

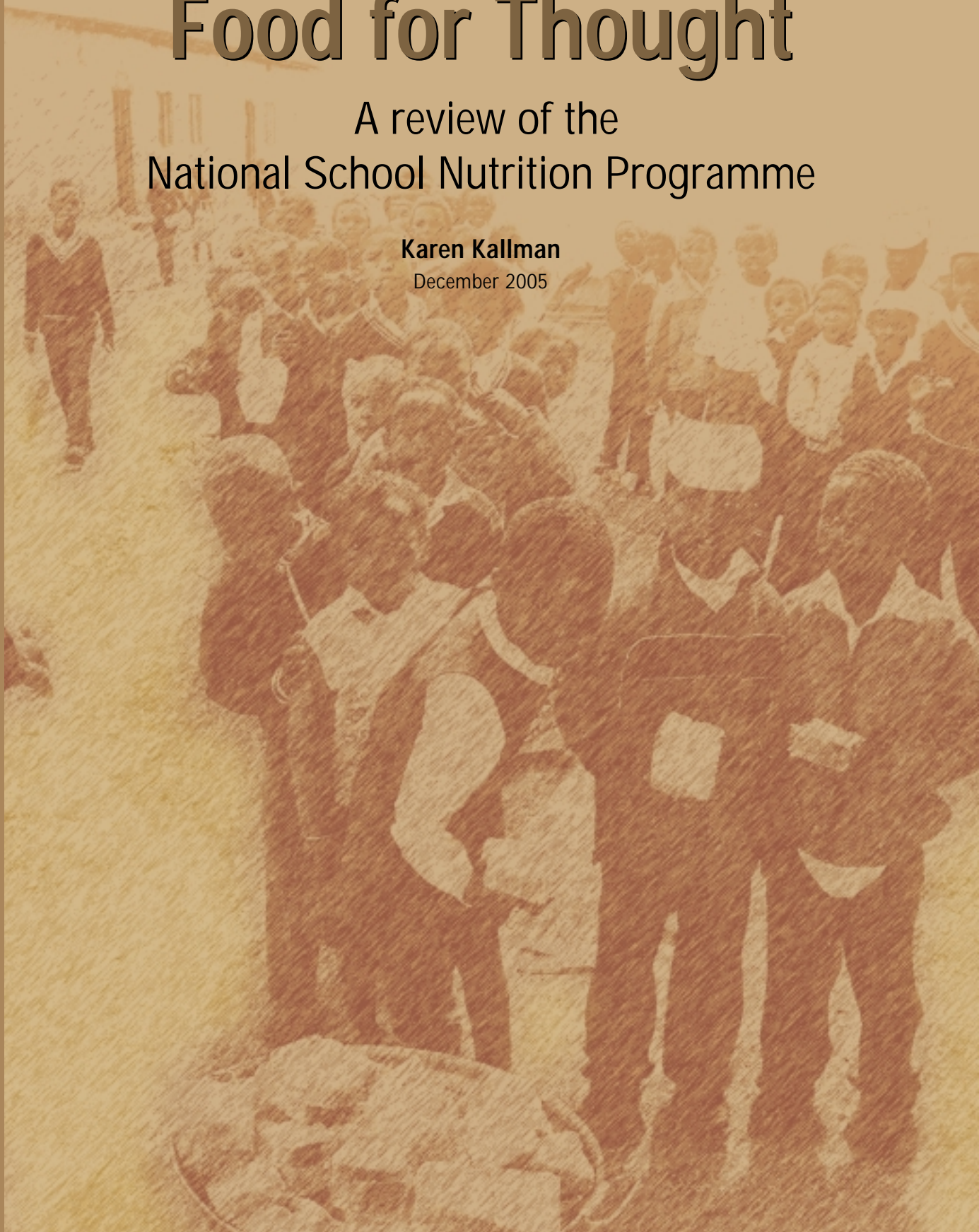
The Means to Live

Food for Thought

A review of the
National School Nutrition Programme

Karen Kallman

December 2005



children's
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child rights in focus
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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



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Commissioned by the Children's Institute,
University of Cape Town

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The *Means to Live* discussion paper series

This paper is one of a series that examine the targeting mechanisms of poverty alleviation programmes across different sectors. The papers form part of the *Means to Live Project*, based at the Children's Institute (CI), University of Cape Town (UCT). This project aims to evaluate the State's targeting mechanisms used to realise the socio-economic rights of poor children and their families.

The project is a collaborative project of the Child Rights and Child Poverty Programmes within the Institute, as well as a number of UCT and external collaborators.

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Abbreviations

HST	Health Systems Trust
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
INP	Integrated Nutrition Programme
INS	Integrated Nutrition Strategy
IFSS	Integrated Food Security Strategy for South Africa
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
RDA	Recommended Daily Allowance
PED	Provincial Education Department
SAVACG	South African Vitamin A Consultative Group
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

1. Introduction

This paper, a review of the National School Nutrition Programme, is one of a series commissioned by the Children's Institute's *Means to Live Project*. The project's aim is to evaluate the government's targeting mechanisms used to ensure the realisation of the socio-economic rights of poor children and their families. Put more simply, it seeks to establish whether current poverty alleviation initiatives are adequately designed and implemented to reach the poor, including children. By focusing on a number of elements of poverty alleviation with significant consequences for children, it will provide answers to the question of whether the poor are able to realise their socio-economic rights through access to these programmes. The research will be used to advocate for the necessary development or changes to government policies and programmes to ensure the realisation of these socio-economic rights.

Other poverty alleviation policies covered in this series include the:

- School Fee Exemption policy (the right to education)
- Free Basic Water policy (the right to water)
- Free Primary Health Care (the right to health care services)
- Housing Subsidy Scheme (the right to basic shelter and housing)
- Child Support Grant (the right to social security)

The Means to Live is a multi-stage, two-year project. The first phase comprised this series of policy reviews on selected poverty alleviation programmes and their targeting. The second phase will be primary research conducted during the second half of 2005. The final research report will be released early in 2006.

This paper looks specifically at how the National School Nutrition Programme is targeted at schools and learners. The paper begins by providing an overview of the nutritional status of children during apartheid and beyond. It then looks at the right to basic nutrition enshrined in the South African Constitution and touches on the right to education, which is intricately linked to this programme. Relevant policy and legislation and the rationale for the programme are outlined before examining the implementation of the programme to date, and the future plans of the Department of Education, which has recently taken over responsibility for the programme from the Department of Health. The remainder of the paper is concerned with the budget for the programme, an overview of the targeting of the programme and an evaluation of the targeting mechanism.

2. Overview of nutritional status of children

A number of key indicators are useful in determining the level of under-nutrition of children. The following are used extensively in research undertaken in South Africa:

- **Height-for-age (H-a):** A low H-a indicates stunting, which is the result of chronic, long-term dietary inadequacy, reflecting socio-economic deprivation. The World Health Organisation (De Onis & Habicht 1986) regards a population to be moderately affected if 25 – 50% of its children under five years of age are stunted, and severely affected if more than 50% of children are stunted.

- **Weight-for-height (W-H):** A low W-H reflects wasting, which occurs as a result of acute nutritional stress and severe food shortages or serious illness. A figure of 5 – 10% wasting in a population is regarded as a moderate prevalence, and more than 10% is considered a severe problem (De Onis & Habicht 1986).
- **Weight-for-age (W-a):** A low W-a indicates that an individual is underweight. If 20 – 40% of a population is underweight, it is considered to be moderately affected. If more than 40% are underweight, a severe problem exists.

Using these indicators, we are able to paint a picture of the nutritional status of children in South Africa. Unfortunately much of the available data is now dated, and there is a clear need for new research in this area to monitor progress in improving the nutritional status of children.

