

Mapping the extent of implementation of school food & nutrition interventions at policy and school levels in Kenya

Context

In Kenya, undernutrition rates in adolescents remain high while overweight and obesity are increasing, especially in urban contexts.

Schools have become important settings for implementing food and nutrition programmes, since adolescents spend 75% of their time at schools and are at an age when dietary habits are formed.

There is a need to document the extent of adoption of policy action in Kenya with global recommendations for comprehensive school food and nutrition programmes (SFNPs).

Objective

The objective of this study was to map the extent of implementation of school food & nutrition interventions at policy and school levels in Kenya

Methods

A comprehensive search of global policy documents and scientific publications resulted in identifying 58 good practice indicators (GPI) for assessing comprehensive SFNPs. These indicators were grouped into 5 main domains and 26 components (Fig. 1).



Fig 1

We searched for Kenyan policy documents addressing these 5 domains, by consulting websites and focal persons from relevant sectors. These documents had to i) be issued by the government (national/county level), ii) mention schools and children/adolescents, and iii) be published in 2010 or later.

We conducted a school based survey (N=30) to assess the extent of SFNP implementation at school level

We assessed the evidence of alignment of policies and school level implementation against the GPIs using the classification:

- the indicator was not addressed in policy / school
- the indicator was partially addressed in policy / school
- the indicator was fully addressed in policy / school

We conducted deliberative workshops with school community (students, teachers, parents, vendors) to identify the challenges and potential solutions in implementing SFNP

Results

38 were included in the review, mainly issued by the Ministry of Health or Ministry of Education.

In total, 19 components (39/58 GPI) were partially or fully addressed by Kenyan policy documents. Policy actions were strong in areas such as Food safety, Health & nutrition services, Nutrition education and Water sanitation & hygiene within the school premises. No policy actions targeted the external school food environment. Cross-cutting issues like gender, inclusion, environmental sustainability were only partially addressed in the policy documents (Table 1).

