education school meals programme has had significant impact on increasing school enrolment, keeping children in school longer and reducing drop-out rates (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2019).

By 2015, the UBEP schools in Kenya provided education and training opportunities to around 955 learners (525 male and 430 female) in the four UBEP schools. The four alternative basic education UBEP schools jointly reintegrated 97 learners back to formal basic education schools while 150 learners who graduated in phase four were prepared and transitioned to Undugu's skills training unit to obtain basic technical, vocational and entrepreneurship training skills in 2016. There seems to be no studies in Kenya showing that like the aforementioned countries the experience of enrolment to basic education is as in those countries, this research seeks to establish the relationship between Undugu Basic Education Programme of school feeding scheme and participation in basic education in Kenya, Nairobi informal settlements in particular.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theory used in this study is liberal egalitarianism, a socio-political philosophy developed in the 18th century. Liberal egalitarianism is the highest point of a development that goes past the Hebrew prophets and teachings of the Socratic philosophers, from which there developed a sense of the importance of human dignity and individuality. In its comprehensive sense liberal egalitarianism strives to safeguard the individual from subjective exterior restraints that inhibit the full realization of individual potentialities (Andresen, Otto & Ziegler, 2008). As the theory develops, it attracts different interpretations from different persons. It has no particular originator. However, John Locke (1634-1704), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), and Adam Smith (1723-1790) among others could be said to be the 'fathers' of this theory. Liberal egalitarianism has been employed in this study draws its foundation and basis from the writings of John Rawls (1971). In this theory inequality is 'prima facie' objectionable. According to Rawls, the justice of social institutions is judged not by their tendency to maximize the sum or average of certain advantages, but by their tendency to counteract the natural inequalities deriving from birth, talent and circumstance (least well-served), pooling those resources in the service of the common good. The common good is measured in terms of a very restricted, basic set of benefits to individuals: personal and political liberty, economic and social advantages, and self-respect (Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2004). The least well served include refugees, street children and those in poor rural villages or deprived urban enclaves.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey research design was used because it helps to determine the frequency of happenings of the phenomenon and ascertain whether or not relation exist between the variables (Siedlecki, 2020). The target population was four UBEP schools in Nairobi County with a total population of 4 head teachers 4 UBEP directors, 52 teachers and 955 pupils. The researcher used purposive sampling technique. The researcher therefore sampled 16 (30%) teachers and

100 (10%) UBEP pupils since the larger the sample the higher the reliability. All the four headteachers and one UBEP director were selected.

Data in the study was collected using questionnaires, document analysis guide, focused group discussions and interview schedule. The questionnaires were used to gather information from the head teachers and teachers. Interview guide was also be used to gather data on the influence of UBEP schools on pupils’ participation in primary education. Focused group discussions were used to obtain data from the pupils. The researcher examined data from both published and unpublished documents that already exist at Undugu Basic Education Programme. The documents were reviewed to supplement data from the interviews and questionnaires. The gathered data was validated, edited and then coded. Analyses was done using SPSS after which quantitative data was summarized using various descriptive and inferential statistics to determine relationships stated in the objectives before being presented using tables, bar graphs and pie charts.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Descriptive Statistics

The study sought to establish the influence of Undugu Basic Education’s feeding programme on vulnerable children’s participation rates in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study first sought whether the school have a school feeding program. The findings revealed all the teachers and headteachers were of the same response that indeed the school have a school feeding program. The findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers and Head teachers’ opinion on School Feeding Programme and Participation

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
School feeding program encourage pupils to join school	0	8.2	14.3	44.9	32.7	4.02	0.90
The school feeding programme encourage punctuality	0	8.2	10.2	61.2	20.4	3.94	0.80
The kitchen facilities of the feeding program are well-built and equipped.	0	0	20.4	61.2	18.4	3.98	0.63
The storage facilities of the feeding program are adequate for storing food supplies.	0	0	14.3	65.3	20.4	4.06	0.59
The feeding program has encouraged active participation and engagement of vulnerable children in academic tasks.	0	2.1	18.4	53.1	26.5	4.04	0.73
The feeding program has improved the concentration and focus of vulnerable children during classroom activities.	0	6.1	8.2	61.2	24.5	4.04	0.76
<b>Aggregate Score</b>						<b>4.01</b>	<b>0.74</b>

With regard to the school feeding program, most of the teachers and head teachers (44.9%) agreed that school feeding program encourage pupils to join school and 32.7% strongly agreed. This was supported by the mean of 4.02 and a standard deviation of 0.90. This means that school feeding program encourage pupils to join the school. The findings of the study indicate that the school feeding program has a positive impact on encouraging pupils to enroll in school. This aligns with the literature presented by Bell (2010) in the

context of Bangladesh. The research conducted by Bell revealed that school meals schemes, implemented as part of alternative basic education programs, contributed to 9.6% of total basic education enrollments. This suggests that providing meals to students in educational settings can serve as a significant incentive for children to attend school. The connection between the study findings underscores the importance of school feeding programs in promoting school enrollment. By offering meals to students, these programs address the issue of hunger and malnutrition, which can be barriers to education. The provision of meals not only supports the nutritional needs of students but also creates a positive learning environment that encourages regular school attendance.