In 1997, the Health Systems Trust (HST) undertook a literature review on the nutritional status of South Africans from 1975 – 1996 (Voster, Oosthuizen, Jerling, Veldman & Burger).² Their most significant observation with regard to preschool children was that, at a national level, between 20 – 25% of preschoolers were stunted and were therefore suffering from chronic under-nutrition. Such stunting is a consequence of chronic dietary inadequacy. Black and Coloured children had the highest prevalence of stunting (25% and 17 % respectively), with rural Black children most vulnerable. They found that the most vulnerable age is approximately two years, with substantial evidence indicating that inadequate weaning practices are a major determinant of under-nutrition in this age group.

The review found that wasting was not a problem, but that amongst White, Indian and Coloured children, being underweight was a more serious problem than stunting. There were indications that even in rural Black children, being overweight could be an emerging problem.

With regards to primary school children, they found prevalence of wasting and being underweight to be low. However, it was estimated that, at a national level, at least 20% of primary school children were stunted and suffered from chronic malnutrition. The growth pattern of children from different ethnic groups differed and there was not enough evidence to attribute this to dietary intake patterns only. Clearly, other environmental determinants also played a role.

The review found that much less research had been done on the adolescent age group. Where findings were available, they pointed to the fact that iron and folate deficiencies were common amongst all ethnic groups, and that Black children seemed to have a low vitamin A, E, B6 and calcium status.

The National Food Consumption Survey (Labadarious & Labadarious), undertaken in 1999, found that one out of 10 children aged between one and nine years was underweight, and that just more than one in five was stunted. Furthermore, younger children (between the ages of 1 – 3 years) were most severely affected, as were those living in rural areas and on commercial farms. The survey also found that, at a national level, the nutritional status of younger children (between 1 – 6 years) had neither improved nor deteriorated since the South African Vitamin A Consultative Group (SAVACG) national data of 1995.³ It should however be borne in mind that the 1999 survey placed particular emphasis on the high-risk

² This is the most recent comprehensive study on the nutritional status of South Africans. The National Food Consumption Survey, done later in 1999, only covered children between the ages of 1 – 9 years.

³ The SAVACG study was considered in the literature review undertaken by the HST, discussed earlier.

segments of the population and captured a greater percentage of households of lower socio-economic status than the SAVACG survey.

3. The right to basic nutrition⁴

The constitutional rights⁵ that are addressed by the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) are:

- The right of access to sufficient food – Section 27 (1) (b)
- The right of children to basic nutrition – Section 28 (1) (c)
- The right to basic education – Section 29 (1) (a)

It is worth noting that none of these rights are completely realised by the NSNP.

The first two rights confer on children a range of different entitlements that overlap. Section 27 (1) (b) entitles children (and adults) to require that the State take reasonable measures, within available resources, to enable them to gain access to food over time. The Constitutional Court has held that this means that the State must institute measures to realise all aspects of this right over time. It also means that these measures must be rational, comprehensive and coherent, inclusive of all significantly ‘at risk’ groups in society, co-ordinated, flexible enough to respond to both short- and longer-term needs, effectively implemented and transparent.⁶

The entitlements established by Section 28 (1) (c) are not yet clearly understood since they have not been interpreted by the Constitutional Court. In broad terms, children’s right to basic nutrition entitles them to require that the State guarantees that they receive at least a level of nutrition that enables dignified survival and basic physical and mental development. This imposes two sets of constitutional duties on the State. First, it must take steps, regulatory and otherwise, to ensure that those parents or family members who are able to care for their children in fact provide for their nutritional needs. These steps include legal measures to ensure that parents meet their constitutional duties towards their children, as well as measures to support parents so that they are in fact able to do so. Second, the State itself must provide for the nutritional needs of those children whose parents or family members are unable to care for them, either because they are absent, or for reasons of poverty or other forms of incapacity. The State must meet this latter duty by supporting parents and family members in their efforts to provide for the nutritional needs of their children and, in appropriate cases, by providing food directly to their children.

The precise breadth of nutritional duties placed on the State by Section 28 (1) (c) is not yet entirely clear. The Constitution implies that Section 28 (1) (c) places a higher level of obligation on the State than Section 27 (1) (b). This is because Section 28 (1) (c) is not internally qualified with regard to resource constraints, reasonable measures and progressive realisation, as is Section 27 (1) (b). Furthermore, Section 28 (1) (c) only promises basic nutrition, whereas Section 27 (1) (b) guarantees access to sufficient food.

⁴ This section draws heavily on Danie Brand’s ‘Budgeting and service delivery in programmes targeted at the child’s right to basic nutrition’, which appears in Coetzee & Streak (2004) *Monitoring child socio-economic rights in South Africa: Achievements and Challenges*. Cape Town: IDASA.

⁵ *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, No 108 of 1996*.

⁶ *Government of the Republic of South Africa v Grootboom* 2000 (11) BCLR 1169 (CC) paragraphs [39]-[44]. See also *Soobramoney v Minister of Health, KwaZulu-Natal* 1998 (1) SA 765, 1997 (12) BCLR 1696 (CC); *Minister of Health v Treatment Action Campaign* 2002 (5) SA 721, 2002 (10) BCLR 1033 (CC).

The founding idea seems to be that, if the State's duty toward children is limited to the requirement to provide a very basic level of nutrition, it can realistically be bound to provide that basic level directly to children in need.⁷

It would be impractical to assume that children are therefore entitled to demand the provision of basic nutrition when they are in need, irrespective of resource constraints. Section 28 (1) (c) is still subject to the limitations clause, Section 36, which requires that any limitation on a right must be "reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom, taking into account all relevant factors, including – (a) the nature of the right; (b) the importance of the purpose of the limitation; (c) the nature and extent of the limitation; (d) the relation between the limitation and its purpose; and (e) less restrictive means to achieve the purpose".

We can interpret this to mean that the State has a heightened duty of justification to show that its nutritional policies in fact prioritise the basic needs of children, both on paper and in terms of budgetary allocations and implementation measures. The requirement that children's nutritional needs be prioritised implies in the first place that their basic survival nutritional needs be given precedence over other broader societal, economic and political demands. Also, and perhaps more controversially, it implies that children's basic survival nutritional needs should be given precedence over the food needs of other people. With respect to Section 29 (1) (a), the government has linked the National School Nutrition Programme to the right to basic education by asserting that, "the [programme] was primarily designed to provide direct services to [primary school] learners to reduce hunger and to alleviate the effect of malnutrition on their learning capacity" (Kloka 2003a). This paper will consider the impact of hunger and malnutrition on learning capacity in section 5 below.

4. Relevant policy and legislation

The *White Paper on Reconstruction and Development*, tabled in Parliament on 15 November 1994, set out the government's initial plans to address the problems of poverty and inequality. Annexure 1 of the White Paper contains information on the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) Lead Projects. The Primary School Nutrition Programme appears on this list as Project 3.3, under the broader Human Resource and Development Programme.

The programme is explained in the RDP document as follows:

Aim: To contribute to the improvement of education quality by enhancing primary school pupils' learning capacity, school attendance and punctuality and contribute to general health development by alleviating hunger. Educating pupils on nutrition and also improving nutritional status through micro-nutrition supplementation. Parasite eradication where indicated. To develop the nutrition component of the general education curriculum.

Scope: Provision of an early snack, meeting 30% of the energy requirement, to 3.8 million children (50% of primary school children), in areas targeted on the basis of poverty criteria, particularly rural areas and peri-urban informal settlements. Project committees at identified schools will submit proposals to provincial teams for appraisal and approval. Training and

⁷ Section 27 reads as follows (emphasis added):

(1) Everyone has the right to have access to –
(b) *sufficient* food and water...

