Improving teacher involvement and cook performance for a national school feeding program

Nigeria

Partner
The Nigerian Economic Summit Group
NHGSFP
Accenture

Sector
Social aid, investment

Project Type
Field experiment

Sample Size
210 schools

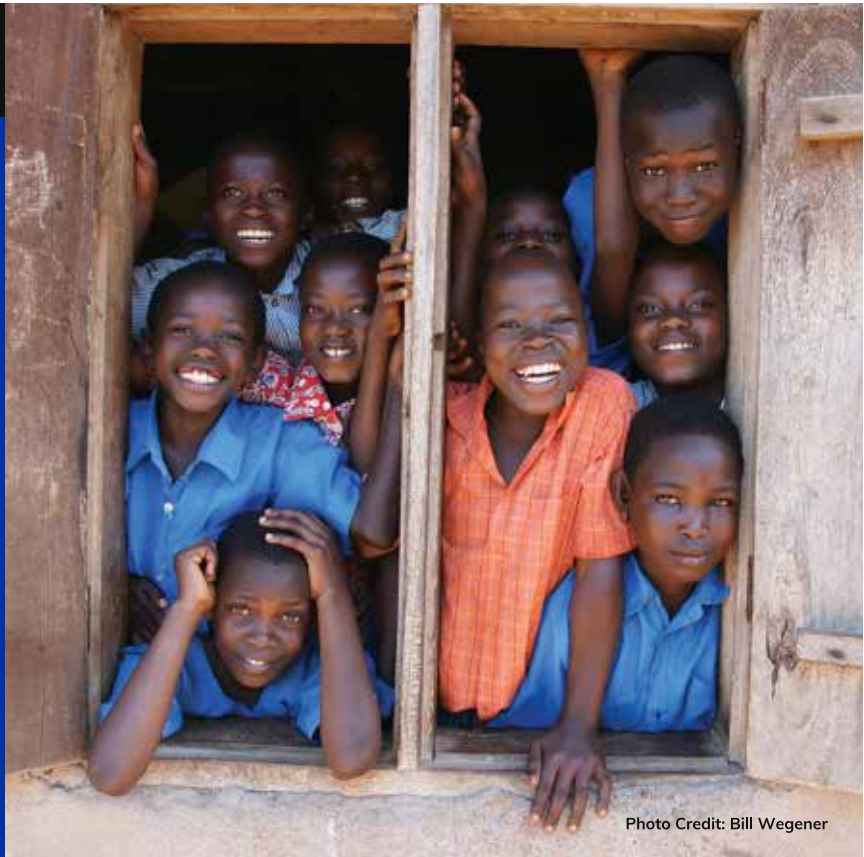**Behavioral Themes**
Salience

Photo Credit: Bill Wegener

Can community ownership of school feeding programs improve delivery of services?

The National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) was established in 2015 by the Federal Government of Nigeria to address rising concerns regarding the low rate of primary school enrollment and attendance. The program, which was to be implemented on a national scale was housed under the National Social Investment Office (NSIO) - a body instituted to manage the implementation of national social investment programs. Over the subsequent two years, the NHGSFP had extended to over 30,000 schools across 19 states (out of 36), reaching over 6.5 million pupils, engaging over 60,000 cooks and supplying food from local agricultural producers.

As this program was deployed, there was an interest in developing a set of interventions aimed at improving community ownership over the school feeding program. Busara, as part of the Policy Innovation Unit within the NSIO, developed and tested a set of nudges to improve community engagement with the school feeding program.
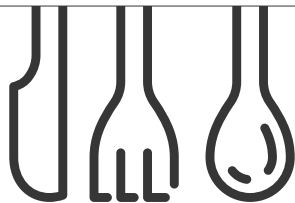
A Behavioral Science Approach

Effective accountability of a program as complex as the NHGSFP is difficult. Teachers, while vested in the program's success, are not always aware or have readily available the expectations of the cooks delivering the program. Parents have limited visibility on the quality of the meals being delivered to their students. Even in the event where they learn about a challenge to the program, they may be subject to a number of competing priorities in ensuring their children have healthy meals and a high quality education.

This project aimed to explore how an understanding of these challenges might lead to more effective design of a community engagement program around the school feeding initiative, and ultimately higher quality delivery of the program to its students.

Goals			
	Increase School Enrollment and Attendance	Improve Cook Welfare	Promote Local Agricultural Production

Design

Interventions - The program leads identified community buy-in and engagement, as well as effective cook support and monitoring as the primary challenges faced within the program. In addressing these, Busara designed a series of interventions which were implemented by the PIU with support from the NSIO. The primary intervention was:

Information aprons

Aprons were awarded to the cooks as a uniform and were encoded with the guidelines for the program to provide a salient reminder to teachers and students on the standards they could hold the cooks to.

The theory was that providing a clear and accessible reminder of the program principles would encourage higher cook compliance and better community monitoring.

