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A Study on the Implementation of the National Social Assistance Policies in Cambodia

Factors Affecting the Implementation of the Home-Grown School Feeding Program

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Graduate School of Public Administration
Seoul National University
Global Public Administration Major

Lart Souy

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Academic Advisor   Choi, Jongwon

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Graduate School of Public Administration
Seoul National University
Global Public Administration Major

Lart Souy

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Lart Souy

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Chair	Koo, Mingyo	(Seal)
Vice Chair	Kim, Byeongjo	(Seal)
Examiner	Choi, Jongwon	(Seal)

Abstract

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Lart Souy
Global Public Administration Major
The Graduate School of Public Administration
Seoul National University

The Home-Grown School Feeding program (HGSF) is currently owned and operated by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) in some provinces after the pilot program and a long period of technical and financial assistance from development partners and donors. This program is considered a social assistance program aimed at improving the attendance and nutrition of school children and promoting local farming through providing daily school meals to vulnerable children. The HGSF was piloted from 2017 to 2019 through the implementation of the McGovern-Dole programs or Food For Education project (EF), technically supported by the World Food Program (WFP) and funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole grant. The program was evaluated

as an effective and successful program with the support of numerous factors, even though substantial challenges remained during the implementation.

Therefore, this study analyzes and scrutinizes the influential factors that affected the success and effectiveness of the program implementation by utilizing the top-down approach of an implementation study. The theoretical framework and relevant documents were reviewed to collect essential information for the analysis. Additionally, an online survey with open-ended questions was purposefully administered to several key policy actors while a few key informants were contacted for interviews. As a result, the majority of the previous studies cannot apparently identify which factor is more important than the others, and those authors do not have a consensus on variables affecting the successful program implementation. However, this study specifically found that the top three main factors are the most dominant to the success of the McGovern-Dole program implementation. The results indicate policy consistency as the leading priority factor, followed by the institutional capacity and government commitment and support, respectively.

According to the study results, the government should considerably focus on these three factors while implementing the HGSF as a national program. In addition to sufficient and consistent policy frameworks, it is suggested that capacity building for implementers is necessary for effective program implementation. In the meantime, government commitment and support are needed to improve program outcomes for the current and future implementation of the HGSF.

Keywords: Home-Grown School Feeding, McGovern-Dole program, successful program implementation, key factors, program sustainability.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACRC	All Children Reading Cambodia
CDF	Commune Development Funds
CSDGs	Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals
DEO	District of Education, Youth and Sports
DPE	Department of Primary Education
DSFCs	District School Feeding Committees
EFA	Education for All
EGR	Early Grade Reading
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
DEO	District of Education, Youth and Sport
EFA	Education for All
FE	Food for Education
HEF	Health Equity Fund
HGSF	Home-Grown School Feeding
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports
NFV	National Fund for Veterans
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSPC	National Council of Social Protection
NSPPF	National Social Protection Policy Framework
PI	Plan International
WFP	The World Food Program
WEI	World Education Incorporated
USDA	The United States Department of Agriculture

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Cambodia is a lower-middle-income country with a 15.5 million population, which increased by 2.15 million people over the 11 years between 2008 and 2019.[1] The economy of Cambodia had continuously grown by seven percent per year for the last two decades before the economic situation that was negatively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.[2] The poverty rate dropped from 13.5 percent in 2014 to below ten percent in 2019.[3] Cambodia Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita increased from USD 1,093 in 2014 to USD 1,643 in 2019.[4] For the official mandate of the National Assembly, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) established the Rectangular Strategy as the top policy framework for Growth, Employment, Equity, and Efficiency through the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), which summarizes key achievements and challenges of policy implementation and outlines priority action plans of the country. As a result of the policy implementation, the RGC achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 by strengthening public institutional capacity, modernizing economic structure, and promoting good governance to ensure economic and social development.

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[1] According to the report of Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2019/20, the population size was not included the Cambodian people living outside the country

[2] Due to the outbreak, it was estimated that the real GDP growth was 2.3 percent in 2021 because serval key sectors, especially the tourism and manufacturing industries, were severely affected, according to Ly Sodeth (2021).

[3] This information is extracted from the National Strategic Development Plan of Cambodia 2019-2023. According to the Ministry of Planning, the poverty rate increased to 17.8 percent in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

[4] The National Report on Final Census Results of Cambodia 2019 indicates that Cambodia has become a lower middle-income country since 2016 and will achieve the upper middle-income country by 2030.

In this regard, it has been acknowledged that the Social Protection System has played a vital role in supporting economic growth and sustainable development with equity and inclusiveness by ensuring support for poor and most vulnerable people to escape from the poverty trap and vulnerability. In 2016, the RGC formulated the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) 2016-2025, aiming to expand social protection benefits to people in need through Social Security and Social Assistance pillars. Under the Social Security pillar, in particular, the government has established the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), the National Fund for Veterans (NFV), the National Social Security Fund for Civil Servants (NSSFCS), and the People with Disabilities Fund (PWDF), to provide social protection services for particular groups of the government officials, veterans, persons with disability, formally employed workers and employees who face income instability that might occur from sickness, occupational injuries, disability, pregnancy or old age. Moreover, under the social protection umbrella, the social assistance programs, including the Scholarship for Primary and Secondary School, Disability Allowance, Cash Transfer for Pregnant Women and Children under Two, the Health Equity Fund (HEF), and Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF), have been implemented by the government.

In the case of the implementation of HGSF, it is considered one of the core educational and social protection programs in Cambodia, aiming to promote equity in access to education, retention of children in school, and completion of primary and secondary education. In principle, the program provides breakfast or lunch prepared by community cooks to the children who come to school; therefore, they are expected to be able to go to school regularly and to pay more attention to their studies. The program was also designed to promote the productivity of local commodities and economic activities. In particular, community people were encouraged to be suppliers by producing agricultural products that could support the

program implementation.

The HGSF was piloted from 2017 to 2019 through the implementation of the Food for Education program (FE) implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) in collaboration with the World Food Program (WFP) and implementing partners and financially supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole grant. The program was implemented in three out of twenty-five provinces and executed in 585 primary schools and covered 8,400 children from the poorest households (Dunn et al., 2020). Since 2019, the HGSF has been fully managed and implemented by the government as the national program, even though the program coverage is still limited due to a deficiency of budget allocation and institutional capacity.

Before the pilot implementation of the HGSF, it was difficult to achieve the program outcomes due to numerous challenges with contextual factors, such as lack of clean water in rural areas, deficiency of complete package of infrastructure, insufficient community support and participation, food insecurity, annual natural disaster (Nielsen et al., 2010; WFP, 2014). An impact evaluation report 2020, however, showed that the program was effectively and successfully implemented. The program resulted in an improvement in the level of literacy of children, an improvement in the use of health and nutritional practices, and an increase in the number of school attendance and the enrollment rate (Dunn et al., 2020).

1.2. Purpose and Scope of the Study

1.2.1. Purpose of the Study

Multiple factors lead to concrete program implementation and achievements, arising from both internal and external factors. These

factors could be strong collaboration between the MoEYS and implementing partners, strong technical capacity of implementing partners, substantial supply chain assistance, robust monitoring systems, stable financial support, government support and commitment, the commitment of implementing partners, donors and community support, and capacity building for the key implementers. Nevertheless, these factors are not clearly identified and which factors are likely to be more crucial than others.

Therefore, the primary purpose of the study is to discuss the most influential factors that contribute to the effectiveness and success of the development program implementation. Remarkably, the most significant factors that influenced the application of the HGSF program in the pilot program phase from 2017 to 2019 will be the center of the study. Theories to describe policy implementation elements are examined, and existing documents of the factors influencing policy execution are extended, followed by developing an analytical framework for the study. Other current studies that examine the implementation of education, health, and social protection policies regarding variables influencing the implementation of different policies are reviewed and synthesized. Moreover, the study examines the effects of policy actors' roles in supporting the success of program implementation. Existing studies and reports regarding the HGSF implementation are also analyzed. Additionally, the perspectives of government officials, program development partners, and experts involved in program implementation are collected and analyzed. Finally, the study identifies characteristics of the pilot program implementation that lead to the nationally owned program. Main reasons for taking the HGSF as a national program are discussed and explored by reviewing existing regulatory frameworks and documents concerning the education, health, and social protection sectors. Furthermore, key policy actors, program practitioners, and experts are

contacted to receive more information.

The findings would significantly improve the quality of the decisions of policymakers, policy implementers, and development partners to comprehend the components that affect the results of asocial assistance-related programs, especially the current and future the HGSF implementation. Based on the phenomena mentioned earlier, the study focuses on the research questions as the following:

1. What are the key factors that influence the effectiveness and success of the HGSF implementation to achieve program outcomes?
2. What major roles do actors play in the implementation process for effective program implementation?
3. What are the main features of the policy implementation of the HGSF program that lead it to the national program?

1.2.2. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the implementation of the HGSF program, which was implemented as a pilot program, namely Food for Education (FE), technically initiated and supported by WFP in collaboration with the MoEYS and implementing partners from 2017 to 2019. Furthermore, the study concentrates on the program implemented in three provinces of Cambodia and funded by the USDA McGovern-Dole Program Grant.

The study basically counts on theoretical research that emphasizes the context of policy implementation theories and factors that influence successful policy implementation. By analyzing the information from the views of policy implementation and existing documents and supported by the data from policy actors such as policymakers, policy implementers, and policy supporters, the study can identify the potential factors that result in the practical and successful implementation of the program.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background and Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background for Policy Implementation

2.1.1. Definition and Significance of Successful Policy Implementation

The concept of policy implementation has been defined differently according to the innovation and discovery of scholars. Policy implementation is a significant policy process that links policy evaluation and policy decisions, determining whether the policy is successful or unsuccessful. It is one of the policy instruments to reach a degree of policy, and the policy process is worthy of policymakers' commitment if the policy goal is effectively fulfilled in the domain of policy implementation (Wubalem & Xinhai, 2020).

Moreover, policy application represents actions undertaken by public and private organizations to fulfill the goals delineated in previous policy choices. It embraces one-time attempts to translate policy choices into operational terms and ongoing efforts to implement the major and minor adjustments demanded by policy decisions (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). It is concerned with enforcing a fundamental policy decision, typically enshrined in a measure, but can also be accomplished through executive orders and court decisions. Furthermore, it is associated with the policy execution and the process of achieving outcomes consistent with the original goals through outputs (Lane, 1987; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989).

Policy implementation is a sophisticated transformation process in which government choices are translated into programs, processes, rules, or practices targeted at societal improvement. It is viewed as the process of transforming a policy into action and assumptions into outcomes

through collaborative efforts, and it can identify several of the critical variables for successful policy implementation (DeGroff & Cargo, 2009; Tezera, 2019).

Successful policy implementation ensures productive outcomes if constituent groups devote significant time and attendance from the agenda-setting to the policy-making phase. It is frequently noted that the initially planned objective of the policy, which is decided in the policy decision-making process, becomes much more concrete and explicit throughout the implementation process. Therefore, policy implementation is recognized as one of the most critical policy procedures that may ensure the success and effectiveness of the policy implementation.