(2) The state must take *reasonable* legislative and other measures, *within its available resources*, to achieve the *progressive realisation* of [this right].

Section 28 (1) (c) reads as follows (emphasis added):

(1) Every child *has the right* to –
(c) *basic* nutrition, shelter basic health care services and social services.

capacity-building are included to ensure effective implementation, and to link to other education quality improvement and community development initiatives. Plan to incorporate it into national nutrition scheme.

Output: Scheme implemented in 50 schools per province, September 1994.

RDP Fund: R472.8m (1994/95)

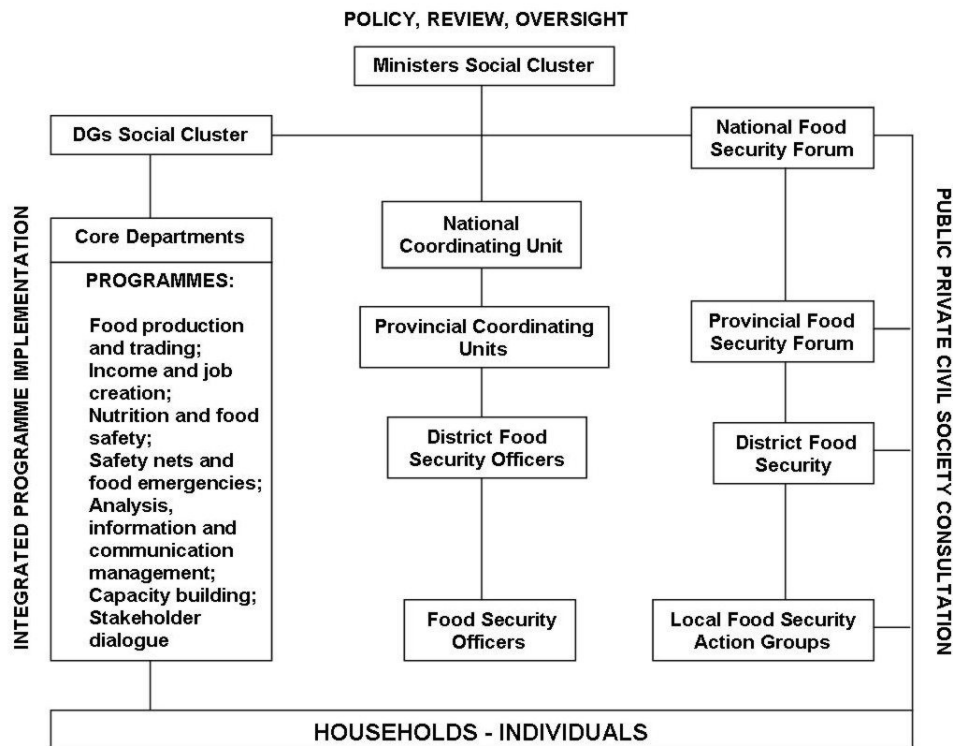
Source: SA Ministry in the Office of the President 1994⁸

Since then, a range of initiatives to deal with hunger and food security have been implemented by the government. The *Integrated Nutrition Programme* (INP) was implemented by the Department of Health in 1995 to address and prevent malnutrition. The Department of Health has a Directorate for Nutrition at a national level, as well as nine sub-directorates/divisions at a provincial level. Structures for managing the INP exist at regional, district and community levels and are supported by various task teams and committees. The Primary School Nutrition Programme introduced by the RDP was one of the component programmes of the Integrated Nutrition Programme. The *1997 White Paper for the Transformation of the Health System in South Africa* mandated the implementation of an *Integrated Nutrition Strategy* (INS).

In the broader policy framework, policies relating to access to food and household food security are co-ordinated and managed in terms of a cross-departmental policy framework and the *Integrated Food Security Strategy for South Africa* (IFSS), introduced in July 2002. This document sets out a broad policy framework for measures aimed at enhancing food security in South Africa. The IFSS does not itself create nutritional programmes. It is intended to “streamline, harmonise and integrate diverse food security sub-programmes in South Africa” (Department of Agriculture 2002) and to serve as a guiding framework within which existing policies can be co-ordinated and expanded and new policies can be developed. To this end, the IFSS calls for a cross-departmental and cross-sectoral management structure.

The IFSS also identifies a number of key focus areas for policy development and implementation (see Figure 1 on the next page). Children’s access to nutrition is covered under the programme titled *Nutrition and Food Safety*. The Department of Agriculture is the lead department driving the IFSS and works together with the Departments of Social Development, Health, Education and Public Works.

⁸ *White Paper on Reconstruction and Development*, 1994. Accessed on: http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/white_papers/rdpwhite.html

Figure 1: Proposed institutional arrangements & organisational structures

Source: Department of Agriculture 2002:35

The IFSS is headed at the political level by an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Minister of Agriculture. It is managed and implemented by a National Co-ordinating Unit, with corollaries at the provincial level (Provincial Co-ordinating Units), which oversee the work of District Food Security Officers and, at local level, Food Security Officers. The 2002 IFSS document envisages the establishment of a National Food Security Forum, with membership drawn from the public sector, the private sector and civil society and with corollaries at provincial, district and local levels. However, these have not been set up yet and there is no indication when they will be set up.

5. Rationale for the programme

5.1 Food security

Although not severe according to the WHO guidelines, the high levels of under-nutrition found in South Africa – a middle-income country – is obviously one of the most important reasons for the introduction of this programme. In addition, the constitutionally recognised rights to basic nutrition and sufficient food and the right to education mandate the State to ensure that all children do not go hungry or remain chronically malnourished. Closely related is the issue of household food security in South Africa. One of the objectives of the Integrated Nutrition Programme is to contribute to the establishment of household food security.

Food security is defined in the IFSSA as “physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South Africans at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Department of Agriculture 2002:15). According to Statistics South Africa, in 2000 about 35% of the total population (amounting to 14.3 million South Africans) were vulnerable to food insecurity. Among these, women, children and the

elderly are particularly vulnerable (Statistics South Africa 2000). Food insecurity is a major determinant of under-nutrition. There is general agreement that South Africa has national food security but not *household* food security (Voster et al 1997:21). In other words, South Africa produces or purchases enough food to feed everyone in the country. However, inequalities in food distribution through the market result in significant numbers of households being unable to access the food they need for the nutrition of their members.⁹

5.2 School attendance and performance

Nutritional and health statuses are powerful influences on a child's learning performance in school. Children who lack certain nutrients in their diet (particularly iron and iodine) or who suffer from protein-energy malnutrition, hunger, parasitic infections or other diseases, do not have the same potential for learning as healthy and well-nourished children do. Poor health and nutrition among school-age children diminish their cognitive development either through physiological changes or by reducing their ability to participate in learning experiences – or both (Del Ross 1999:6).

Contrary to conventional beliefs, nutritional status does not improve with age. The extra demands on school-age children (to perform chores, for example, or walk long distances to school) create a need for energy that is much greater than that of younger children. Indeed, available data indicate high levels of protein-energy malnutrition and short-term hunger among school-age children. Moreover, deficiencies of critical nutrients such as iodine, vitamin A and iron are pervasive among school-aged children (Del Ross 1999:6).