Cooks are required to wear these aprons when serving pupils food. These aprons serve to make the responsibilities of cooks more salient to everyone who interacts with them during meal-times (teachers, pupils, the wider community). The aprons also include a toll-free phone number that members of the community and/or other cooks can call to provide feedback or find out more information on the program.
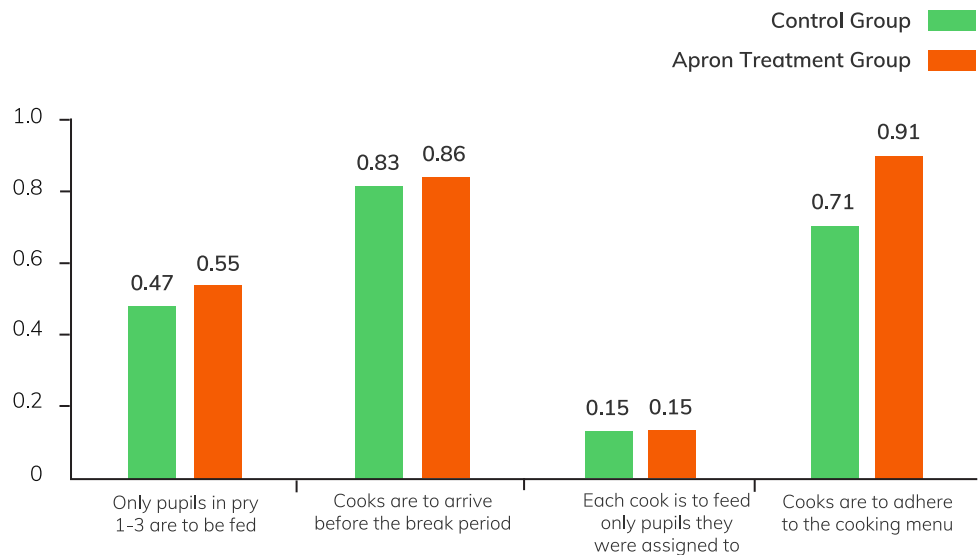
Results

Effect of apron treatment on teachers' understanding of the program

The informational apron improved teachers' understanding of some aspects of the program

Only pupils in pry 1-3 are to be fed	Cooks are to arrive before the break period	Each cook is to feed only pupils they were assigned to	Cooks are to adhere to the cooking menu
0.47 / 0.55	0.83 / 0.86	0.15 / 0.15	0.71 / 0.91

Effect of apron treatment on cooks' behavior

The informational apron had no impact on cooks' behavior

Late	On time	Early
0.01 / 0.02 / 0.02 / 0.06	0.54 / 0.55	0.29 / 0.29 / 0.13 / 0.09
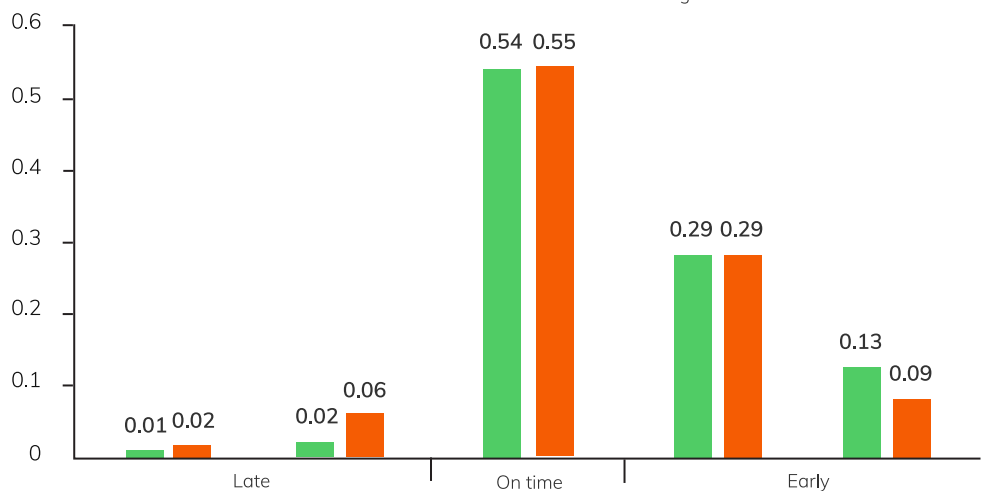
Discussion

Understanding, not necessarily action

The informational apron had a positive impact on teachers understanding of the program, but did not drive any change in cook's behavior. This may suggest that simply involving other actors in the program delivery alone will not necessarily drive their ownership of the end result.

Cook exclusivity and guideline adherence

One of the guiding principles of the program was that cooks were intended to serve a specific set of pupils each and every day. Understanding and agreement with that statement was very low (15%), and did not move after exposure to the aprons. This could suggest that prompting guidelines that are not universally accepted could lead to diminished effects in enforcing the full set of guidelines. For instance, if I agree with 3/4 of rules, but strongly disagree with the final, I may discount the importance of the rules in general.