2.2.2. Dimensions for Successful Policy Implementation

Numerous elements affect the formation and execution of policies, including the method by which it is developed, the actors participating in the process, and the environment in which the policy is developed and enforced. Conditions for effective and successful policy implementation of policy have been identified and discussed distinctly by scholars, researchers, and professionals. Sabatier and Mazmania (1979) has identified five conditions that can contribute to achieving the policy objectives:

(1) Casual theory: an underlying causal theory in target group behavior is applied in program design. Appropriate means contribute to tackling problems and achieving the program objectives.

(2) Policy objectives and structures: the policy objectives and structures of the implementation process are developed to optimize the quality of implementation performance. Explicit policy objectives and systems are critical for providing clear

guidance to policy implementers. Furthermore, the practical implementations require sufficient resources, particularly human and financial, committed implementing officials, better coordination and formal rules within the organization, incentives for compliance, and opportunities for special interests to participate in the process and monitor performance.

(3) Management skill, political abilities, and commitment: the management team of the implementing organization has managerial and political abilities and a solid commitment to policy objectives. Leaders should be able to build strong working relationships, persuade opponents and specific groups, rally support, manage funds, maintain high morale, and resolve problems.

(4) Supports for program implementation: systematized constituency groups and policymakers vigorously assist in the program implementation process. It is critical to retain the support of key public officials; therefore, financial and technical resources would be supplied to implementing agencies to run the program effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, it is worth including interest groups to support implementation, decipher challenges, and persuade public officials.

(5) Sustainability of the program implementation: the program implementation is sustainable despite changing socioeconomic and political conditions. The perception of how important the problem the policy aims to solve might be influenced by socioeconomic factors. Resources derived from political support are likely to dwindle as a problem loses relative relevance over time (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979).

At the outset of policy implementation, not all prerequisites will be fulfilled. In cases where not all of the requirements are met, policymakers

can enhance the likelihood of effective implementation over time in various ways. According to Tezera (2019), four other primary dominants of effective policy execution should be considered. These determinants are indicated as follows:

(1) Policy design: the policy is discussed and outlined logically in response to prevailing issues. The clarity of policy objectives and priorities is identified to enhance the practical outcomes of the policy implementation. Policy objectives are clear and logical, policy contents and actions are justifiable, and implementation results are feasible.

(2) Stakeholders and involvement: At both individual and organizational levels, key policy actors can be political actors and a variety of experts who have the ability and experience to influence effective policy design and execution toward successful outcomes. These people can constitute a systematic vision of the program, develop concrete action plans, and create implementation procedures and structures.

(3) Institution and societal context: the institutional environment consists of the official and unwritten social limitations that govern the system's implementation process. Policies applied in various sectors, particularly in the education sector, are required to be examined as they may accelerate or disrupt the process of policy implementation.

(4) The implementation strategy: this factor refers to the implementation strategy that guides the process of mainstreaming the policy into action.

These determinants can be interpreted that successful implementation is dependent on clarity and consistency of policy objectives, concrete institutional framework, active consultations with public and private

partnerships, feasible targets and accomplishment bolstered by resources, strong economic fundamentals, robust implementation, and monitoring mechanisms, and political stability for effective public service delivery. Effective implementation necessitates efficient administrative structure, effective financial management, transparent processes, and qualified personnel. Significant capacity improvement in program planning, budgeting, and management is requisite at the national and international levels, with consensus on program objectives and targets (Tezera, 2019).

Other four elements influence policy implementation as classified by Egonmwan (2009). These elements include the significance of policy contents, program implementers, policy context, and environmental determinants. In practice, essential factors will be distinct based on specific challenges and circumstances. Furthermore, the other seven dimensions that affect policy implementation are outlined by Bhuyan et al. (2010). The dimensions include (1) the policy, its formulation, and dissemination; (2) social, political, and economic context; (3) leadership for policy implementation; (4) stakeholder involvement in policy implementation; (5) implementation planning and resource mobilization; (6) operations and services; and (7) feedback on progress and results. Wubalem & Xinhai (2020) defined five determinants and five models to provide guidelines for successful policy implementation and developed to enhance implementation performance. The determinants include rational, management, organizational, bureaucratic, and political factors as independent variables and implementation performance as a dependent variable. Additionally, the policy implementation models have the top-down, bottom-up, policy-action relationship, inter-organizational interaction, a rational choice, and synthesis of bottom-up and top-down implementation models.

2.2.3. Approaches to Policy Implementation

Top-Down Approach

The Top-down approach is considered authoritarian and hierarchical decision-making, organizational transformation, and leadership style. Strategies or plans are initially created by one or a few senior managers and then disseminated lower down the organizational hierarchy. The choices of the top management affect the lower levels of the hierarchy to varying degrees. The top-downers begins with a policy choice made by the central administration, followed by the question:

(1) To what degree were the practices of implementing authorities and particular groups compatible with the policy decision's objectives and procedures?

(2) To what degree were the outcomes congruent with the goals?

(3) What were the key components influencing policy outcomes and impacts?

(4) How was the policy adjusted as a result of the experience? (Lester et al., 1987)

The approach is beneficial when there is a dominating national program throughout the policy issue under examination, when a single public agency clearly dominates the field, or when the researcher is only concerned with the effectiveness of a program. The Top-down theorists advocate for precise and consistent policy objectives to enhance efficiency and reliability. The top-down approach benefits from systematically important variables to implement policy properly. Furthermore, the top-down approach indicates that policymakers should examine the potential of program implementers for successful implementation. However, it is argued by many scholars, particularly Michael Lipsky, who is the founding father of street-level bureaucracy, that this approach ignores the

discretionary power of street-level bureaucrats, who are the actual policy implementers at the ground level.

Bottom-Up Approach

The bottom-up approach is considered a participatory and consultative style of decision making, organizational change, and policy implementation in which participant engagement is encouraged at all levels, particularly at the ground level, where street-level bureaucrats mobilize actors who have common interests and goals to participate in service delivery activities at particular sectors. The program effectiveness counts on people's ability in the local implementing organizations. The role of street-level bureaucrats is defined as a day-to-day worker who provides direct services to beneficiaries, initiates policy strategies, mobilizes resources for policy implementation, and solves problems under pressure. Street-level bureaucrats are able to identify a policy network and comparative importance of several programs, either public or private, interact with policy implementers, and tackle unintended problems (Winter, 1990). It is considered that the talents of particular persons in subnational implementation structures are more essential than the endeavor of government servants at the central level in determining the success of the program.

Nevertheless, the bottom-up model has been criticized. Street-level bureaucrats have discretionary power in interactions with clients, and they are more likely to abandon clients' goals. Local implementers may take advantage of their clients and oppose policies enforced by the central administration. In circumstances, street-level bureaucrats may desire to follow the example of top-level policymakers and do their best to execute national programs (Birkland, 2015).

Synthesis Approach

The two approaches have strengths and weaknesses that contribute to policy implementation outcomes. In the Top-down approach, the policymakers are the main actors who can produce a rigorous policy framework that responds to prevailing issues. Researchers have suggested an abundance of variables and conditions for effective implementation. However, the Bottom-up approach focuses on the network of actors involved in service delivery in local areas. It is believed that the expertise of each individual will lead to program success. The top-down and Bottom-up methods are founded on distinct rationality notions. The top-downers is based on instrumental reasoning or a rational model, whereas the bottom-uppers is dependent on restricted reason or a satisfying model (Sabatier, 1986). The differences between the top-down and bottom-up approaches are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches

	Top-Down *(Sabatier & Mazmanian)*	**Bottom-Up** *(Hjern et al.)*
Focus	(Central) Government decision, e.g., new pollution control law	Local implementation structure (network) involved in a policy area, e.g., pollution control
Identification of major actors in the process	From top-down and from govt. out to private sector (although importance attached to causal theory also calls for accurate understanding of target group's incentive structure)	From bottom (govt. and private) up
Evaluative criteria	Focus on extent of attainment of formal objectives (carefully analyzed). May look at other politically significant criteria and unintended consequences, but these are optional.	Much less clear. Basically anything the analyst chooses which is somehow relevant to the policy issue or problem. Certainly does not require any careful analysis of official government decision (s).
Overall Focus	How does one steer system to achieve (top) policy-maker's intended policy results?	Strategic interaction among multiple actors in a policy network.

Source: Sabatier (1986, p. 33)

The top-down and bottom-down approaches were integrated into a new model, the synthesis model, for gaining a complete perspective and encouraging further theory development. Promising variables derived from the approaches were identified and combined to explain implementation outcomes. As a result, four key variables that influence implementation outcomes of policy were constructed: (1) the character of the policy formation process before the law or decision to be implemented, (2) the organizational and inter-organizational implementation behavior, (3) street-level bureaucratic behavior, and (4) the response by target groups and other changes in society. These elements indicate several stages or degrees in policy development and implementation operations. The integration model seeks to focus the study on a few critical variables while avoiding the extensive list of potentially relevant variables that are typical in implementation studies. However, the model becomes more sophisticated when each of the four variables is examined independently, especially the relationships among these variables (Winter, 1990).

2.2.4. Precedent Theories on Factors Affecting Policy Implementation

Donald Van Meter and Van Horn (1975)

This model describes six variables of the top-down approach that shape the relationship between policy and performance. These variables included: "(1) policy standards and objectives; (2) policy resources; (3) inter-organizational communication and enforcement activities; (4) characteristics of implementing agencies; (5) economic, social, and political conditions; (6) disposition of the implementers" (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Such a model does not only describe the connections between the independent variables and the ultimate dependent variable, but it also elucidates the interactions among the independent variables. Van Meter and Van Horn's policy implementation process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. A Model of the Policy Implementation Process
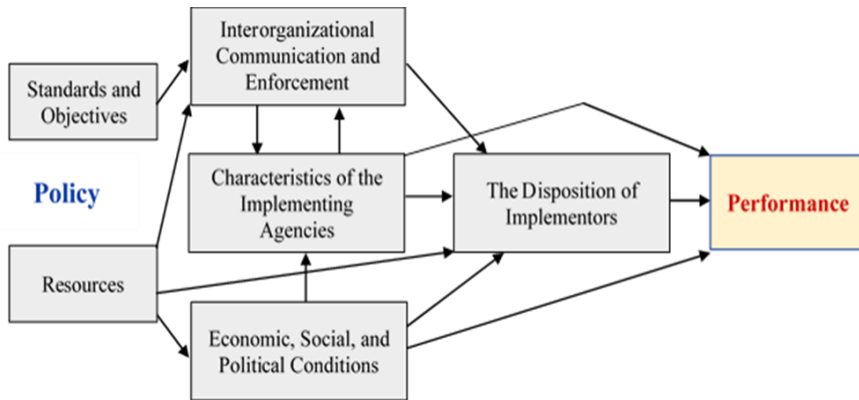
Source: *Van Meter and Van Horn (1975).*

