



SCHOOL FEEDING – A CATAPULT TO INCREASED PUPIL ENROLEMENT AND RETENTION IN TAKAKAMIAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Picture: Pupils of Takaramiam happy with the harvest from their potato garden

Takaramiam primary school started in 2004 as a community initiative with a first enrolment of 175 pupils, in 2009 Government took over and is now a Government aided primary school with an enrolment of 585 pupils 2015. With the problem of lack of mid-day meals in most government aided schools, coupled with the low level of quality teaching, the school was enrolment had gone down, and the enthusiasm for parents to send their children in this school had greatly dwindled. The school feeding concept started in Takaramiam primary school late 2013 (October) as a pilot basing on experience of CIDI in the area of school gardening under SNV funded project that phased out in 2013. During the 18 months of the pilot period, tremendous results have been registered. During the recent discussions with the key stake holders, a number of them had very good testimonies to share, and some of them have been documented as presented in the following section;

School enrolment in Takaramiam primary school has increased from 420 to 490 pupils (in a period of about less than a year) , resulting from the initiatives of mid day meals offered at school from the harvests of school gardens. The high enrolment has created a situation of lack of enough space in the form of classrooms for pupils to study in. With only two class room blocks, with two classes each, the current number of pupils is overwhelming with a teacher to pupil a ratio of 1:80. As a result, PAG church, a development partner has appreciated the dire need for additional classroom space and was has been able to construct one additional classroom making now a total of five classes.

One of the teachers testified as such *“Provision of mid day meals has made pupils fully stay at school for the time they are meant to since they no longer have to go home for lunch at mid day as it used to be before the pilot project came on board. Dodging of afternoon lesions is no more as it used to be the case when pupils could go out for lunch in their homes and never come back and some would end up being assigned other chores at home”*. *“Escapism and truancy have actually dwindled significantly”* says Mr. Onyinge Julius a P.7 Teacher who also added that pupils’ interest to be at school and concentrate in class has greatly improved.

According to Apiding Immaculate her two children used to give her headache of waking them up and chase them all around to school every day but when mid day feeding started, her children these days wake up very early without her call one of the parents added; *“We the neighbors to this school used to suffer with these kids, our oranges, mangoes were stolen daily by children but when they started feeding at school this vice no longer happens”* says Mr. Auta George a parent at the vicinity of the school.

“Through the school gardening activities that we pupils have participated fully in, setting up demonstration gardens at school, I have learnt good agricultural practices like row planting of crops which knowledge has helped me to be able to produce vegetable gardens at home which harvests have enabled me relieve my father off the burden of providing for me entirely in terms of scholastic materials, I am nowadays able to buy sanitary pads on my own without running to daddy for money, also my perception of agriculture as a punishment has changed. I now view and consider it a productive and profitable activity” Says Tino Doreen a Primary seven pupil.

Considering the picture of all the surrounding primary schools in the sub county, it can be said that Takaramiam primary school has become a model