In this way, poor nutrition and health among school children contribute to the inefficiency of the educational system. Children with diminished cognitive abilities and sensory impairments perform less well and are more likely to repeat grades and drop out of school than children who are not impaired in this way. They also enrol in school at a later age, if at all, and finish fewer years of schooling. The irregular school attendance of malnourished and unhealthy children is one of the key factors in poor performance. Even temporary hunger, common in children who are not fed before going to school, can have an adverse effect on learning. Those who are hungry have more difficulty concentrating and performing complex tasks, even if otherwise well nourished. Research and programme experience shows that improved nutrition and health can lead to better performance, fewer repeated grades, and reduced drop-out rates (Del Ross 1999).

School feeding programmes throughout the world have successfully attracted poor children to school and retained them by offering what they would probably not get elsewhere: hot food or nourishing snacks. The primary objective of a school feeding programme is to provide meals or snacks to alleviate short-term hunger, enabling children to learn. School-based feeding programmes have proven effective in encouraging enrolment, increasing attention spans, and improving attendance at school (International Food Policy Research Institute 2005).

The term 'short-term' hunger is contrasted with 'long-term' hunger, which describes the overall nutritional status of a child and addresses what happens to a child when she or he goes home. It refers more broadly to household food security. Therefore, within the context of household food security, school feeding should form part of a comprehensive approach

⁹ The IFSS asserts that South Africa is food secure at a national level, as it produces its main staple foods, exports its surplus food, and imports what it needs to meet its food requirements. National food security indicators reveal that South Africa has been meeting the food needs of its growing population from domestic sources for the last 20 years. However, due to widespread inequality and poverty, South Africa does not have household food security (Department of Agriculture 2000:16).

to improving the health and general well-being of children. One of the biggest advantages of school feeding is that it can, if properly designed and effectively implemented, alleviate short-term hunger immediately and therefore maximise children's learning capacity (Department of Health 2002).

The National School Nutrition Programme was conceptualised primarily as an educational intervention aimed at addressing children's ability to learn, rather than a health intervention to improve the nutrition of children (Kloka 2003a). In other words, it deals with short-term rather than long-term hunger. This choice of goal was motivated by the fact that school feeding schemes have generally proven to be an ineffective and costly means of improving the nutritional status of children. This is because of the multiplicity of factors causing malnutrition,¹⁰ the relatively small contribution that a school feeding programme can make to a child's daily nutritional requirements, and logistical problems related to large-scale implementation.¹¹ In addition, school feeding is ideally suited as a vehicle for nutritional education and for enhancing other development and health initiatives in schools. Hence, the interventions of the Primary School Nutrition Programme (PSNP) – now the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) – include school feeding as well as nutrition education, parasite control and micronutrient supplementation in schools.

6. Implementation of the programme

The NSNP is designed to identify and reach areas where poverty is most extreme. It aims to provide one meal or snack a day¹² by 10am through one of 22 approved menu options. Provinces select their menus on the basis of social acceptance, availability and cost. The Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces currently follow a cold menu that comprises brown bread, margarine, peanut butter and a nutritious drink. The Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and North West provinces follow a warm menu which includes pap and beans or soya, samp and beans or soya, with vegetables wherever possible.

In addition to the delivery of food to learners, the programme aims to involve local communities in the procurement and preparation of the food. Establishing and supporting food gardens has become an increasing focus of support for the programme and schools.

6.1 How the programme works

In 2004 the Department of Health handed over principle responsibility for the NSNP to the Department of Education. Prior to that, the Health Department had been responsible for the design of the targeting and implementation of school feeding. The national department originally devised targeting and implementation policies, and policies regarding people who were to benefit from the PSNP.¹³ These policies are captured in the Department of Health's *Primary School Nutrition Programme National Framework and Operational Guidelines, 1995*. (However, no copy could be sourced.) The provincial Departments of Health were delegated the duty of implementing the PSNP within their provinces in accordance with the

¹⁰ For example: infections and other determinants of nutritional status, such as parents' education, family income and mothers' employment.

¹¹ Additionally, a concern about school feeding is that the school meal may displace food consumed by the school child at home, thereby not provide any net gain in nutritional intake, and possibly even result in an overall reduction of nutritional intake. This is particularly of concern when the school meal is small in terms of its nutrient value (McCoy, Barron & Wigton 1997:12).

¹² The minimum frequency is 156 days out of the 197 school days in a year.

¹³ The targeting aspect of the policy is discussed in some detail in section 8.

policies of the national department. For the purposes of implementation, provincial departments each had an 'Operations Manual', based on these national guidelines.

The PSNP was transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of Education in April 2004 and was then renamed the National School Nutrition Programme. The main reasons for the decision to transfer the programme to the Education Department were that the focus of the programme was on educational outcomes of school feeding; that school feeding is implemented in schools, which is the functional responsibility of the Education Department; and to facilitate the inclusion of school feeding into the broader context of educational development (Kloka 2003a).

During 2004, the 'transition year', the Department of Education, for management purposes, continued to operate the feeding scheme in the way it was run by the Department of Health. The Department of Education has said that, from 2005, changes in targeting, and possibly also in implementation, will take place (pers. comm. C Mpati, 24 May 2005).

At a briefing of the Education and Recreation Select Committee on 30 June 2004, the National School Nutrition Programme Director, Ms Mpati, stated that the initial aim of the Department of Education was to take over the programme and meet at least the existing standards, with quality as opposed to quantity¹⁴ improvements over time.

Before the transfer, provincial Health and Education Departments generally collaborated in the management of the programme. The Department of Health was responsible for menu planning and the nutrition component, while the Department of Education was responsible for implementing the programme in the schools. The PSNP was implemented at school level by a variety of different institutions: school project committees, school governing bodies, community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations appointed by the individual schools.

Under the management of the Department of Education, provincial departments are responsible for drawing up targeting criteria for schools. This will be discussed in greater detail in section 8.

Under Department of Health management, governing bodies of schools could elect to run the operations of the PSNP through their school finance committee, or could elect a sub-committee to manage the operations of the PSNP¹⁵. The KwaZulu-Natal operations manual, for instance, sets out guidelines for the composition of such a committee. It states that the committee should consist of at least a chairperson who must be an elected member of the governing body; the principal or his/her delegate; and another two members (co-opted or otherwise).

¹⁴ At the meeting Ms Mpati stated that, "quality and not quantity was top priority. They preferred a programme that fitted nutritional standards for a smaller number, than have a sub-standard programme for a larger number, of children" (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2004). It should be noted that in the evaluations summarised below, one of the recommendations was to focus on quality and decrease quantity to ensure that the programme have the desired outcome, i.e. a beneficial effect on the learning abilities of those children most in need.

¹⁵ Extract from the *Operations Manual of the PSNP for KwaZulu-Natal* (Department of Health no date).

6.2 Evaluation of the Department of Health's delivery of the programme

There have been a number of evaluations of the PSNP since its inception. Here follows first a brief outline the findings of more recent evaluations, and then a summary of the findings of earlier evaluations.

6.2.1 IDASA evaluation – 2004

Danie Brand, an associate researcher at the University of Pretoria's Centre for Human Rights, undertook the most recent review (Brand 2004), using information from previous studies. The review was published in an Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) publication on the monitoring of children's socio-economic rights. He concluded that the number of schools and children that the programme had reached indicated that the PSNP has been successfully implemented in quantitative terms. From its inception to 2001/02, the programme reached an average of 14,746 out of 17,254 primary schools each year in South Africa. This translates into an annual average of 85% of primary schools in the country.

Addressing the Select Committee on Education and Recreation briefing on the NSNP in June 2004, Mr Hindle, Deputy Director-General: Planning and Monitoring in the Department of Education, reported that the almost five million children had been reached. He noted that this accounted for approximately 40% of the 12 million children in schools around the country. He said that "it would be great if the coverage could extend to 50%, but more emphasis was being placed on ensuring quality food standards" (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2004).