Sabatier and Mazmanian Model (1980)

This top-down model depicts the key categories and independent variables influencing policy application. The categories included: (1) the tractability of the problem; (2) the ability of the statute to structure implementation; and (3) non-statutory variables affecting implementation. The variables that positively affect the implementation process were synthesized into six conditions: (1) Clear and consistent objectives; (2) Adequate causal theory; (3) Implementation process legally structured to enhance compliance by implementing officials and target groups; (4) Committed and skillful implementing officials; (5) Support of interest groups and sovereigns; (6) Changes in socio-economic conditions which do not substantially undermine political support or causal theory (Sabatier, 1986). Sabatier and Mazmanian's model is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Skeletal Flow Diagram of the Variables Involved in the Implementation Process

Tractability of the Problem
1. Availability of valid technical theory and technolog
2. Diversity of target-group behavior
3. Target group as percentage of the population
4. Extent of behavior change required

Ability of Statute to Structure Implementation
1. Clear and consistent objectives
2. Incorporation of adequate causal theory
3. Financial resources
4. Hierachical integration with and among implementing agency
5. Decision-rules of implementing agencies
6. Recruitment of implementing official
7. Formal access by outsiders

Nonstatutory Variables Affecting Implementation
1. Socioeconomic conditions and technology
2. Media attention to the problem
3. Public support
4. Attitudes and resource of constituency groups
5. Support from sovereign
6. Commitment and leadership skill of implementing officials

Stages (Dependent Variables) in the Implementation Process

Policy outputs of implementing agencies → Compliance with policy outputs by target groups → Actual impacts of policy outputs → Perceived impacts of policy outputs → Major revision of statute

Source: Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980, p. 542).

Edward III Policy Implementation Model (1980)

This top-down model represents four determinants that affect the policy implementation: communication, resources, dispositions of the implementers, and bureaucratic structure. The context of disposition refers to preferences or actions that represent policymakers' desire and predisposition to reinforce the policy implementation properly; as a result, policy objectives can be accomplished. A policy can be adequately and efficiently executed if implementers are aware of what to do and have the capacity to perform the policy and intend to do so (Mubarok et al., 2020). George C. Edwards model is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Factors that influence the success of Policy Implementation
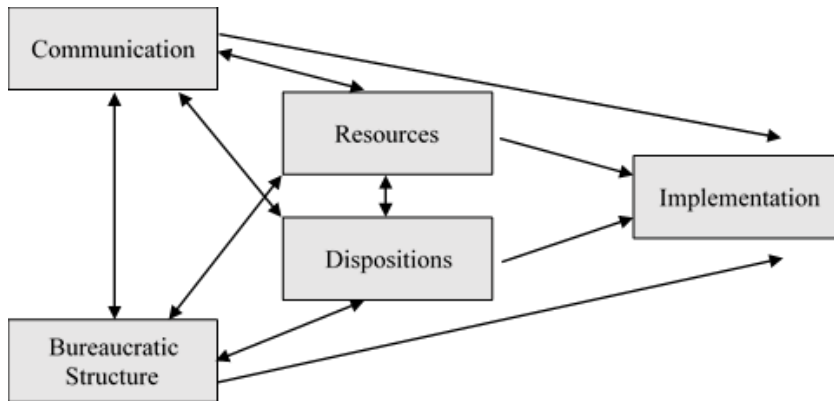
Source: Edwards (1980).

According to the top-down models above, it is observed that the variables or factors affecting policy implementation ranged from four to seven, and they were criticized because they failed to determine which models and variables were the most effective, parsimonious, and significant. Thus, these resulted in ignoring strategic innovation stemming from private networks, field workers or local implementers, and other policy implementing stakeholders.

Intergovernmental Policy Implementation Model (1987)

Due to the criticism of the top-down approach, components of both top-downers and bottom-uppers were synthesized, modified, and developed as a conceptual model of intergovernmental policy implementation. The new model could be applied to the federal system and the government's tendency to perform and its capability to conduct their propensity. Furthermore, it posits that state implementation of federal programs is ultimately determined by top-down and bottom-up variables (Lane, 1987). The variables of this model are indicated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. A Conceptual Model of Intergovernmental Policy Implementation
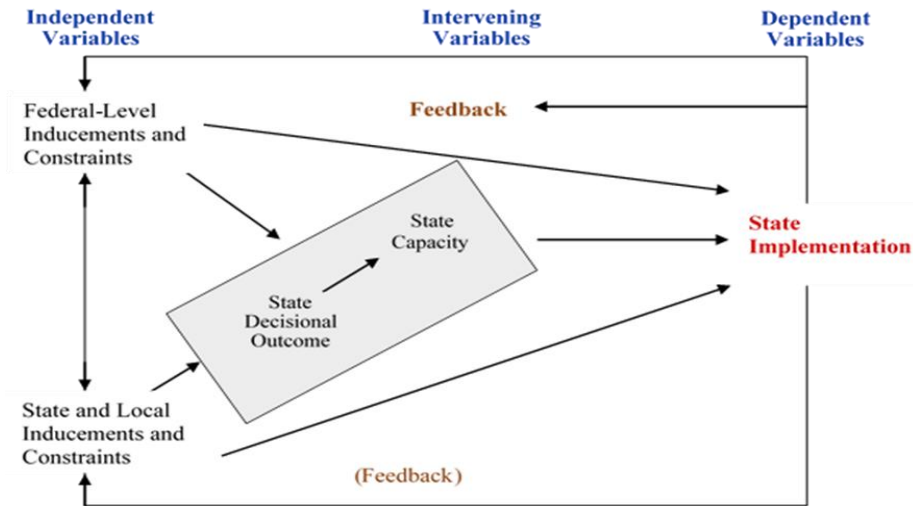
Source: Goggin et al. (1987).

Soren Winter Model (1990)

This model aims to describe and combine the most relevant implementation factors to provide a complete picture and stimulate future theory development. It does not provide a research plan for synthesis or a methodological formula. The character of the policy-formation process may affect other three variables, the organizational, inter-organizational implementation behavior, street-level bureaucratic behavior, and target groups behavior. The formulation of ambiguous and contradictory goals may lead to the powerlessness of street-level bureaucrats to develop coping strategies. The deficiency of causal theories about how to tackle societal problems in policy formation may result in unexpected responses from target groups. Street-level bureaucrats' conduct is influenced by their organizational context and inter-organizational relationships. Interorganizational antagonism can be embodied in street-level bureaucratic conduct.

Coping mechanisms implemented by field workers may influence

target-group behavior. The coping strategy also influences inter-organizational when the field workers decrease their burdens by declining entire collaboration with other institutions and by disposing of customers by moving them on to other authorities (Winter, 1990). Winter's policy implementation process is illustrated in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5. The Implementation Process and Determinants of the Implementation Results
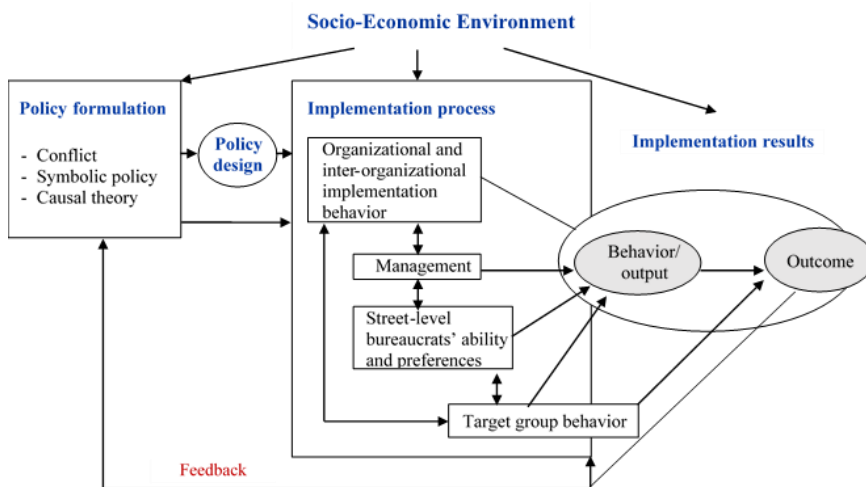
Source: Soren Winter Model (1990).

2.2. Literature Review

2.2.1. History of School Feeding Implementation

The WFP and the World Bank have worked together to solve school feeding issues prompted by the world food catastrophe and sustain the budgetary management of prolific social protection in response to governments' vision. As part of the international movement to attain Education for All, they provide social protection and technical assistance for the effective implementation of School Meals programs in some countries encountering food insecurity, social shocks, and low investment in human capital. For more than 40 years, practically every country has had

a school meals program, and about 21.7 million students in 70 nations from kindergarten through secondary education receive food at school each day. Although the WFP supports school feeding programs for over twenty million students each year, many more school students do not receive the food, particularly in countries with the highest poverty rates and in schools where meal coverage is insufficient in comparison to the needs of children worldwide (WFP, 2014).

In the context of Cambodia, the Royal Government has confirmed the school feeding program as a critical element of the development of children, communities, and society as a whole. From 1999 to 2013, the WFP, in collaboration with the MoEYS, introduced SF as a traditional modality in sixty-four rural primary schools, benefitting 37,500 pupils (WFP, 2013). The program was steadily extended over the years to include over 62% of all primary schools and over 450,000 primary children in 4,250 schools located in 16 provinces (MoEYS & WFP, 2015). Two types of School Feeding programs, such as scholarships in the form of food rations or cash take-home (THR) and the HGSF program, were all included. The SF was moved to the MoEYS services in 2014, implemented in nine provinces in regions with high rates of food poverty and comparably low educational achievement. Daily cooked breakfast for pre-and primary school students was provided as an incentive for them from low-income families to enroll, attend frequently, and finish their primary education, and to alleviate temporary hunger and increase classroom attentiveness. The HGSF was implemented as the pilot program in 2017 and served 17,218 primary school pupils, including 8,482 females.

According to the SF roadmap jointly developed and signed by the MoEYS and the WFP in 2015, SF would be transitioned to the government ownership by 2021. It was observed that the HGSF is the preferred program for the government since it does benefit not only school children but also

the communities. Therefore, the RGC has been making efforts since 2019 to assume responsibility for the SF implementation, which involves identifying precise goals and objectives. The transition of SF to government ownership is not fully complete due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lack of transition strategy and instruments, budget constraints, and more importantly, the institutional capacity to handle full program responsibility has still been further strengthened.

2.2.2. What is School Feeding Program?

The SF is described as the offering of meals to school children. There are several types of school feeding programs; however, they may be separated into two major categories according to their modalities. The first category is in-school feeding, in which students have meals in school, and take-home rations, in which families are offered food if the students come to school regularly. This modality may be classified into two types: programs that provide meals and programs that provide nutritious fruits or refreshments. The second category is the HGSF, which offers food that is primarily produced and purchased in communities. The HGSF strives to connect school feeding with rural development by boosting agricultural activity, enhancing food security, and promoting children's nutrition by procuring commodities from local farmers in the surrounding communities (Donald et al., 2009).

