



Council of Governors



Feeding the Future with Dishi Na County initiative in Nairobi's Public Primary Schools and ECDE Centres

County	Nairobi City County		
Sector:	Health, Wellness and Nutrition	Sub-sector/Theme:	Nutrition and School Feeding
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Target Audience	Nairobi residents and other counties		
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Context and Challenge

Children, being the most vulnerable demographic, often bear the brunt of food insecurity, particularly in communities where access to nutritious meals is limited. A study by Zerga, Tadesse & Ayele in 2022 showed a clear correlation between inadequate nutrition and academic performance, with hungry children often experiencing difficulty concentrating in class, reduced cognitive function and lower academic achievement. Approximately 66 million primary school-age children attend classes hungry across the developing world (Hamilton, 2023), hindering their ability to learn and thrive.

In Kenya, where the cost of living remains high and unemployment is prevalent, the challenge of food insecurity adds to the daily struggles faced by parents in providing for their families. This issue disproportionately affects school-going children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who face unique hurdles in accessing adequate food. For example, 8.4 million Kenyan children in arid and semi-arid areas go to school without meals (Hamilton, 2023).

Nairobi, being the most populous county in the country, reflects this reality, with over 250,000 children enrolled in public primary schools and Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) centres (Kinyanjui, 2023).

Recognising the urgency of addressing this pressing issue, the Dishi Na County programme was conceptualised by H.E. Governor Sakaja Arthur Johnson, EGH, in his manifesto and approved by his Cabinet in 2023 as a strategic intervention to ensure that every child in Nairobi has access to hot, delicious and nutritious meals, regardless of their socio-economic background. This programme seeks to create a conducive environment for children's educational success and holistic development.



Roysambu Primary School and ECDE children during the launch of the Dishi na County programme at Roysambu Primary School

Response and Actions (Solution Path)

The process of addressing the challenge of food insecurity among school-going children in Nairobi City County started with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the national Ministry of Education on July 18, 2023, between H.E. Governor Sakaja Arthur Johnson, EGH and Education Cabinet Secretary Ezekiel Machogu. This laid the foundation for collaborative efforts between the County Government and relevant stakeholders. A multi-sectoral approach was adopted, involving various entities such as the technical county team, the *Food for Education* organisation, contractors, private sector leaders and the national government's Ministry of Education.

Each stakeholder played a specific role in the initiative, ranging from project oversight and coordination to procurement and implementation. Site selection for the central kitchens was meticulously conducted by the County's *Health, Wellness and Nutrition*, and *Talent, Skills Development and Care* sectors, considering factors such as the population of children, accessibility and proximity to target schools. Contracts were subsequently awarded, marking a significant milestone in the programme's implementation. The groundbreaking ceremony for the kitchen sites was a momentous occasion, graced by esteemed dignitaries, including H.E. President Dr. William Ruto, CGH and H.E. Governor Sakaja Johnson, EGH, at Roysambu Primary School.

One of the pivotal decisions made was to entrust the operation of the kitchens to the Food for Education organisation, an NGO renowned for its expertise in cooking and delivering food to school-going children across Kenya. Leveraging their experience, expertise and existing infrastructure, this decision aimed to ensure the successful implementation of the Dishu Na County programme.

Throughout the kitchens' construction period, several actions were taken to address key challenges, including robust planning, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation. Decisions were made by all key stakeholders based on careful deliberation and analysis of available data, with the primary objective of maximising impact and ensuring the programme's success.

However, like any complex undertaking, hurdles were encountered along the way, including delays in procurement processes and logistical challenges. These hurdles were overcome through proactive measures such as streamlining procedures and enhancing communication channels. The involvement of other departments such as Finance, Environment, Works, etc., was integral to the development of the solutions, with collaboration and synergy driving progress towards the common goal of alleviating food insecurity among school children.