With regard to the targeting of the programme, Brand concluded that the picture is encouraging. He noted that after an initial sharp rise from 1994/95 to 1995/96, both the number of schools and the number of children targeted for the PSNP showed a slight but steady annual decline, indicating a contraction of the targeting mechanism. By reducing the target numbers, the uptake rate improved. The percentage of targeted schools where the PSNP was delivered increased annually; and the percentage of targeted children that were reached showed a similar, if somewhat less impressive, increase. Brand argues that these trends seem to indicate that the targeting of the programme has become progressively more precise and that delivery to those children identified as in need has become progressively more effective.

If we are to evaluate Brand's assessment, it is important to know how many individual children are 'in need' of school feeding – a figure that is not available. Brand concluded that the implication is that the programme has been implemented in an increasingly cost-effective manner. However, it could be argued that, given the high proportion of children living in poverty, it may mean that more and more poor children are being excluded. The figures do not give us any indication of who exactly is being reached and who is being excluded. Table 1 on the next page illustrates the trends noted by Brand.

Table 1: Number of schools and learners reached by the PSNP, 1994/95 – 2003/04

Financial year	Number of schools			Number of learners		
	Targeted	Reached	% coverage	Targeted	Reached	% coverage
1994/95	15,911	13,617	83	6,293,626	5,628,320	89
1995/96	20,110	15,894	79	6,877,175	5,567,644	81
1996/97	17,025	13,061	77	6,075,356	4,880,266	80
1997/98	17,945	14,549	81	6,024,773	5,021,575	83
1998/99	17,500	15,776	90	5,574,305	4,830,098	87
1999/00	16,087	15,428	96	5,422,204	4,719,489	87
2000/01	16,087	15,428	96	5,422,204	4,719,489	87
2001/02	16,000	14,667	91	5,400,000	4,700,000	87
2002/03	16,441	15,653	95	4,830,600	4,595,452	95
2003/04	16,955	16,107	95	4,807,997	4,567,597	95
Average	17,000 (98% of all primary schools)	14,847	88	5,667,943 (57% of all primary school learners)	4,957,252 (50% of all primary school learners)	87

Source: Kloka 2003a; Department of Health 2004

The table shows clearly that, over the past 10 years, the number of children actually reached by this programme has decreased by nearly one million. This represents a decrease of about 20%, not allowing for population growth. At the same time, the targets decreased by 1.5 million children. A greater proportion of those targeted have been reached but the targets have decreased markedly.

6.2.2 Report of the South African Human Rights Commission – 2002/2003

The South African Human Rights Commission report for 2002/03 came to very different conclusions in its evaluation of the PSNP. It found the programme unreasonable because of the reduction in the targeted number of children who should benefit from the programme. They argue that in the context of increasing numbers of children enrolled in schools, the PSNP did reach 4.5 million children in grades R to 7; however this was over 100,000 children less than the year before (South African Human Rights Commission 2004). The drop in the number of learners who were reached is related to the fact that the government reduced its target from 5.4 million learners in 2001/2002 to 4.9 million learners in 2002/2003 – possibly because of rapid increases in the cost of food procured for the programme.

Unfortunately there is no sufficiently accurate or regular monitoring data on the nutritional status and needs of children in South Africa to indicate whether this decline in the number of children targeted by the PSNP was appropriate to changes in the nutritional situation of children over this time period. We do however know that child poverty rates measured by income have increased over this period, as has the burgeoning HIV/AIDS pandemic and unemployment rate. In light of these, the wisdom of reducing the number of children eligible for nutrition support in schools is being questioned.

6.2.3 Earlier evaluations of the Primary School Nutrition Programme

Both departmental and external evaluations have been done of the Primary School Nutrition Programme since its inception and whilst under the auspices of the Department of Health.¹⁶ The following issues and recommendations were raised with regard to the programme:

Comprehensive nutrition programme

Despite its broad range of objectives, the implementation of the PSNP has generally been limited to being a 'vertical' school feeding programme. In other words: it has not been part of a comprehensive nutritional programme needed to have a significant impact on nutritional status (McCoy et al 1997). They recommended that in the medium- to long-term, the PSNP should be transformed from being a vertical feeding programme to a comprehensive school nutrition programme. As a comprehensive school nutrition programme, McCoy et al (1997) recommended that the PSNP should be integrated in two ways:

- as part of a broader package of priority school health activities; and
- as part of the national Integrated Nutrition Programme (INP).¹⁷

Administration and management of the programme

School feeding is noted for being an expensive and logistically complicated component of comprehensive nutrition programmes. Many of the problems with the implementation of the PSNP were found to be the result of inadequate management (McCoy et al 1997). Constraints as well as advantages existed within procurement systems, with the tender system being preferred, based on government resources required, quality control, control over prices, and limited risk of fraud (Louw et al 2001). However, they noted that there had been frequent news reports of allegations of fraud and corruption at certain schools in different provinces.

An internal evaluation by the Department of Health in 2003 indicated that there were critical challenges to implementing school feeding in an effective and efficient manner. These included (Kloka 2003b):

- Recommended national targeting directives not being adhered to at provincial level, and provincial directives not being adhered to at school level.
- Inadequate human resource availability.
- Insufficient involvement of intra- and inter-sectoral partners to deliver the broadest range of services in terms of feeding in the most efficient and effective way.
- Inconsistency and low coverage of the number of feeding days in comparison to the number of school days and number of planned feeding days.
- National guidelines on feeding times and menu options not adhered to at provincial and school levels.
- Inadequate food quality.

¹⁶ See: McCoy, Barron & Wigton 1997; Department Of Health 2000; Louw, Bekker & Wentzel-Viljoen 2001; Kloka D 2003b

¹⁷ Further details of these recommendations can be found in the document and have not been included because they are not directly relevant to this discussion paper.

- Poor control for food safety.
- Actual food servings not complying with national and provincial guidelines.
- Irregular monitoring.

Food quality and safety

In 2001, the Directorate of Nutrition commissioned a qualitative survey of 149 randomly selected schools in all provinces to evaluate the school feeding programme in terms of targeting, coverage, menu options, cost effectiveness, as well as food quality and safety (Louw et al 2001). The survey found that, because provinces wanted to cover as many schools and feed as many children as possible, they compromised the quality and quantity of the food provided, and hence did not provide optimal feeding as was originally planned by the Department of Health (Louw et al 2001).

The survey also showed that eight of the provinces provided less than 20% of the daily energy requirements compared with a minimum of 25% specified in the guidelines. Basic hygiene was also compromised in some schools due to the lack of water and adequate infrastructure for food preparation. Thirty percent of the sample schools did not have water on site and water had to be collected from rivers, streams, tanks and dams in nearby villages. This was of great concern because most menu options require water for preparation (Louw et al 2001).

Menu options

The evaluation by Louw et al (2001) found that national guidelines on menu options were not adhered to at provincial and at school levels. There was considerable variation between the provinces. Actual servings did not comply with national or provincial criteria. The actual servings varied between 22.3% of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for energy to 11.5% of the RDA for energy, with all but one province providing less than 20% of the RDA for energy. Furthermore, neither the national criteria nor the provinces provided guidelines for the level of fortification of food items for micronutrients, although a balance of nutrients was called for. This balance of nutrients was not addressed by any of the provinces. However, menu options were found to be generally healthy and culturally acceptable.

Louw et al further found that national guidelines on feeding times were not adhered to at provincial and school levels. Only 2% of schools served the food before 09:00, 7% served between 09:00 and 10:00, 42% between 10:00 and 11:00, 35% between 11:00 and 12:00 and 13% after 12:00.