2.2.3. Why School Feeding program?

There are three main reasons why countries develop and implement school feeding programs. These reasons are (1) SF as a safety net; (2) Educational benefits; and (3) Nutritional Benefits. The programs are implemented to meet social needs and offer a social safety net during times of crisis. The programs are frequently employed for social protection more than educational reasons. The programs provide a direct or indirect transfer

of the value of the food given to homes, with the amount of the transfer varying dramatically from in-school meals at the low end of the spectrum to ample take-home rations at the high end. Additionally, it can promote learning and educational outcomes by maintaining children in school and increasing enrollment or decreasing absenteeism. If they are in school, their cognitive capacities will improve. Moreover, the programs can improve nutrition for school children. The priority of nutrition initiatives is to prevent malnourishment during prenatal development and the first years of life when development and growth are most crucial.

2.2.4. Impacts of School Feeding Program

The SF programs benefit social protection and education, which are the fundamental causes for growing support for school meals globally. The SF programs' social safety net duties include quick responses to social shocks and long-term social protection. SF can improve education indicators such as enrollment, attendance, cognition, and educational success, albeit the magnitude of benefit and proof of effect varies depending on the feeding modality.

It is found that SF has a positive effect on health, micronutrient status, school enrollment, and attendance of students, and a reduction in transmission and morbidity, peculiarly in activities that provide nutritional fortification and deworming to school-aged students in countries with numerous micronutrient failures and high worm infection burdens (Bundy et al., 2009; Jomaa et al., 2011). Developing successful social protection via SF initiatives necessitates the participation of a diverse group of players, including the education sector. Policy study demonstrates that the efficacy and longevity of school feeding programs, regardless of their objective, are contingent on the agenda being embedded into education sector policy. The programs' evident educational advantages provide a solid basis for the education sector to operate and administer them. In contrast, the same

educational results add into the incentive compatibility of the programs for the social safety net (Donald et al., 2009).

In Cambodia, it is found that school feeding program provides a lot of benefits to children: it encourages children to attend school regularly, helps to ensure the school environment is clean, improves teacher satisfaction, and provides incentives for them to come in and teach regularly, reduces school drop-outs, reduces student's absenteeism, improves children's health and complete primary school, and makes it easier for the school and teachers to manage students. The benefits extend beyond the immediate family; for example, it reduces migration, creates jobs for the community, encourages the community to grow more vegetables, reduces the number of children using addictive drugs, and in particular, increases the literacy in a given area, which in turn helps the country's overall development (Ham et al., 2017).

2.2.5. Approach for Effective SF Implementation–SABER

The "Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)" was developed to assess the quality and potential for sustainability of SF implementation. This approach comprises components as follows:

National Policy Framework

National policy and budgetary frameworks vary from country to country in their integration of school feeding. Still, a solid policy base improves the program's longevity and accountability, as well as the efficiency with which it is put into practice. SF is addressed in the Poverty Reduction Strategy in certain developing nations, related to education, nutrition, or social protection, and referenced in sectoral strategies or activities. A policy foundation for the program serves to increase its potential for continuity and execution effectiveness. SF is incorporated in national policy frameworks in all situations when countries are executing

their national programs. Furthermore, the most extensive programs are the most politicized, like in India, where a Supreme Court judgment endorses the program, and in Brazil, where it is enshrined in the Constitution. The majority of nations whose school feeding programs are now supported by outside sources do not include school feeding in their national policy frameworks. There are several ways that countries may begin the process of national ownership, and one of them is to incorporate programs into the national policy and budget frameworks, where applicable.

Institutional Capacity for Implementation and Coordination

The program's execution is often the responsibility of a particular government organization or ministry. The policy indicator helps determine whether a multisectoral steering group manages the program's execution. The quality of the national school meal management unit, accountability structures, and coordination mechanisms is examined. In addition, it examines school-level administration and accountability frameworks. Best practices show that school meal programs are more likely to be adopted if an institution is authorized and accountable for its execution. It must also have sufficient resources, administrative skills, personnel, expertise, and technologies at the national and local levels to properly apply the initiatives.

Stable Funding and Planning

The extent to which the programs are counted in this budgeting process will influence whether the program receives funding from the government budget or general fund assistance allocations. As the initiative grows into a national one, it will require a steady financing source apart from WFP. To achieve this policy goal, the national budget lines and financing are dedicated to school meals, and whether funds are dispersed in a timely and effective way.

Sound Design and Implementation

It is critical that the program clearly states the challenges, objectives, and expected outcomes in an appropriate way for the country's particular environment. It is also vital that the program targets the proper recipients and select the proper modes of food distribution and a high-quality food basket. Food fortification and deworming should be fundamental components of every school nutrition program. The program needs a solid execution strategy that can acquire and transport significant amounts selected schools, maintain food quality, and manage resources transparently. Governments and stakeholders should thoughtfully rebalance global, regional, and domestic food procurement to promote domestic economies without risking the food standards security.

Community Participation and Ownership

The programs related to public needs are domestically managed. They include several types of local groups and community commitment, whether cash or in-kind, such as donating food and labor, tend to be the strongest and most likely to transition successfully from donor aid. Programs that incorporate this component from the start and continually maintain it has the best success. Schools may be held responsible by parents and local stakeholders who can guarantee that their children get nutritious meals. An official policy or decree, for example, should explicitly identify the many roles that community engagement may play in the program. It may be designed, implemented, managed, evaluated, and contributed resources by the community. On the other hand, communities must be prepared to play various roles in the program (Bundy et al., 2009).

Table 2. Summary of the SF implementation standards

Standards	Sub-sections
National policy frameworks	In national strategies or policies, SF is identified as education or social protection intervention; there is a specific policy related to SF that defines the program purposes, coverage, justification, design, and financing
Institutional structure and coordination	Capacity for implementation and coordination, national institution mandated with the implementation; a specific unit under the leading institution at the central level is responsible for the comprehensive management, with appropriate employees, resources, and expertise; an operational multisectoral coordinating system; adequate staff and resources for design and implementation at central and local levels
Stable funding and planning	A budget allocation for SF from the government or external sources, including donors and development partners, that cover the program's needs
Sound program design and implementation (including evaluation)	Suitable objectives in consistence with the country context and the national policies; fortunate program beneficiaries and targeting criteria; appropriate food modalities and food basket; procurement and logistics arrangements are based on procuring; proper calibration of demand and supply; functioning monitoring and evaluation system
Strong community participation and ownership	Local people have been involved in the program design and implementation. They address issues and contribute resources to the program implementation

Source: Bundy et al., (2009).

2.3. Overview of the HGSF Implementation and Achievements in Cambodia

Table 3. Basic HGSF Program Information

Title	**McGovern-Dole program or the HGSF or Food for Education**
Scope	Three provinces (Battambong, Kampong Thom, Siem Reap)
Duration	2017-2019
Budget	USD 15,212,698
Donor	USDA McGovern-Dole Program Grant
Objectives	Students and small-scale farmers will benefit from the project's use of locally sourced ingredients in school meals, which will help to spur agricultural growth and promote food security while also aiding small-scale food producers and farmers in the surrounding area. 1. Improve equitable access to education, promote proper age enrolment, ensure regular attendance, decrease dropout, and improve retention for pre- and primary school children; 2. Increase the dietary diversity and promote good nutrition practices of school children and their families within the community; 3. Contribute to increasing local food suppliers and smallholder farmers; improving reliable income-generating opportunities and community participation; 4. Increase national and sub-national ownership and develop capacities for sustainable, cost-efficient, and high-impact school feeding models.
Implementing agency	MoEYS and WFP

Major functions	**MoEYS**
	- Policy/strategic and operational guidelines
	- Mobilization and allocation of domestic finances for program continuity under full national ownership
	- Routine activities and implementation planning, monitoring, and backstopping;
	- Daily implementation and supply contract management;
	WFP
	- Technical and strategic assistance;
	- Resource planning and fund/grant management
	- Mobilize funding to share the costs for the project
	- Operational aid, monitoring, and backstopping

Source: MoEYS Report (2020)

The SF program is one of the Cambodian national social assistance programs, such as the Scholarship for Primary and Secondary School, Disability Allowance, Cash Transfer for Pregnant Women and Children under Two, and the Health Equity Fund, aiming to improve school attendance and school enrollment (RGC, 2017). After the traditional SF program was transitioned to a new model, the HGSF was piloted from 2017 to 2019 in three out of twenty-five provinces, with technical support from the WFP and financial aid from the USDA McGovern-Dole grant. The program was conducted in 585 primary schools and covered 8,400 children from the poorest households (Dunn et al., 2020, p. v). Pre-primary and primary school pupils were provided daily nutritional meals prepared by community cooks. The vast majority of schools were served breakfast before the beginning of lessons. The program commodities, including rice, vegetable food spices, kitchenware, etc., were supplied by local communities and exported from other provinces or countries. Together with the school meal activities, the program features a variety of services to enhance the students' literacy, strengthen the school atmosphere, and educate students and families in health care and nutrition (Nielsen et al., 2010).

The program was implemented through the government's mechanism and management structures from central to local levels. In collaboration with the local community, the program was proactively implemented and directly undertaken by school teachers with technical assistance from the WFP and under immediate supervision and management from central administration, the MoEYS and the National Social Protection Council (NSPC).