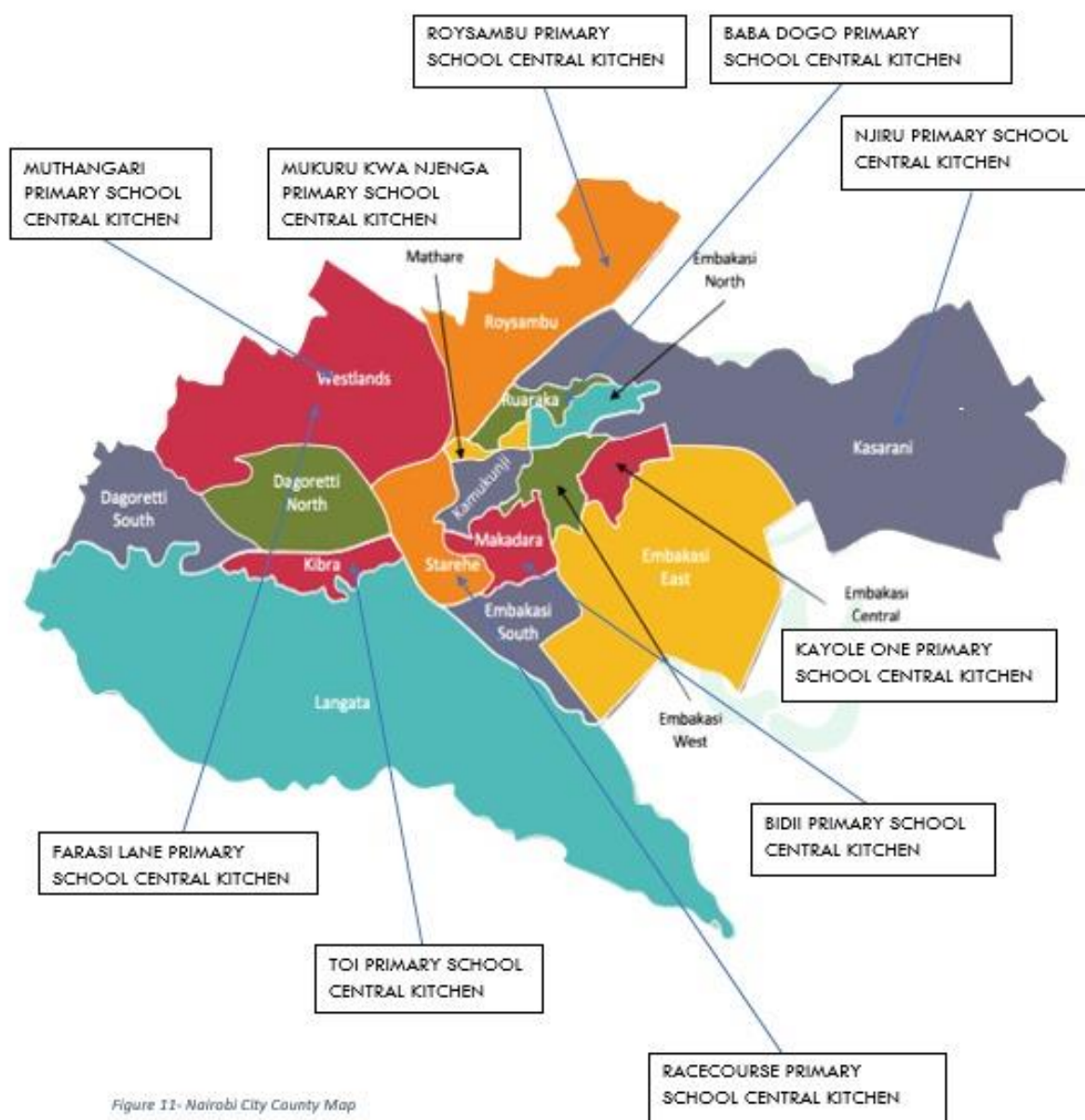
Inside one of the Central Kitchens with 12 jikos

Outcomes and Results

Since its official commencement on August 28, 2023, the programme has successfully provided nutritious meals to 184,000 school-going children from public primary schools and Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) centres. Currently, 106 schools have been onboarded to the programme, receiving daily food provisions. Furthermore, the completion of 10 state-of-the-art central kitchens marks a significant milestone, with plans underway to construct 7 more kitchens to further expand the programme's reach. The 10 kitchens were built in 10 central schools in 10 sub-counties in Nairobi as shown below:

1. Starehe Sub-county – Racecourse Primary
2. Makadara – Bidii Primary
3. Kasarani – Njiru Primary
4. Roysambu – Roysambu Primary
5. Embakasi Central – Kayole 1 Primary
6. Embakasi South – Kwa Njenga Primary
7. Dagoretti North – Muthangari Primary
8. Kibra – Toi Primary
9. Westlands – Farasi Lane Primary
10. Ruaraka – Baba Dogo Primary

DISHI NA COUNTY PROGRAM 10NO. KITCHEN SITES



Food distribution

Food-for-Education prepares nutritious meals from the central kitchens, which it packs in special sealed containers to keep the meals warm and safe from contamination as it transports them to neighbouring schools in its food trucks specially built to transport hot food.

How parents make payments

Parents pay for subsidized school lunches using mobile money (which has nearly 100% penetration in Kenya). The amount is credited to a virtual wallet linked to an “NFC-technology” enabled smart wristband, which students use to ‘tap to eat’ in under 5 seconds every day. Dishi na County does not accept any cash payments for Tap2Eat food.