Impact of the programme

On the positive side, the evaluations indicated that teachers perceived school feeding as contributing to learner cognitive attentiveness, improved school attendance, reduced absenteeism and household food security. Most educators also did not perceive school feeding as an infringement on learning time or as taking up too much time (Kloka 2003b; McCoy et al 1997).

Targeting of school feeding

In a 1997 evaluation, McCoy et al showed that in several parts of the country, the coverage of school feeding was poor and inconsistent for significant periods of time. They recommended that the school feeding component of the PSNP should be targeted at fewer

schools and in particular those schools and children that would benefit the most. Furthermore, the specific criteria for targeting should be chosen separately by each province. They also asserted that the number of schools that are targeted for school feeding should be based on a sound financial basis that will not allow the quality and quantity of the school meals to deteriorate further. A more needs-based formula for the allocation of funds to schools should thus take the location and infrastructure of the school into account.

In an external evaluation by Louw et al in 2001, it was found that targeting was undermined by a political imperative to cover as many schools as possible and, due to financial constraints on the programme, that the non-targeting approach compromised the quality and quantity of food items. It was found that the abandonment of individual targeting in schools also led to smaller portions being served to learners. However, teachers' perceptions were that individual targeting led to intimidation, victimisation and stigmatisation (Louw et al 2001).

The dilution caused by the inclusion of schools that were not necessarily the most needy, also resulted in providing meals on less than 80% of annual school days in six provinces, while frequently accompanied by poor adherence to menu options and defined guidelines. Louw et al also found that in three provinces, over 30% of targeted schools missed 25 or more feeding days, while 2% of schools had no feeding during the year of evaluation (two provinces).

6.3 Programme plans

The Department of Education's role since taking responsibility for what is now the NSNP is to plan and manage its conditional grant, support and monitor implementation at provincial level, and carry out statutory reporting.

The Department of Education in its strategic plan has set the following targets for the implementation of the programme in 2005/06 (Department of Education 2003):

- To reach about 15,000 poverty-stricken schools at which about five million learners will be fed;¹⁸
- To improve coverage of planned feeding days to a minimum of 156 in all nine provinces;
- To comply 100% with nutritional criteria for school feeding, as directed by Cabinet.

In other words: The Department of Education plans to retain the lower numerical targets but improve the quality of delivery to standards previously set but not yet met.

Furthermore, the national co-ordinator of the National School Nutrition Programme in the national Department of Education reviewed the NSNP in 2004 and has identified a number of issues that will be incorporated into its plans to improve the programme (Mpati 2004). These are:

- inadequacy of financial and local infrastructural resources as compared to need;

¹⁸ This number does not vary greatly from the number of children who have been targeted over the last few years (see Table 1 above). It is unclear how the department identified this targeted figure.

- targeting in favour of primary school learners in schools where there are both a primary school and a high school. This sometimes deprives one sibling from the same poor home and deprives children in the same school;
- scarcity or non-availability of fresh produce;
- unsanitary food preparation areas and toilets as well as water scarcity; and
- cumbersome administration in the invoicing and payment chain.

Addressing the Portfolio Committee on Education on 1 March 2005, the Director of School Nutrition, Ms C Mpati, indicated that the NSNP has also begun to develop a programme for secondary school children (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2005).

7. Budget for the programme

7.1 Funding sources

The national Department of Education receives a conditional grant which it distributes to the provinces in terms of the *Division of Revenue Act, Act 5 of 2004*.

According to the Act, the conditions of the grant are (National Treasury 2005a):

- Provincial business plans which focus on outputs must be submitted and approved by the national accounting officer before the transfer of the first instalment.
- The grant must be accounted for separately from other funds transferred to the department.
- Provinces must comply with the targeting criteria and minimum norms and standards as determined by the Cabinet decision of 23/01/02¹⁹ and implementation guidelines of the national department with regard to approved menus, nutrition quality and quantity and food safety.
- Measurable objectives as outlined in the Division of Revenue Act must be achieved.

Treasury is mandated to monitor the programme in the following ways (National Treasury 2005a):

- Provinces must report quarterly in terms of progress indicators.
- Monitoring visits by the national Departments of Education and Health must report on nutrition quality, quantity and food safety.

¹⁹ These norms and standards comprise of the following:

- (i) standardised menu options, food specifications and costing of four basic options that include cooked and non-cooked food and the provision of the necessary utensils and equipment for preparation and serving of meals;
- (ii) standardised feeding days to 156 school days. Learners should receive a meal before 10h00 on at least 80% of the annual school days;
- (iii) entering into service level agreements with inter-sectoral partners and contracts with all suppliers;
- (iv) developing and implement an effect[ive] communication plan for schools and communities to ensure effective implementation of school feeding;
- (v) implementing an effective targeting strategy to identify geographic areas where poverty levels are highest and serve primary schools within the geographically targeted areas that serve the poor, specifically in rural and farm schools and schools serving informal settlements, identified by each of the provinces.
- (vi) harnessing and replicating successful initiatives to increase the participation of women's groups.

- Periodic assessments are to be commissioned by the national department.

7.2 Budget allocation

At its inception in 1994/95, the PSNP received an earmarked RDP allocation, which lasted until the 1997/98 financial year. In 1997, the programme was incorporated into the INP, which was funded through a conditional grant. This arrangement continued until the transition to the Department of Education in 2004.

The NSNP now falls under Programme 5: Quality Promotion and Development, in the Education Budget Vote (Vote 15). The national school nutrition conditional grant – or school feeding grant – accounts for the bulk of the spending in the new programme. Table 2 reflects the PSNP budgets of the last 10 years.

Table 2: Primary School Nutrition Programme budgets, 1994/95 – 2004/05

Year	Amount allocated	Estimated expenditure	Estimated expenditure as % of budgeted expenditure	Percentage of INP conditional grant and ordinary budgets
1994/95	R472,840,000	R134,823,786	29%	N/A
1995/96	R500,000,000	R312,478,000	62%	N/A
1996/97	R500,000,000	R325,621,177	65%	N/A
1997/98	R496,000,000	R399,376,266	81%	N/A
1998/99	R477,443,132	R399,909,093	86%	72%
1999/00	R457,945,362	R356,145,445	78%	69%
2000/01	R588,411,000*	R533,772,000	91%	61%
2001/02	R613,630,000*	R512,520,000	83%	76%
2002/03	R672,411,000*	R521,322,000	77%	
2003/04		R711,620,000		
2004/05		R832,200,000		

*The budgeted expenditure reflected in this table for the years 2000/01, 2001/02 and 2002/03 is that for the total INP conditional grant, with roll-over funds from the previous years added, and is not the specific amount allocated from the INP conditional grant for the PSNP. The estimated expenditure is for this total amount and not the estimated expenditure for the PSNP specifically, as the latter figures were not available nationally. However, the PSNP has been allocated an average 86% of the INP conditional grant each year, so these broad figures give a strong indication of expenditure trends for the PSNP.

Source: Kloka 2003a

Annual allocations to the PSNP have been substantial and will increase to the NSNP even more substantially over the next three financial years. From its inception until the 2002/03 financial year, the programme showed negative real budget growth, on average -5.3%. In fact, on a number of occasions over this period, the programme also saw negative nominal growth. However, the NSNP will see an average annual real growth of 10% in budget allocation over the next three years. This marked increase is consistent with a 2002 Cabinet decision (taken after an intensive review of the PSNP) not only to continue with the programme but, in light of rising food prices and the incidences of malnutrition and under-nutrition, to expand the programme (Brand 2004:109).