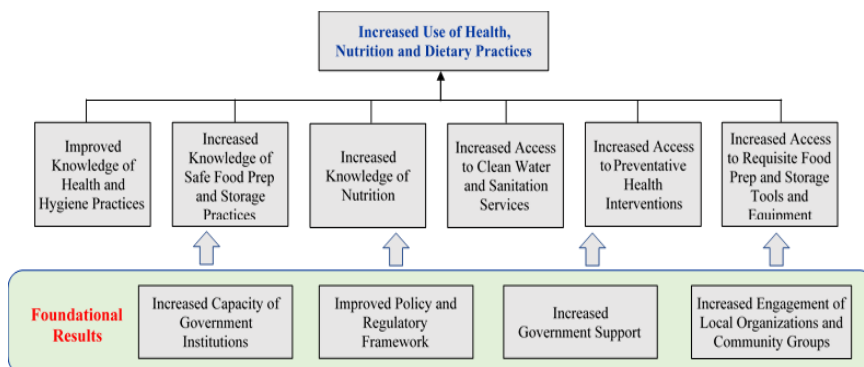### 2.3.1. Program Results Framework (RFs)

Figure 6. Results Framework 1 of the McGovern-Dole program
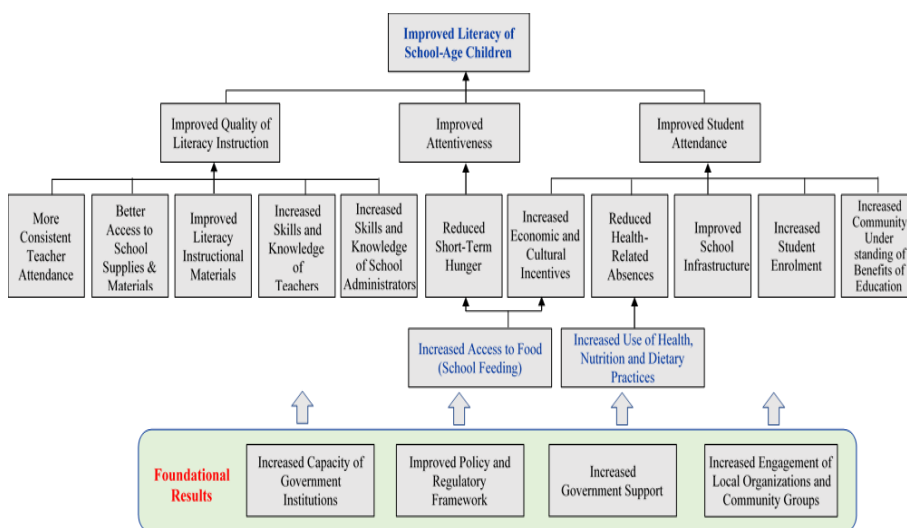
Source: World Food Program (2019, p. 5)

Figure 7. Results Framework 2 of the McGovern-Dole program

Source: World Food Program (2019, p. 6)

2.3.2. Achievements of the Program Implementation

According to the McGovern-Dole RFs 1 and 2, the program has two main strategic objectives, including (1) improved literacy of school-age children and (2) increased use of health, nutrition, and dietary practice. Improving literacy requires children to attend school, be studious, and instructors to offer high-quality literacy education. Additionally, increasing health, nutrition, and dietary practice requires knowledge and accessibility to health-related services. The following sections summarize the results of the McGovern-Dole program implementation.

Achievements of Strategic Objective 1

- Improved attendance: in the baseline survey, the net enrollment rate for children aged 6-11 years was 87.6 percent. As indicated in Table 4, the enrolment rate rose to 97.5 percent. There was no significant difference in overall or female enrollment rates between the McGovern-Dole and comparison schools. However, according to statistics from the MoEYS Education Management Information System (EMIS), McGovern-Dole-supported schools had more excellent net enrollment rates than non-assisted schools (99.6 percent versus 95.2 percent).

Table 4. The enrolment rate for children 6-11 years old (SY 2018/19)

Schools	Net enrollment rate (%)	
	Total	Girls
All USDA schools	96.7	96.5
Comparison schools	98.4	99.4
All surveyed schools	97.5	98
Baseline (SY 2016/17) – All USDA supported schools	87.6	91.4

Source: WFP Evaluation Report (2019)

- Improved attentiveness: schools provided students with a conducive learning environment. It was found that the students could pay attention to the class very well after they had nutritious meals at school.
- Improved quality of literacy instruction: school teachers were able to improve students' literacy with high-quality teaching methodologies. The teachers and school directors actively engaged in training activities to enhance broader knowledge and build specific skills.

In general, literacy-related activities and those that resulted in improved literacy were enforced expeditiously, with many implementing partners in collaboration with the MoEYS at the central and local levels to ensure that teacher training was successfully conducted with the suitable education materials and followed up in class. The findings show that this was an efficient and productive strategy for promoting literacy ability.

Achievements of Strategic Objective 2

- Improved knowledge of health and hygiene-related practice: more than 4,000 people participated in health and nutrition training at school and community levels. School gardens were established for nutrition education, and the majority of the schools utilized the school gardens throughout the years.
- Increased access to food preparation and storage tools: food storage guidelines were introduced to ensure food safety for the students. The students were also responsible for providing support to clean school grounds and latrines and serving meals.
- Increased access to clean water and sanitation services: 92% of McGovern-Dole schools had clean latrines and separated latrines for boys and girls. Since some schools lacked budget for maintenance, clean water was not available for cooking. Therefore,

the student brought water from their houses.

- Increased access to preventative health interventions: 83% of McGovern-Dole schools received deworming treatment in the school year 2018-2019.

In conclusion, all of the activities lead to developing the students' health. The RF 2 demonstrates that improved health should result in fewer health-related absences, increasing the likelihood that children will attend most of their classes.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1. Research Methodology

Qualitative research method was utilized to examine and scrutinize the key factors that affected the program implementation, the significant roles of the actors in the program implementation process, and the main characteristics of the program that led it to the national implementation. The qualitative research is highly essential to understanding people's feelings and ideas, in addition to the respondents' perspectives, to generalize the research findings. The research method comprises generating new questions and processes, collecting data in the participant's environment, and analyzing that data inductively, starting with specifics and working a researcher's way out to broader themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

This study employed an exploratory content analysis research method supported by theories of public policy implementation, a broad literature review, and the investigation of numerous sources containing problem-related content. Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is a means of systematically articulating the meaning of qualitative data, and it focuses on the analysis of a collection of texts to identify themes, definitions, or patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Hall & Steiner, 2020). The exploratory study is adopted to fulfill researchers' interest and need for more profound knowledge, assess the feasibility of performing a more extensive research and create procedures to be utilized later. When doing exploratory research, a good data collection approach is required (Babbie, 2015). To achieve this, researchers look at the text's content and context and allocate consecutive segments of data to coding frame categories (Schreier, 2012). This method has been used for various methodologies, from intuitive and interpretative to rigorous and exacting textual studies (Rosengren, 1981; Hsiu-Fang & Sarah E, 2005). Even though the method has seldom been

used in the study of legal documents, Hall & Steiner (2020) has applied this method to highlight the history of legal framework on the protection of insect pollinators.

Among the three approaches to content analysis, this study used a directed approach to validate or extend a theoretical framework or theory. The research questions may be narrowed down with the use of existing theory or study. In this way, it may assist in forecasting the variables of interest or the connections between them and, therefore, identifying the initial coding scheme or the relationships between codes. Deductive category application is a term for this (Mayring, 2000; Hsiu-Fang & Sarah E, 2005). In the directed content analysis, researchers leverage current theory or previous study to construct the first coding scheme before evaluating the data (Kyngas &Vanhanen, 1999; Hsiu-Fang & Sarah E, 2005). The explanation of the results will be guided by the theory or earlier research that was employed. The theory may be enriched, refined, and expanded by adding new categories, or they may give a different perspective on the phenomena.

Researchers study a carefully chosen set of texts to develop coding frames or themes that serve as the essential tools for classifying qualitative texts. Analyzers read every word of the texts one by one for comprehension (Schreier, 2012; Hall & Steiner, 2020). Text data may be in the form of narrative replies, open-ended survey questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, assessments, or print material like papers, textbooks, or guidelines (Kondracki &Wellman, 2002; Hsiu-Fang & Sarah E, 2005). The directed content analysis has the advantage of supporting and expanding established theories. This approach reveals that, as a field's body of research expands, researchers are less likely to adopt the nave attitude that is typically associated with naturalistic designs. The naturalistic paradigm faces difficulties from the guided approach. In theory, researchers approach the

data with an educated, nonetheless, strong bias, which has certain inherent limitations. As a result, evidence supporting rather than refuting a hypothesis may be found more often by researchers (Hsiu-Fang & Sarah E, 2005).

Through content analysis, researchers can develop a conceptual framework to evaluate ongoing content analyses, guide researchers through the process of conceptualizing and designing practical content analysis research, and make it easier for researchers to compare and contrast published content analyses (Krippendorff, 2018). Therefore, to achieve the purpose of this study, the research methods are briefly presented as the following:

1. Theoretical frameworks and literature reviews: theoretical frameworks and documents regarding public policy implementation, particularly approaches to policy implementation and factors affecting outcomes of policy implementation, are reviewed to acquire general concepts for conducting the study. A directed approach to content analysis is applied to select texts carefully and frame the texts into groups.

2. Synthesis and analytical framework: according to the theoretical frameworks and literature reviews, several factors influence the success of policy implementation. Accordingly, the reviewed theories and documents are synthesized that reflect the research questions and are based on the context of program implementation in Cambodia. An analytical framework is developed as a map to guide data collection and analysis. The top-down approach is adopted for developing the analytical framework and primary data collection.

3. Data collection: primary and secondary data are collected. The content analysis is applied for secondary data collection. Existing published documents regarding the implementation of the McGovern-Dole program are reviewed. For primary data collection,

top policymakers and program actors are contacted for online survey completion and interview.

4. Data analysis: the analysis is based on the analytical framework and research questions. The collected data from secondary and primary sources are summarized in a matrix table that includes variables (themes) extracted from the analytical framework. A summary of the data from the primary source is used to confirm the secondary data.

Figure 8: Summary of Research Methodology
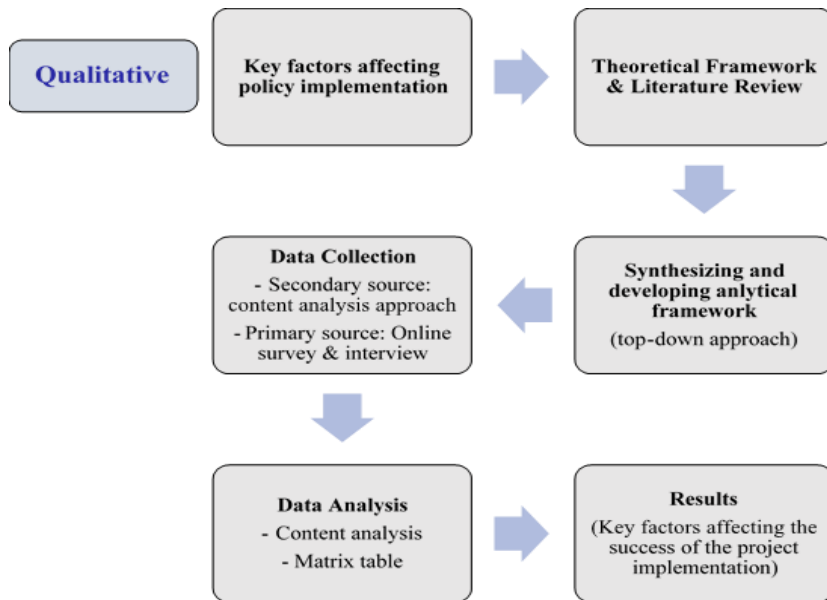
Source: Created by the researcher (2022)

3.2. Analytical Framework

An analytical framework was developed in connection with the theoretical analysis initially presented in Chapter II. As observed, many factors and conditions cause the success of program implementation, depending on financial and human resources, active public support and positive coordination among policy actors, types or nature of the policy areas, target groups, and geographical context within which the programs are adopted. For policy implementation studies, it is optimal to utilize a top-

down approach if there is a well-structured program in place and the researcher's resources are limited, meaning that when a student is investigating the implementation for a term paper of a program structure. However, the bottom-up approach works better when local implementation's dynamics and the deficiency of a single dominating program are essential factors to consider. Numerous sources must be examined and evaluated because of this dispersed behavior (Birkland, 2015, p. 270).