A majority of the teachers and head teachers (61.2%) agreed that the school feeding programme encourage punctuality and 20.4% strongly agreed. This was supported by the mean of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 0.80. This shows that the school feeding programme encourage punctuality. The study established that a majority of the teachers and head teachers (61.2%) agreed that the kitchen facilities of the feeding program are well-built and equipped and 18.4% strongly agreed. This was supported by the mean of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 0.63. This shows that the kitchen facilities of the feeding program are well-built and equipped. The study established that a majority of the teachers and head teachers (65.3%) agreed that the storage facilities of the feeding program are adequate for storing food supplies and 20.4% strongly agreed. This was supported by the mean of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 0.59. This shows that the storage facilities of the feeding program are adequate for storing food supplies. The findings of the study demonstrate that the school feeding program has a positive effect on promoting punctuality among students. This suggests that the kitchen facilities of the feeding program are well-designed and equipped to prepare and serve meals efficiently. Additionally, the study highlights that the storage facilities associated with the feeding program are adequate for storing food supplies, ensuring that meals are readily available for the students. Supporting these findings, Alderman et al. (2018) conducted a study that emphasized the influence of nutrition on class attendance. The research indicated that the meals provided through the feeding program play a significant role in alleviating short-term hunger among school children during school hours. This suggests that the availability of nutritious meals helps to address the immediate nutritional needs of students, leading to improved attendance and punctuality.

The study established that a majority of the teachers and head teachers (53.1%) agreed that the feeding program has encouraged active participation and engagement of vulnerable children in academic tasks and 26.5% strongly agreed (mean of 4.04, and a standard deviation of 0.73). This shows that the feeding program has encouraged active participation and engagement of vulnerable children in academic tasks. With an aggregate mean of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 0.76, the respondents agreed that the feeding program has improved the concentration and focus of vulnerable children during classroom activities. This is also shown by 61.3% who agreed and 24.5% who strongly agreed. This is an implication that the feeding program has improved the concentration and focus of vulnerable children during classroom activities. The study shows that the feeding program has encouraged active participation and engagement of vulnerable children in academic tasks and that the feeding program has improved the concentration and focus of vulnerable children during classroom activities.

The findings of the study align with the literature provided by Jabiri (2020), which emphasizes the positive effects of food provision in alternative basic education programs on children's concentration and learning. The study shows that the feeding program implemented in the current research has encouraged active participation and engagement among vulnerable children in academic tasks. It has also been observed that the feeding program has improved the concentration and focus of these children during classroom activities. Jabiri (2020) highlights that providing food to children through alternative basic education programs allows them to concentrate better and enhances their learning abilities. This corresponds with the findings of the current study, which indicate that the feeding program has positively influenced the vulnerable children's ability to concentrate and learn more effectively.

### Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is used to examine the relationship between two or more variables. The findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

		Feeding programme	Participation rates
Feeding programme	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	49	
Participation rates	Pearson Correlation	.750**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	49	49

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The study reveals a large correlation between feeding programme and participation rates of vulnerable children in education. ( $r=0.750$ ,  $p$ -value 0.000). With a significant  $p$  value of less than 0.05, the findings show that there was a strong positive statistically significant association between feeding programme and participation rates of vulnerable children in education in Nairobi County, Kenya. In corroboration with the study findings, DeStefano and Schuh-Moore (2018) provides an example from Bangladesh, where the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) supports and funds approximately 24,000 alternative basic education schools. This literature supports the notion that feeding programs, such as the one observed in the study, have a positive influence on the participation rates of vulnerable children in education.

### Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical method used to examine the relationship between a dependent variable and the independent variable. The findings are shown in Table 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.750 <sup>a</sup>	.563	.553	.123

a. Predictors: (Constant), Feeding programme

According to the findings in Table 3, the coefficient of determination (R squared) is 0.563 and adjusted R squared of 0.553 at 95% significance level. The R squared of 0.563 implies that feeding programme can explain 56.3 percent of the variation in participation rates of vulnerable children in education in Nairobi County, Kenya. The remaining 43.7 percent of the variation in participation rates can be explained by other factors which were not part of the model.

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.91	1	0.910	60.495	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	0.707	47	0.015		

<b>Total</b>	<b>1.617</b>	<b>48</b>			
a. Dependent Variable: Participation rates					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Feeding programme					

Findings in Table 4 show the F value indicating whether the set of independent variables as a whole contribute to the variance in the dependent variable. The F value was 60.495 and was significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) at 95%. This means that feeding programme was significant in predicting participation rates of vulnerable children in education in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.092	0.187		5.840	.001
	Feeding programme	0.542	0.094	0.492	5.766	.003
a. Dependent Variable: Participation rates						

The findings in Table 5 showed that the feeding programme has a positive and statistically significant effect on participation rates of vulnerable children in education as shown by a coefficient of 0.542 and p-value of 0.003. This shows that an increase in the feeding programme increases participation rates of vulnerable children in education by 0.542 units. This suggests that when vulnerable children are provided with regular meals, it enhances their engagement and involvement in educational activities. Corresponding to the study findings, Namukwaya and Kibirige (2019) in a study in Uganda specifically focusing on the alternative basic education school meals program, revealed that this program has had a significant impact on various aspects of education. It has been instrumental in increasing school enrollment, keeping children in school for longer durations, and reducing drop-out rates.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study highlights the significant positive influence of the Undugu Basic Education’s feeding program on the participation and well-being of vulnerable children in education. The provision of meals through the program improves students’ engagement, encourages school enrollment and punctuality, and enhances concentration and academic performance. The well-designed kitchen and storage facilities further support the program’s effectiveness. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of school feeding programs in creating a conducive learning environment and promoting the holistic development of vulnerable children.

The study recommends that policymakers and practitioners prioritize and invest in school feeding programs, ensuring the availability of nutritious meals in educational institutions. These programs should be implemented alongside effective record-keeping systems and well-designed kitchen and storage facilities. Furthermore, efforts should be made to raise awareness among students, teachers, and parents about the benefits of the feeding program in order to encourage enrollment, punctuality, and active participation in education.

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