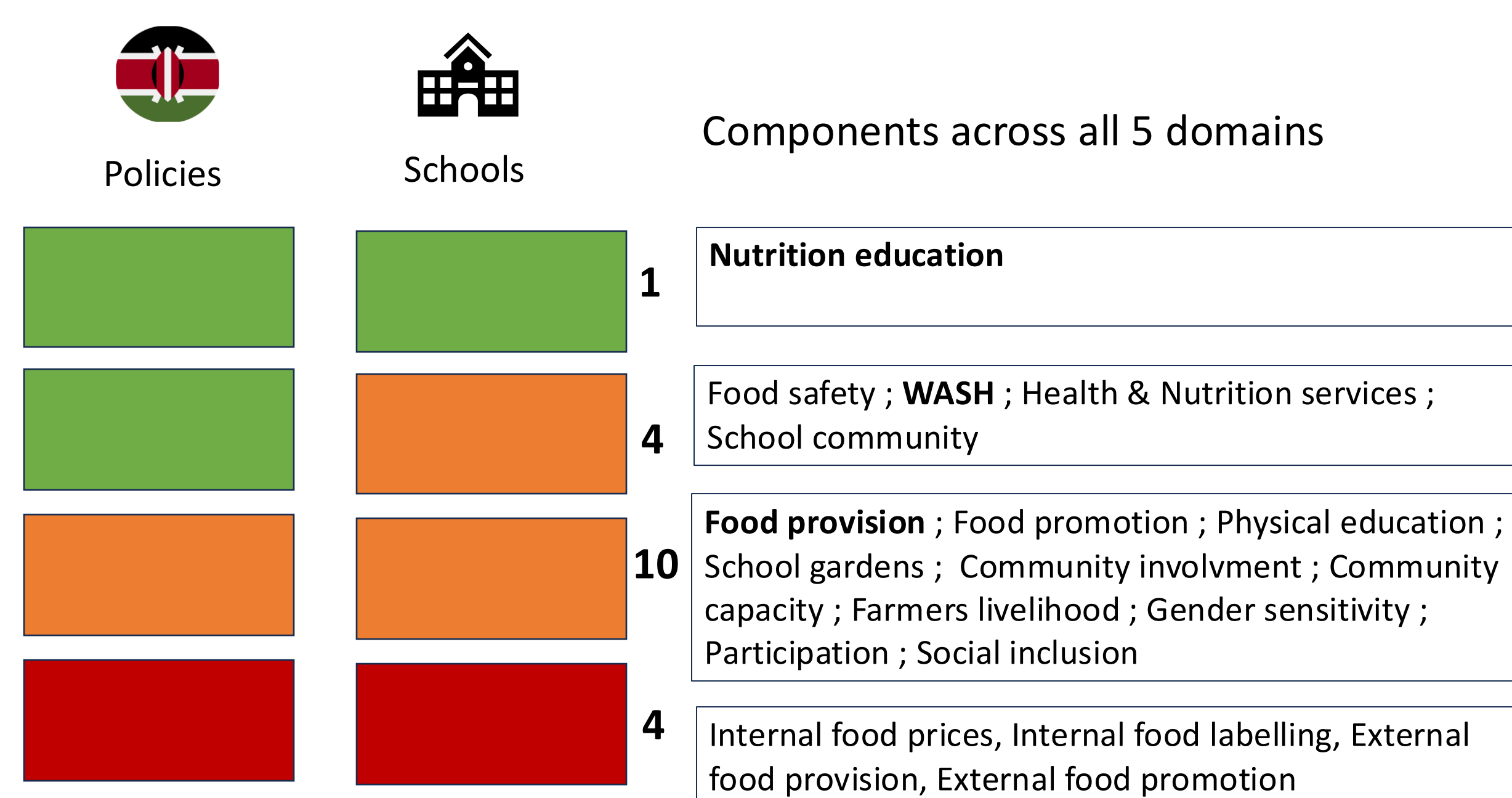
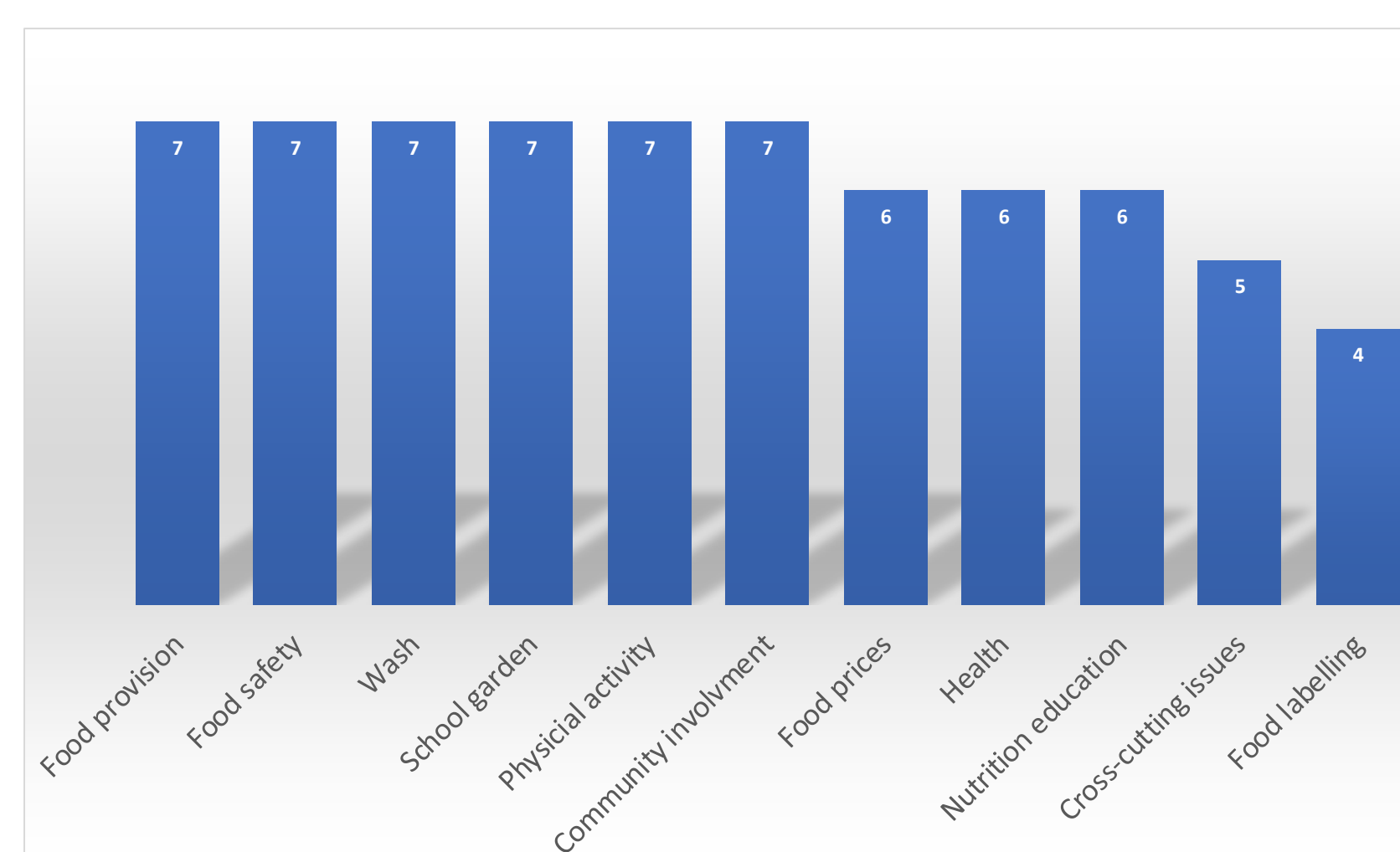