In the context of Cambodia, policy instruments or tools are generally designed by the topmost designers and approved by the top policymakers to shape implementation while also acknowledging the motives and demands of lower-level implementers. Hence, applying the top-down approach for this study is more appropriate than the bottom-up approach so that more information for the analysis would be easily collected. However, in implementation studies, it is not always apparent what the dependent variables are, and there is no consensus over the appropriate assessment criteria for determining if implementation was successful or unsuccessful (Linder & Peters, 1984; Winter, 1990). On this subject, the study discussed the causes that positively influenced the program implementation by focusing on three key factors as follows: (1) policy contents; (2) institutional arrangement and resources; and (3) community participation and government support.

Factors Related to Policy Consistency

Policy objectives and features are crucial because they not only establish the direction of policy processes as a result of policy creation but also serve as a vital legal resource for policy implementers (Sabatier, 1986). The policy consistency considerably impacts how well it is implemented. When there is a lack of uniformity, it is challenging to communicate the policy goal clearly, which leads to misunderstandings among the policy target group participating in implementation. The simplicity of policy

objectives, coherence, relevance, causal link, and policy type have all been cited as elements influencing policy implementation in multiple ways. The success of the policy implementation relies on policy contents and features that are clearly identified. Therefore, the HGSF implementation success depended on the clarity of policy contents and its consistency with the national policy frameworks. In this regard, related policy frameworks and program goals were reviewed, compared, and analyzed to ensure consistency.

According to the literature review, several policy frameworks were endorsed to guide the implementation of the McGovern-Dole program or the HGSF and led it to the national agenda. Those documents were selected and reviewed thoroughly. Moreover, program plans and reports of the McGovern-Dole implementation were reviewed and verified with policy frameworks to ensure whether the program goals and activities are aligned with the policy frameworks.

Factors Related to Institutional Arrangement and Resources

Institutional arrangement can determine the success or failure of program implementation because it clearly shows management structures, roles, responsibilities, check and balance system, and capacity of a particular program implementation. Within the institutional arrangement, human and financial resources and coordination among internal and external people are required to bolster the effectiveness of program implementation. When it comes to executing policies, the organization's leadership possess managerial and political skills. It is essential for leaders to be able to create productive working relationships, convince others, mobilize support, manage resources, keep employees motivated, and find solutions to challenges (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979). Coordinating the procurement and delivery of large amounts of food to specific schools and ensuring its quality and effectively managing resources are all essential

components of successful school feeding programs, which involve tremendous institutional ability and coordination. There must be efficient coordination between all levels of government and all levels of education to be successfully implemented. Providing school meals requires clearly defining each participant's role and duties, and figure out how they may operate together. As long as the SF program is organized in line with current regulations and matches with appropriate resources, including experienced and qualified employees at various levels with clearly defined tasks, alternative configurations have proven effective (The World Bank et al., 2016).

Resources refer to human and material resources. Successful policy implementation requires potential implementers with technical skills, positive attitudes, and a high willingness toward policy goal attainment. In the meantime, the roles of program partners should be clearly identified (Edward III, 1978). Implementation of policies relies heavily on having someone in charge of making sure that they are enforced. To put it another way, a policy's capacity to be implemented depends heavily on the way it is organized and the skills of its implementers. In this regard, these factors explore and scrutinize the management structure and capacity of the implementing institution, including knowledge, skills, attitudes in program coordination and implementation, mechanism of monitoring and evaluation (M & E) of the program implementation, and financial resource management. It is difficult for the researcher to measure these variables. Alternatively, the researcher acquires the information from existing documents through document analysis with the support of the respondents' perceptions from the survey and interview.

*Factors Related to Community Participation and Government Support*

Community and government participation in specific program implementation are significant in all circumstances to strengthen program performance and outcomes. Local communities can mobilize resources

from residents and the government to tackle challenges during the program implementation. The program operation is greatly aided by organized constituency organizations and policymakers. Therefore, financial and technical resources are provided to implementing agencies to conduct the program successfully and efficiently and maintain the support of important public figures. In addition, interest groups may help execute, interpret problems, and encourage public officials to support the program (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979).

The HGSF is more likely to succeed in transitioning from donor aid if it can adapt to the community's needs. The program is operated in local communities and includes donations from parents or other community members. A community member may be able to help plan and administer a school feeding program or provide resources for it (The World Bank et al., 2016). In this regard, these factors explore the prominent roles of the community and the level of community engagement and government support in the program implementation, from program design to program accountability. Additionally, the roles and responsibilities of the community and the government are set out in the program policies and procedures and national policies.

The summary of the analytical framework, which was synthesized from the theoretical frameworks and literatures, is indicated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Summary of the Analytical Framework
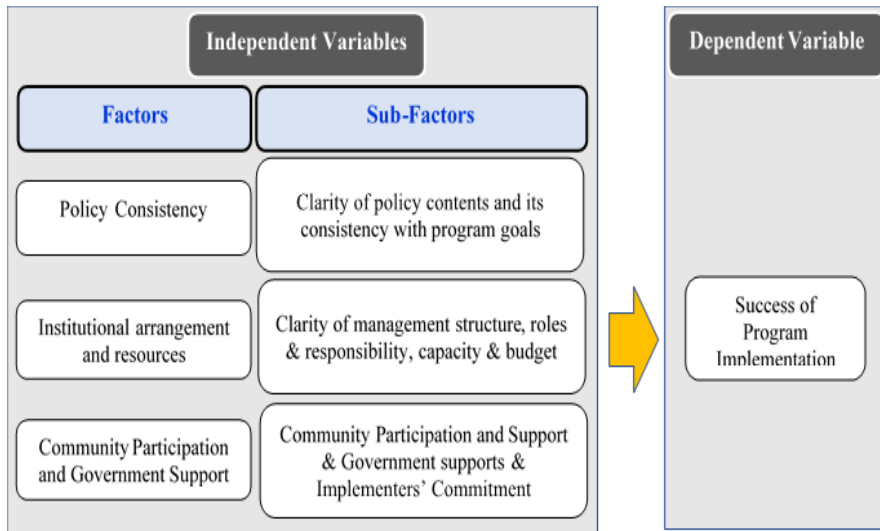
Source: created by the researcher (2022)

3.3. Methods of Data Collection

The study utilized primary and secondary data for qualitative analysis. The study primarily focused on secondary data through content analysis methods. The study synthetically analyzed the policy implementation theories of prominent scholars, and reviewed existing published documents regarding the HGSF implementation, such as books and periodicals, journals, research and project reports, media reports, the government published policies and frameworks, and other materials.

Document analysis is a low-cost method for obtaining empirical evidence that is often paired with data from interviews and observation to reduce prejudice and achieve a high degree of trustworthiness. Although document analysis has many advantages, it should not be used as a substitute for other types of evidence that may be more relevant to the research topic and the study's conceptual framework (Bowen, 2009). It seems especially difficult to gather accurate and consistent data when examining implementation concerns. A large sample of implementing

institutions is required to establish statistically generalizable findings on the program leading to complete implementation. Lengthy and expensive research is also needed for data collection. However, if the program is adopted and implemented utilizing naturally occurring processes, it is challenging for outside researchers to collect precise data from a large sample due to inconsistent responses (Scheirer & Griffith, 1990).

Therefore, an online survey was conducted to gather more information and confirm the data from the reviewed documents about the factors affecting the success of the McGovern-Dole program implementation. A set of questionnaires with open-ended questions was purposefully administered through Telegram to 16 respondents who were the main actors actively engaged in the program implementation during the pilot. The respondents included the policymakers from National Social Protection Council (NSPC), experts from WFP and WVC, and program implementers from the MoEYS at the central level. An informal interview with three people from different institutions, who were in charge of the program implementation, was conducted to acquire more information about the actual situation of the program implementation. The interview was based on structured questions.

Table 5: The Number & Category of Respondents

No	Category	Institution	Survey/ Interview	# of Resp.
1	Policymaker	NSPC	Survey	4
			Interview	1
2	Expert	WFP, WVC	Survey	6
3	Implementer	MoEYS	Survey	6
			Interview	2
	Total			**19**

Source: created by the researcher (2022)

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Factors Affecting the Success of the Program Implementation

The factors affecting the SF program were discussed and found in distinguished studies and reports on SF program implementation. As stated in the 2010 impact evaluation report on the SF program implemented between 2000 and 2010 in Cambodia, the program success and sustainability were reliant on five factors, including (1) program design (input, purposes, and objectives); (2) high community engagement; (3) explicit government ownership and commitment; (4) strategic capacity development; and (5) stakeholder engagement. The program required high-resolution targeting of beneficiaries, which aligned with the purpose and objectives of the program. The choice of modality influenced the level of targeting and focus on those most in need. Additionally, community contribution, adequate strategic and financial resources, strong capacity of implementers, and close partnership among stakeholders were crucial to the program success. It was reported that during the program implementation, the WFP provided capacity trainings to direct implementers, and it built collaboration with partners in implementing the government policies to enable factors for improved schooling and to visualize contextual factors that impede the program implementation (Nielsen et al., 2010).

Moreover, the decentralized evaluation report 2017 of the McGovern-Dole program showed multiple factors that contributed to the success of the program implementation from 2013 to 2016 in Cambodia, which included internal and external factors. These factors included robust WFP Cambodia management and personnel, strong partnership among implementing partners, program monitoring, clear roles of community and implementing agencies, and external funding (The KonTerra Group, 2017). Likewise, the

decentralized evaluation report 2020 also indicated that the factors that influenced the successful implementation include: (1) strong collaboration between the MoEYS and implementing partners; (2) strong technical capacity of implementing partners; (3) substantial supply chain assistance; (4) robust monitoring systems; (5) financial support to research, field visits and workshops; (6) government's support, collaboration, and commitment; (7) commitment of implementing partners; (8) donors and community support; and (9) capacity building for the MoEYS personnel (Dunn et al., 2020). In the meantime, some factors have been identified to negatively influence the results of the program implementation, including lack of incentives for cooks, storekeepers, and the community and insufficiency of capacity building and water access, and a weak monitoring system (World Food Program, 2019). According to the analytical framework, the factors that positively influenced the program implementation are grouped into three categories. These categories are depicted as the following:

4.1.1. Policy Consistency

The review of the relevant documents demonstrates that the program activities financially supported by the USDA McGovern-Dole grant are closely consistent and well-aligned with the national policy frameworks on SF implementation. According to the results frameworks, the McGovern-Dole program was implemented with two strategic objectives: (1) improve the literacy of school age-children through improved quality of literacy instructions, improved attentiveness, and improved student attendance; (2) increase the use of health and dietary practices through improved knowledge of health and hygiene practice, increase knowledge of safe food preparation and storage practices, increased knowledge of nutrition, increased access to clean water and sanitation services, increased access to preventative health interventions, and increased access to requisite food prep and storage tools and equipment. It is observed that these objectives

are connected to government policies. The nature and degree of program outcomes can be compared to policy objectives, and similarly, the program impact on beneficiaries' needs can be related to policy goals (Winter, 1990). Therefore, each of the relevant policies is reviewed as the following.