According to National Treasury (2005b), expenditure is expected to rise from R832.2 million in 2004/05, to R912.2 million in 2005/06, to R1.098 million in 2006/07, and to R1.152.9 million in 2007/08. It is estimated that this grant is likely to continue for the next ten years. The provincial budget allocation is represented in Table 3 on the next page.

Table 3: Budget allocation for National School Nutrition Programme for 2004/05

Province	Gazetted allocation R million	Transferred to province, April 2004 R million	Total number of targeted schools	Total number of learners to feed
Eastern Cape	R177.259	R 44.315	5,188	948,574
Free State	R 49.100	R 12.275	1,132	164,852
Gauteng	R 75.730	R 18.933	1,024	325,036
KwaZulu-Natal	R181.420	R 45.355	3,027	1,255,960
Limpopo	R153.125	R 38.281	2,794	912,800
Mpumalanga	R 64.079	R 16.02	1,379	491,362
Northern Cape	R 22.469	R 5.617	1,460	300,678
North West	R 72.401	R 18.1	274	111,384
Western Cape	R 36.617	R 9.154	866	149,035
Total	R832.2 million	R208.05 million	17,144	4,659,681

Source: Public Monitoring Group 2004

The table indicates that allocation for the poorer provinces and provinces with larger populations, i.e. KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo, are much greater than that for wealthier and smaller provinces.

The evaluation by the South African Human Rights Commission – discussed earlier – found the budgeted resource allocation per targeted learner per day of the PSNP to be unreasonable. This relates to the reduced allocation of resources to the programme between 2001/2002 and 2002/2003. In 2001/2002 the total cost of the school food ‘meal’ ranged from approximately 99 cents to R2.10. In 2002/2003, however, the maximum budgeted resource available per targeted learner per day was less than 67 cents. This, they assert, is clearly an unreasonable set of parameters for the programme and needs to be improved to meet the higher standards set by Cabinet.

8. Targeting of the NSNP

8.1 Department of Health’s targeting criteria

The national Department of Health, when it was responsible for the NSNP (then PSNP), outlined broad criteria for its selection of schools. The criteria were (Kloka 2003c):

- Identify geographic areas where poverty levels are highest.
- Prioritise selected geographic areas according to the severity of poverty.
- Identify registered needy schools for school feeding within the selected geographic areas, focusing on rural and farms schools and schools in informal settlements.
- Avoid individual targeting and feed all learners in targeted schools.
- Give priority to Grade R learners.
- Determine the maximum number of learners that could be fed through the following formula: $\text{School feeding budget} / \text{number of feeding days} / \text{cost per learner} = \text{maximum number of learners that could be fed}$.

- Avoid compromising the number of feeding days, quantity and quality of food and menu options in an effort to feed more children, because this would adversely affect the impact of school feeding.

Within this framework, provincial Departments of Health, in collaboration with provincial Departments of Education, implemented flexible targeting strategies to identify the most vulnerable schools. In essence, each province applied their own targeting criteria, using the strategy devised by the national department as a guide. This resulted in somewhat significant differences. Table 4 below provides a description of the targeting criteria applied by each province.

There seemed to be two tiers of targeting under the management of the Department of Health – the school, and the children within that school. However, provinces selected different mechanisms for targeting the children in need in their schools. The Free State Province indicated that they fed *all* children in targeted schools. In other provinces, for example in Gauteng, teachers identified ‘needy’ children.

Table 4: Department of Health’s provincial targeting strategies for identifying vulnerable schools

Province	Criteria
<i>Eastern Cape</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All learners in all farm schools. • Grade R learners to Grade 4 learners in ‘needy’ primary schools. • Targeting guidelines, indicators/criteria not given.
<i>Free State</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority given to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - farm schools; - schools in informal settlements; and - schools in small towns. • Use percentage of learners paying development funds (school fees) and other donations as indicators to identify ‘needy’ schools. • Feed all learners in targeted schools.
<i>Gauteng</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite all registered primary schools to apply. • All primary schools that apply receive school feeding. • Teachers identify needy children based on criteria such as financial status and nutritional status.
<i>KwaZulu-Natal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed in farm and rural schools and schools in informal settlements. • Feeding in township schools takes place according to the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority of children come to school hungry. - High absenteeism rate. - Majority of learners are unable to pay school fees. - Majority of learners are not able to bring food boxes to school. - Learners come from homes that depend on a social grant for survival. - General lack of concentration and participation in school activities.
<i>Limpopo</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeds all learners in rural and peri-urban schools.
<i>Mpumalanga</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed schools in poverty-stricken areas, including farming, rural, deep rural and informal settlement areas. • Use indicators and departmental assessments in collaboration with Department of Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social problems; - unemployment; - disease; - poor school performance; and - dropping out.
<i>Northern Cape</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give priority to rural schools. • Feed all learners in participating rural schools. • Phasing out urban schools/feed only 50% of learners in participating

	<p>urban schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use results of 1994 anthropometric survey in primary schools to identify 'needy' schools.
<i>North West</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools in geographic areas with a poverty level of 70% and above are eligible for school feeding. • Schools in areas where the poverty gap is below the cut-off point (70%) but where there are pockets with poverty gaps of 70% or more are identified through a nutrition situation analysis taking into account community inputs/discussions and variables such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nutritional indicators; - vital statistics; and - household food security indicators. • All rural and farm schools and schools in informal settlement areas are potentially eligible to school feeding. • The poverty gap is applied in a realistic and flexible manner, i.e. the cut-off point is not applied strictly and in isolation to other variables. • The maximum number of children to be fed is limited to the budget available, using the following formula: School feeding budget/number of feeding days/standardised cost = maximum number of children to be served. • The number of feeding days or quantity and quality of menu options will not be compromised to feed more children. Doing this would adversely affect the impact of school feeding.
<i>Western Cape</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools are targeted according to the classification in the Poverty Index, used by the Department of Education. • The Poverty Index classifies schools on a scale of 0 to 1, with 1 being the most impoverished. • The province feeds all the learners in the poorest schools (which includes all rural and farm schools), half the children in slightly better-off schools, and a quarter of the children in the remaining schools with a poverty index above the threshold of 0.5.

Source: Kloka 2003c

8.2 Department of Education's targeting criteria

The Department of Education has acknowledged that it is not possible for the funding of ordinary public schools to be driven by a simple per learner formula²⁰ that favours the poor. The reasons for this are that social conditions and school conditions are massively unequal, provincial administrations and school governing bodies have widely varying capacities, and provincial governments have different fiscal competencies.²¹

The Norms and Standards therefore set out that allocations for recurrent cost items (which would include the NSNP) must be targeted as far as possible on the basis of need, determined according to the condition of the school and the relative poverty of the school community, using what they have called a "resource targeting table", set out in Table 5 on the next page.

²⁰ Number of learners x cost per learner x the number of feeding days = school feeding budget.

²¹ *National Norms and Standards for School Funding in terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84, 1996)*, Department of Education, Pretoria, October 1998.

Table 5: Resource targeting table based on condition of schools and poverty of communities

School quintiles from poorest to least poor	Expenditure allocation	Cumulative percentage of schools	Cumulative percentage of non-personnel and non-capital recurrent expenditure	Per learner expenditure indexed to average of 100
Poorest 20%	35% of the resources	20%	35%	175
Next 20%	25% of the resources	40%	60%	125
Next 20%	20% of the resources	60%	80%	100
Next 20%	15% of the resources	80%	95%	75
Least poor 20%	5% of the resources	100%	100%	25

Source: Department of Education 1998

Each provincial education department (PED) is required to produce a “resource targeting list” of all schools in its province, sorted on the conditions at the school and the poverty of the community served by the school, to produce the five groups of schools. These will correspond to the “school quintiles, from poorest to least poor” column in Table 5. Resource allocation will be based on this list.