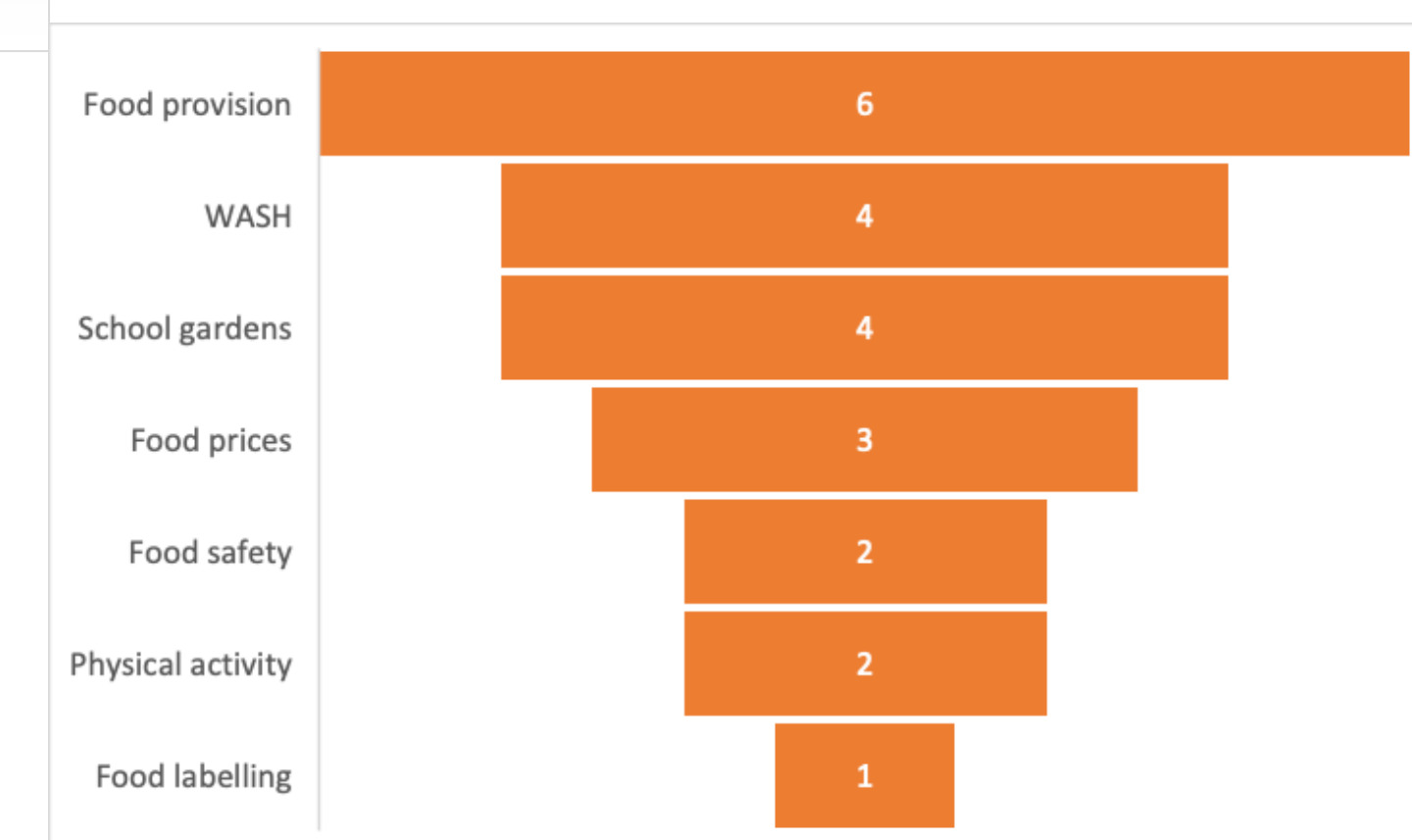
Table 1: Alignment of Kenyan policies against global good practice indicators across the 5 domains
* GPI: Good practice indicators



Number of schools (out of 7) that identified each component as a challenge

"{Parents} There are students who complain that foods are not well cooked; some of them find some things in the food that cause stomach-aches. {Students} Okay, Monday we do have ugali and cabbage, the soup is always too dilute to be soup. It's like hot water, during lunchtime especially today – Monday, Tuesday and Friday, you will find that they pour away the soup because it's too dilute. So the students complain because nutrition or feeding programme in the school currently is not well taken care of" (Challenges workshop, public, boys, day school, medium SES area, Nairobi)

"We don't have enough space where we can have a garden .. we can decide to start introducing smart farming, we have seen some people have sacs, even plastics where they plant maybe vegetables." (Solutions, Teachers/Vendore, Nairobi)



Number of times each component was selected as a top priority challenge to be addressed by the participants across the 7 schools

Conclusions

- Significant policy guidance, heavy focus on the school premises, insufficient guidance on the external food environment
- Gaps in implementation in schools → need for monitoring and feedback mechanisms
- Beside SMPs, other components are essential for the promotion of healthy diets among adolescents : WASH, school gardening, nutrition education → need to strengthen collaborations between sectors for optimal implementation