Rectangular Strategy, Phase III 2013-2018

It was the central national policy framework that indicated the implementation of other sectoral policies and guides the implementation of the social protection system to improve the welfare of the poor and vulnerable by strengthening and integrating existing social protection programs into a formal social protection system. This strategy introduced the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy for the Poor and Vulnerable (NSPSPV) 2011-2015 and the NSPPF 2016-2025. In alignment with the national goals, the government established a food assistance program for the poor and vulnerable people to allow impoverished children to attend school, and programs to help vulnerable communities (RGC, 2013).

National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) 2016-2025

NSPPF 2016-2025 aims to unify and accelerate current social protection programs, including social security and social assistance. The NSPPF documents the transition of the SF program to the state-owned and specifically discusses SF as a kind of social assistance program. Additionally, the NSPPF anticipates the expansion of scholarships and SF by 2021 to assist the government in achieving its development goals.

> *"The Royal Government will prepare an action plan and strengthen its human resource capacity to take over the management and financing of the SF by 2021...the Royal Government encourages the use of home-grown vegetables in the School Feeding Program to improve the quality of the nutrition of children" (RGC, 2017, p. 15).*

The National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (NSFSN) 2014-2018

NSFSF 2014-2018 focused on various parts related to school meals, including the connection between food and nutrition security to safety nets to enhance equity and access, nutrition-sensitive and safe food systems, and better nutrition and food security through small-scale farming. As a result, all of the WFP's SF efforts, including the McGovern-Dole program, contributed to the strategy's execution and implementation.

Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2014-2018

The USDA McGovern-Dole project was consistent with the ESP 2014-2018, which aimed at enhancing fundamental education and quality, particularly improving literacy skills in the early grades of primary education (MoEYS, 2014). In alignment with these ESP's goals, the McGovern-Dole literacy initiatives were implemented and well-connected with other project activities, including All Children Reading Cambodia (ACRC), accomplished by literacy stakeholders such as WEI and KAPE.

Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) 2016-2030

This objective is also associated with the CSDGs 2016-2030, which outlines equal access of all girls and boys to high-quality early education and free and equitable primary education. Moreover, the McGovern-Dole program is coherent with CSDG 2 and 4, focusing on improving food safety and nutrition and increasing school-aged children's literacy. The CSDG 2 aims to "eliminate hunger, ensure food security and enhance nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture" while the CSDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promote lifelong opportunities for all" (MoP, 2018).

Other Relevant Policies

Following the policy frameworks, in May 2015 the RGC and the WFP signed an agreement as a roadmap to develop and implement a countrywide SF program by 2021. The recognition and advancement of appropriate program application options reflected the government's commitment and organizational capabilities. The government has reaffirmed its desire to pursue program options with the lowest possible costs while yet achieving the most significant possible benefits. The government sees the HGSF as a potential model for future national program execution (MoEYS & WFP, 2015).

It was found that the WFP Safety Net Policy (WSNP) 2012 and WFP Gender Policy (WGP) 2015-2020 were firmly connected to WFP's initiatives which assisted the Royal government in recognizing SF as a social protection program. The WSNP 2012 highlighted preferences and implications for the WFP involvement in offering tactical assistance, applicable services, and knowledge for safety nets, ensuring that food and nutrition security goals are included in safety nets and helping governments create proper social protection system (WFP, 2012). The WGP 2015-2020 aimed to guarantee that WFP's programs are gender-sensitive, empower women, and promote women's rights (WFP, 2014). The McGovern-Dole initiative targeted both girls and boys, emphasizing females in areas where gender disparities in schooling persisted.

In addition to the point as mentioned earlier, the McGovern-Dole program was consistent with numerous the WFP guidelines and strategies, including the WFP Strategic Plan (WSP) 2017-2021, which centered on attaining the SDGs, eliminating hunger and malnutrition, fostering collaboration, and increasing literacy through direct program execution and bolstering country capacities (WFP, 2016). Additionally, the scheme was a critical component of WFP Cambodia's community support program. The WFP's Revised School Feeding Policy (2013) strengthened the link

between the SF, nutrition and social protection, emphasizing five goals, including increasing national capacity for the SF (WFP, 2013). WFP's cooperation in Cambodia with the MoEYS and other ministries was reasonably consistent with those policy priorities. Likewise, the WFP's Draft Nutrition Policy (2017-2021) emphasized the organization's commitment to promoting nutritious meals that satisfy nutritional needs (WFP, 2017). Furthermore, the USDA McGovern-Dole activities were implemented to attach with the activities of other development partners in Cambodia, specifically with the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019-2023, which centers on social protection and nutrition to expedite the accomplishment of the CSDGs (United Nations Cambodia, 2019).

Due to the lessons learned and experiences from the program implementation, several social protection related-policies and initiatives have been established in collaboration with key stakeholders. In particular, the new National Policy on School Health (NPSH) was adopted in 2019 to offer guidance on practical implementation for infectious disease prevention. The policy specifically targeted the implementation of the SF, aiming for school-based safe food and nutrition activities by encouraging students to choose safe and healthy food choices. With the financial support from the USDA McGovern-Dole grant and technical support from the WFP, this policy has been adopted based on the experiences of the SF implementation.

The results of interviews with the policy-makers and implementers from the NSPC and the MoEYS revealed that the McGovern-Dole program was incorporated into the NSPPF 2016-2025 and ESP 2014-2018. Along with the NSPC, the MoEYS and the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) collaborated with the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council (GSNSPC) to develop a specific HGSF

Framework for the next phase of the program implementation. A respondent from the NSPC ascertained that the government increased its interest in establishing a nationwide SF program. The establishment of the HGSF Framework provides an opportunity to strengthen existing connections between school health and nutrition. The WFP played a critical role in supporting the development of the new HGSF guidelines for the MoEYS, which aligned with the existing the HGSF resource framework, program implementation mechanism, and the Cambodian context.

In conclusion, the program goals and activities were precisely associated with the government's plans and the national policy frameworks. The program was suitable and corresponded well with the government's preferences, WFP's policies, and those of other players.

4.1.2. Institutional Arrangement and Resources

Institutional arrangements are examined as government instruments that extend beyond actual policy instrumentation. It is a component of the government's organizational structure that governs the interaction of its many tiers. Additionally, it encompasses the structural features of policy execution, namely the institutional framework and organizational structure of the public policy. It outlines critical responsibilities in the execution and structuring of programs that lead to the success of program implementation (Sager & Gofen, 2022). As indicated in the SF roadmap 2015 and the NSPPF 2016-2025, the government will develop an action plan and increase its human resource capability to assume responsibility for the SF program's administration and finance. The government will overhaul the social protection system's institutional framework by explicitly outlining the roles and responsibilities of relevant parties at the policy, regulatory, and operational levels.

Establishment of Institution and Major Roles of Key Actors

Strong institutional arrangements have a significant role in the success of policy initiatives; however, it could lead to implementation failure if the established institutions do not have binding legislation, which makes it impossible to overcome existing cultural and professional hurdles, and do not have central steering of development policy (Wittwer et al., 2022). The NSPPF clearly defines the roles of the NSPC as the policy-maker and the MoEYS as the policy implementer. The NSPC, which was established with a composition of high-ranking representatives from line ministries and institutions, is accountable for overseeing and coordinating the development of different social protection programs and policies. The MoEYS is responsible for assessing and executing the HGSF pilot program, strengthening the institutional capacity of local implementers, developing a national policy on the SF, and evaluating the management and financial elements of the programs (MoEYS & WFP, 2015; RGC, 2017).

As documented in various implementation reports, several government actors engaged in the SF program implementation, such as the MoEYS, NSPC, Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Planning (MoP), and CARD (MoEYS, 2019). There were also several development partners involved in the program implementation, such as the WFP, Plan International (PI), World Vision (WV), World Education Incorporated (WEI), Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE), USAID, UNICEF, the World Bank, WHO, and FAO (WFP, 2016). Among these actors, it has been noted that only three key actors were actively involved in the program activities. These actors are the NSPC as the policy-maker, the MoEYS as the policy implementer, and WFP as the leading policy supporter.

It is documented that the NSPC's responsibilities include: (1) coordinate the policy development on the social protection-related program

among key ministries and stakeholders; (2) conduct monitoring and evaluation of the achievement and effectiveness of the application of social protection policy to ensure a seamless, coherent, efficient, and effective process; and (3) unite and align the social assistance programs with the social security system to ensure consistency and to, integrate positions on the social protection system for additional actions and allow the possible transfers of members from one system to another, if necessary.

To enhance the effectiveness, managerial efficiency, and institutional coordination, the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council, under the management of the NSPC, was established as a coordinating body among the policy-making body, the policy implementing body, and the development partners. Following the RGC's goals and commitment, the MoEYS acts as the principal SF implementing agency in collaboration with key government institutions and UN agencies, and NGO partners that offer practical consultation and assistance to the program implementation.

Mr. Ven Thol, a deputy director of the Primary Education Department in the MoEYS, mentioned in the interview that "the MoEYS is a key actor for program planning, implementation and reporting for both at national and sub-national levels, including the development of operational guidance, legal document, tools and system, and capacity-strengthening to support the implementation on the ground. The NSPC has crucial roles in coordinating the collaboration with relevant ministries, institutions, and development partners for the program implementation and providing guidance on policies, strategies, legal instruments, etc., especially for the national HGSF program establishment. The WFP provides both financial and technical support to overall program implementation and other tools/systems, strategy, and policy development."

The responsibilities of the MoEYS include: (1) develop long-term and medium-term plans, budget and action plans, and annual operational plans; (2) mobilize financial resources from development partners and negotiate the annual budget plan with the MEF and disseminate the approved budget plan to target provinces; and (3) direct and lead program management, and program implementation, with the support from the secretariat in developing and reviewing policies, guidelines, and standards. Within the MoEYS management structure, the central level proposes regulatory frameworks, mobilizes financial resources, and manages the program implementation, while the local level is the direct implementer, which includes school directors and teachers. To ensure the effective management and implementation of the SF program at the central level, the MoEYS established active implementation mechanisms such as entities, committees, and task forces, as indicated in Figure 10. Specifically, the Department of Primary Education (DPE), Program Coordination Committee (PCC), and SF Task Force (SFTF) were established to provide explicit guidance for the comprehensive program implementation, including direction for collaborating with other ministries and development partners and lobbying for budgetary assistance from the government. The established Task Force oversaw and provided technical assistance to local committees to build their capacity and enhance the quality of the program leadership and management.