Steps to top up a child's food account

Go to M-pesa – Lipa na M-pesa – Select Paybill – Business number 956781 – Account number – Tap2Eat account number – Input the Amount – Input Pin – Confirm transaction.

You will receive a confirmation message that shows that your money has been deposited into the Food for Education Paybill account.

The minimum amount to top up your account is KES 5 per child per meal. You can top up for weekly, monthly, or termly meals. You can make payments at any time of the day.

Dial *648# on your registered number to view the children registered under your account and your account balance.



Food for Education Food Trucks

The positive results achieved through the programme can be largely attributed to the concerted efforts of various stakeholders and key activities undertaken. The visionary leadership of Governor Sakaja has played a pivotal role in driving the programme's success, demonstrating a commitment to addressing the nutritional needs of vulnerable children in the county. The technical team, particularly the Efficiency Monitoring and Evaluation Department, ensured comprehensive monitoring, resulting in the timely delivery of the kitchens within a record

time of 14 weeks, coupled with excellent quality and functionality.

The programme has garnered extensive support from the private sector, the political class, and the citizenry, contributing to its success. Parents are only required to pay a nominal fee of KSh 5 for the nutritious meals, ensuring children unable to pay are not left behind. The actual cost of the meal is KSh 45, out of which KSh 15 is supported by partner subsidies, while the County covers the remaining cost of KSh 25.

This collaborative effort has created a conducive environment for the seamless delivery of food to the children daily, facilitated by the experienced Food for Education organization staff.



Nairobi Governor Sakaja enjoying Dishi na County lunch with ECDE Pupils



H.E. President William Ruto serving lunch to primary school children

Positive results extend beyond the provision of meals, with steady increases in school enrollment from 29,740 in 2023 to 30,182 in 2024 as a result. Parents have expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the programme, citing the lessened food burden and the positive impact on their children's attendance and academic performance. This positive reception underscores the programme's importance and effectiveness in addressing the nutritional needs of vulnerable children, ultimately contributing to their holistic development and well-being.

Lessons Learned

From the onset, several crucial lessons have emerged, shaping the County's understanding of effective strategies for addressing food insecurity among school-going children.

One of the most significant lessons learned is the effectiveness of the hub-and-spoke concept that informed the design of the central kitchens. This approach proved to be cost-effective, efficient and highly sustainable, allowing for the centralised preparation of meals that are then distributed to multiple schools. Implementing this model has streamlined operations and optimised resources, ensuring consistent provision of nutritious meals to a large number of children across the county.

Stakeholder engagement emerged as a game-changer throughout the process, demonstrating the importance of collaboration and partnership. Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms enabled stakeholders to identify challenges early and implement timely solutions, contributing to the overall success of the programme. The multi-sectoral approach, which involved the active participation of the technical team, stakeholders, and contractors, ensured that issues were addressed promptly with innovative solutions.

Throughout the process, several innovative ideas were identified, including the use of technology for efficient monitoring and evaluation, and the adoption of sustainable practices in kitchen design and operation. These innovative approaches have the potential to be replicated by other counties, offering practical solutions for addressing food insecurity among school children.

In terms of cost, the average cost of building the kitchens was approximately KSh 324 million, while the annual cost of running the entire programme amounted to approximately KSh 1.7 billion. Despite the significant investment required, the effectiveness of the programme in addressing food insecurity and improving educational outcomes underscores its value and impact, making it a worthwhile investment for the county.



Governor Sakaja with Dishi na County programme Staff at one of the Central Kitchens



French Minister Chrysoula Zacharopoulou pledged KSh 156 million towards the programme

Recommendations

Drawing from the County's experience with the Dishi Na County programme, below are several key recommendations for other counties facing similar challenges.

First, adopting a multisectoral approach involving government agencies, NGOs, community groups, and private sector partners is essential for comprehensive coverage and resource pooling.

Second, active stakeholder involvement throughout the programme, from planning to evaluation, ensures community ownership and programme alignment with local needs. Strong partnerships enhance sustainability and effectiveness.

Third is the need to establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and inform decision-making in real-time, and utilisation of technology for data collection and analysis to enhance efficiency and accountability.

Fourth is to prioritise long-term sustainability by considering scalability, cost-effectiveness, and environmental impact during programme design. Counties should embrace innovation and technology to optimise resources and streamline operations.

Fifth, is the need to advocate for national policy changes and institutional reforms to create an enabling environment for sustainable food security and nutrition programmes. Collaboration with policymakers and advocacy groups to prioritise investments in child well-being is critical.



Governor Sakaja with ECDE children enjoying Dishi na County Lunch

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