The resource targeting list will comprise all ordinary public schools in the province sorted by ‘need’ or ‘poverty’. Two equally weighted factors will be used to rank the schools:

- a. *The physical condition, facilities and crowding of the school.* Using the school register of needs data, provincial education departments may create indices based on the range of physical facilities at the school, learner to classroom ratio, the overall condition and need for repairs, and the availability of basic services. This factor is weighted 50%.
- b. *The relative poverty of the community around the school.* Using Census, household survey or other data, provincial education departments may create indices based on, for example, the proportion of households with electricity and piped water in the community served by the school, the level of education of the parents served by the school, and other similar criteria. This factor is also weighted 50%.

Within these parameters, there is quite a lot of discretion in how provinces define poverty and how they do the analysis.

Having listed the schools in rank order, PEDs must then divide the list into five quintiles, from poorest to least poor. The distribution by quintile will determine the per learner allocation in terms of the resource targeting table above. Thus, allocations will be made on a variable per school basis that favours the poorer schools. The ‘neediest’ and largest schools will get priority in funding.

Practically, all the schools in the poorest 20% get the same amount of money per learner. Under the recently introduced management of the Department of Education, schools do not have to apply for the NSNP scheme; they are automatically identified by the department and allocated expenditure for the programme.

The same resource targeting table is to be used by all PEDs. However, each PED's resource targeting list need not be used mechanically. There are four ways in which variations may be made to the list:

- a. ***Naturally occurring breaks.*** PEDs are urged to take advantage of naturally occurring breaks in the distribution that are close to, but do not exactly coincide with, the quintile break points (20%, 40%, etc.). For example, if schools in the 17th percentile are distinctly poorer than those in the 18th, the break point need not be the 20th percentile, but may be the 17th. The same might apply to any break points around the 40th, 60th, and 80th percentiles. If slightly different break points are used, the relative expenditures per learner in the various quintiles may differ somewhat from those shown in the last column of Table 5 above.
- b. ***Homogeneous conditions.*** If the distribution makes it practically impossible to distinguish between two quintiles, the provincial education department is encouraged to consider making the same per learner allocations to the two quintiles. However, the general progression of the table must be respected.
- c. ***Special circumstances.*** It is inevitable that special circumstances will apply in a number of schools, which will warrant reassigning them to another quintile. Governing bodies may also apply for such a reassignment and provincial education departments must establish a fair and objective administrative mechanism for considering such requests and deciding upon them.
- d. ***Further subdivisions.*** It is unlikely that enough information will exist to enable a PED to create further sub-divisions, particularly in the poorest two quintiles. However, if sufficient information is available, a provincial education department may proceed to create further sub-divisions, as long as the overall progression of the table is respected.

When the 90-day report on the NSNP was presented to the Select Committee on Education and Recreation in the National Council of Provinces in June 2004 (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2004), Ms Mpati reasserted that the targeting criteria focused on reaching the poorest schools and on prioritising rural and farm schools and informal settlements. Grade R was to be a priority in public schools, and the programme would extend progressively to other grades as resources permitted. She also said that KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces would get the largest share.

Her report further noted that there were variations in targeting. For example, Gauteng Province has extended the programme to some secondary schools, using its own provincial budget in addition to the conditional grant it receives from the national Department of Education. The Eastern Cape Province has spread its net wider by covering all pupils, but only up to Grade 4, while the Free State is considering extending feeding to targeted secondary schools.

8.3 Evaluation of the targeting mechanism

One of the advantages of the targeting mechanism used by the Department of Education is that it is very clearly pro-poor as it was designed to channel the largest percentage of money to the poorest schools. The schools are 'graded' by provincial education departments, leaving some discretion in their hands but within the ambit of the national guidelines. However, one concern is that, because the targeting is done on a provincial basis rather than a national basis, this means those in the poorer provinces may be unfairly disadvantaged

because the depth of their poverty is greater. For example, a school in the poorest 20% in Gauteng may fall into the same category as one in the next quintile in the Eastern Cape. The department does however attempt to address this by allocating the largest share of the budget to KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo – the three poorest provinces (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2004).

It is unclear from the information available whether every child in a school will receive a meal or whether the Department of Education envisages a second level targeting of individual pupils within schools. Although the guidelines stated that all children in a school should receive a meal, the various evaluations discussed earlier pointed out that, under the Department of Health, this was not the case in the majority of instances. This selection of learners for school feeding within schools led to stigmatisation. And as pointed out earlier, another cause for concern is where a school is a combined junior/secondary school and children from the same family attending different grades in that school are not all eligible for the nutrition programme.

There are thus a number of exclusions and inequities created by the targeting of the NSNP, and the PSNS before it. Since a child is legally defined as a person under the age of 18 years, this programme targets only a very small proportion of 'children'. Groups of children who are excluded include those who are too young to go to school, and those who are in secondary schools in provinces where the NSNP is not delivered at secondary school level (i.e. currently most schools). It also excludes children who are not enrolled or are not attending school for one of a number of reasons. They could be so poor that they are unable to attend school because they cannot afford school uniforms, school fees or transport to and from school. They may also stay at home to look after a sick parent or sibling. The child may live in such a poor household that they do wage or in-kind labour instead of attending school. Or they may be disabled and not able to access specialised or mainstream schooling. The fact that the programme is targeted through the schooling system means that it is able to reach a very large number of children easily, but could possibly exclude those most in need.

Lastly, the programme currently also excludes poor children who attend schools in wealthier areas. In a recent case before the Durban High Court, a school in a middle class area that is attended by a majority of poor children from surrounding informal settlements, applied to get onto the school nutrition programme repeatedly over a period of two years. The school was added to the NSNP only after the matter was taken to court and settled in March 2005.

9. Conclusion

The primary aim of the NSNP is to foster better quality education by enhancing children's active learning capacity, by alleviating short-term hunger, by providing an incentive for children to attend school regularly and punctually and by addressing certain micronutrient deficiencies. In order to assess whether this goal has been reached it would be necessary to compare the educational performance of participating children and schools with those who have not been chosen for the programme. This would require an evaluation that takes into consideration the range of other factors that affect school performance, drop-out rates, enrolment and concentration. However, this information is not available.

With respect to its numerical targets, the programme was successful in providing meals to 4.5 million children in 16,107 schools in 2003/2004. However, the number of children benefiting from the programme has decreased steadily over the last few years and the department has no intention of increasing the number of children targeted for assistance. It could be argued that this constitutes a regressive rather than progressive step – as required by the constitutional right to adequate food. Earlier sections of this paper highlighted a lack of research evidence about the nutritional status of children since 2000. Without these figures it is impossible to assess the absolute need for the programme, which ought to inform the targeting of both schools and learners.

The programme has also been plagued by administrative problems, which the Department of Education has made a commitment to address. This needs ongoing monitoring. The details of the second level of the targeting mechanism (i.e. how children are targeted within schools) need to be clarified to ensure that local needs are met in line with the State's constitutional obligations.

In relation to the right of the child to basic nutrition, it is argued that the State is constitutionally obliged to provide a minimum level of nutrition to all children whose parents cannot provide it. Furthermore, it could be argued that the NSNP is the one measure by the State which seeks to meet the right of the child to basic nutrition. The NSNP on its own though is not sufficient to meet all the daily nutritional needs of children since it only provides one meal a day; and also does not cover children not yet of school-going age, children in secondary school and children not at school due to poverty.

To address children's right to basic nutrition more fully, the NSNP needs to be part of a more comprehensive nutrition programme that covers all children in need, especially those that are most vulnerable.

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