At the provincial and district levels, Provincial School Feeding Program Committees (PSFC) and District School Feeding Committees (DSFCs) were established to oversee the execution of the program implementation and provide technical assistance to the School Feeding Committees (SFCs) at the school level to ensure that the program implemented smoothly and consistently with the national frameworks. This level helped ensure that the SF implementation was incorporated into the province, district, and school strategic development plans and that there was easy coordination with NGO partners to organize programs for building

capacity in schools, local authorities, and the community at large. At the community level, several community committees with different roles were established, including Local SF Committees (LSFC), Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and School Support Committees (SSCs). The SSCs served as a link between schools and their surrounding communities, and were composed of school administrators, village council members, village leaders, teachers, and parents. Every month, members of the LSFC and SSC discussed strategies that the local community may help support the school, whether it was via food donations or fundraising efforts for building improvements and grounds upkeep.

As the primary policy supporter for the SF implementation, the WFP was in charge of organizing and implementing international initiatives at the country level. Further, to help improve the quality of the program implementation to achieve the program goals as stated in Results Frameworks, the WFP provided technical and strategic assistance and mobilized funding to share the costs for the program to build the capacity of the government institutions, to increase government support, and to enhance engagement of local organizations and community groups. Additionally, it was accountable for the performance and outcomes of its programs both internally and to its beneficiaries and partners (WFP, 2016). The WFP Country office administered area offices located in target provinces implementing SF programs to provide direct technical support to the local administration. At central level, the WFP worked closely with several departments in the MoEYS, including the DPE, the School Health Department, and the Policy Department. To acquire more support from other development partners, the WFP also signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with GIZ and UNICEF, who were able to provide technical assistance based on their technical areas: water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, agriculture (schools gardens), social protection and health.

Figure 10: Management Structure of the HGSF program
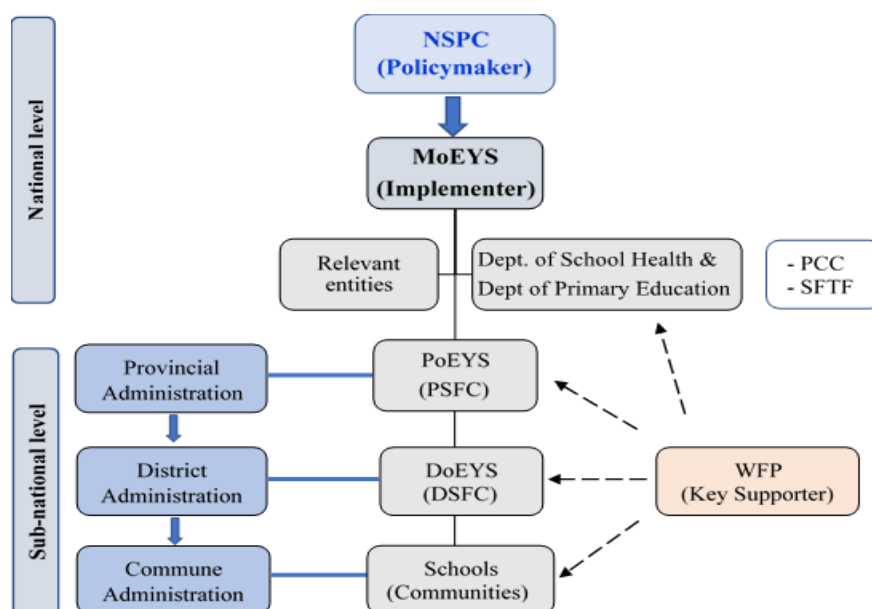
Source: created by the researcher (2022)

Institutional Capacity to Manage School Feeding Implementation

Capacity Building for MoEYS Personnel

The McGovern-Dole grant had an intense concentration on capacity building to sustain government management of the program, and conducting the assessment on the government's readiness to manage the program is another fundamental component of the evaluation. To accomplish the effective program implementation, the MoEYS staff had to improve their capacity through several training sessions, workshops, and study tours in the country and other countries. During the program implementation, the MoEYS staff at all levels, including school directors, teachers, monitoring team, and staff from the Provincial Department of Education (PDoE), were invited to participate in several training sessions organized by the WEI and KAPE in collaboration with the relevant departments within the MoEYS. The purpose of the training was to improve

leadership and management skills for school directors and assist teachers in incorporating EGR techniques into classroom practice.

At central level, in 2018, the MoEYS convened an inter-ministerial stakeholder workshop on the SF program to identify critical milestones for the program's continuous transition to government management and mainstream the program implementation to counterparts from several ministries, NGO partners, and other relevant development partners. Moreover, an official visit to target provinces, such as Preah Vihear and Siem Reap provinces, was organized by the MoEYS and the MEF as part of a joint learning study tour to familiarize the officials with the HGSF implementation process and to enable the organization's strategic consultations between the two institutions on the connections to the ESP and the NSPPF. With the support from the WFP, several key government officials were invited to attend the 20th Annual Global Child Nutrition Forum in Tunisia for learning exchange and technical assistance and to help the country in the creation and implementation of sustainable SF programs.

According to the McGovern-Dole baseline survey, which assessed the skills and knowledge of the trained teachers, educators, and school administrators, it was illustrated that slightly more than half of the teachers, educators, and teaching assistants were trained or certified, however, a somewhat higher percentage (fifty-seven percent) of instructors had recognized teacher certification qualifications. The instructors, educators, and teaching assistants who received intense coaching or mentorship were in the minority, and only thirty-six percent of teachers reported using innovative, high-quality teaching strategies and resources (WFP, 2014). It was noted that the educational leaders and other officials seemed to face a similar training and certification difficulty, with training and certification levels far lower than those reported among instructors. Generally, ten percent of the school administrators and other employees reported receiving

training or certification, while twelve percent reported receiving recognized education certification qualifications. As expected, this resulted in low performance, with just seventeen percent of school administrators reporting the adoption of innovative, high-quality teaching techniques (WFP, 2014).

The baseline survey also focused on the improved Literacy Instructional Materials by assessing Percent of teachers using the national literacy curriculum and the related instructional materials. It was found that sixty-six percent of the teachers in the targeted schools utilized the national literacy curriculum in their teachings. This is intriguing gap between teachers/administrators of schools and national policymakers over what constitutes successful literacy teaching tools (WFP, 2014). By applying new skills and knowledge, the trained teachers and school directors were intended to allow considerable gains in students' early reading abilities.

Table 6: Trainings on Literacy for the MoEYS staff at the local level

Number of MoEYS Staff	Target	K. Thom	Siem Reap	Achievement
# of trained school administrators and officials	591	271	443	714
# of school administrators in targeted schools who showed the use of new methods or tools	413	198	286	484
# of trained teachers, educators, teaching assistants	2,200	1,115	2,097	3,212
# of teachers, educators, teaching assistants who showed proficiency in the use of innovative and high-quality teaching strategies or technologies.	1,540	681	1,018	1,699

Source: WEI Quarterly Report (2019).

As a result of the technical assistance and capacity building, the MoEYS demonstrated its ability to manage the SF program and successfully integrated it into the existing government cash scholarship

program, which already had a dedicated budget allocation and a policy and management structure within the DPE. The government also displayed a strong commitment to developing and operating a nationwide SF program on its own initiative. The MoEYS has the potential to undertake the school meals program by 2021, and it has the potential to execute as a result of community and local government responsiveness to the MoEYS's educational strategy, improved budget allocation, expertise with program execution, a development plan, and engagement from communities and local governments (Ham et al., 2017, p. 46). The MoEYS's capability was also determined by existing human resources (school storekeepers, and cooks), cooking facilities (kitchens and kitchen utensils), budget procedure-related paperwork, and community engagement (water, light, and firewood).

According to the endline evaluation 2019, the MoEYS capacity for implementing school feeding programs increased but needed further improvement for the subsequent implementation phase. Even though the MoEYS expressed its strong ability and commitment to implement the program, the research found that capacity gaps within the MoEYS staff were identified and required to strengthen for long-term program implementation. Additionally, it was observed that the turnover of the MoEYS staff was the main challenge for successful implementation. The high number of the well-trained staff, particularly at the school level, was replaced by the new team. Employees' turnover at the local level had a negative impact on the organization's ability to operate on a national level. Multiple cases of program expertise being lost due to trained individuals leaving their positions or migrating to other places. To address this issue, the MoEYS planned to create a local pool of trainers to guarantee that new MoEYS staff could be taught about the program implementation without assistance from the WFP. EGR teaching strategies may be supported by a group of trainers in the provincial teacher training centers of the MoEYS.

Technical Capacity of the Implementing Partners

It has been acknowledged that the WFP is one of the leading International Organizations in commodities management and has a solid logistic system. Therefore, during the program implementation, it was capable of providing operational advice to achieve the high quality of food commodities delivery for the program outcomes. The program implementation was supported by the WFP staff, the highly skilled program implementers. They possessed considerable technical experience in crucial program areas, such as school health policy, education, and social protection. Their experience was critical in developing and executing an effective program design and implementation and assisting other institutions in these fields. To enhance staff capacity, the WFP Country office in Cambodia also received technical assistance from WFP Office of SF and the Regional Bureau in Bangkok to expand its work on food safety, social behavior change communication, and nutrition and to align its work with the preferred HGSF model of the government and the policy priorities. In the meantime, the WFP Cambodia did a Capacity Needs Assessment to ascertain the extent of its capacity deficiencies. Consequently, it was found that the WFP teams had significant capacity development abilities.

In addition to the WFP's support, several NGO partners, including PI, WV, WEI, and KAPE, also actively participated in the program activities to support the government. It was found that PI and WV are long-standing partners and have extensive expertise in managing and implementing programs. As a consequence, the McGovern-Dole program was implemented and managed effectively. These practices will be beneficial lessons when the program transitions to government ownership. Additionally, the high capacity of the WEI and KAPE in implementing the program was acknowledged by all stakeholders and the agencies.

Financial Resource

It is the crucial element to implement the program smoothly. Without the financial support, policy implementation will not work, regardless of the perfect frameworks adopted. The program implementation was fully and financially supported by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) with a total amount of USD 15,212,698 for various research, workshops, capacity building, and other program operations. The amount of grant provided was considered sufficient according to the program plan. The granted budget was managed by the WFP and transferred to the bank accounts of the target schools through the government mechanism. The budget was spent on program commodities, food and vegetables, and training activities from 2017 to 2019.

In 2017, the financial support was funded to the MoEYS to undertake a feasibility study for the HGSF program and assist the government in determining its suitability and viability. The study helped guide the direction for the SF transition and develop a more suitable SF model for the state ownership. Moreover, the findings could also assist the MoEYS in addressing some of its capacity shortages on the HGSF implementation. Based on the study, the development of a national policy, and a national strategy, including the determination of the most appropriate menus and the priority for targeting, and the identification of the optimal operating models for a national SF were all considered. This included the flow of funds, food, and information. In 2018, the budget was delivered to support workshops organized to establish essential milestones for the program's continuous transition to government management and to support a study tour of the MoEYS staff to the HGSF-focused schools in target provinces. This assistance was critical in defining the MoEYS's perspective on school nutrition and transition preparation.

However, the decentralized evaluation report 2017 of the McGovern-

Dole program showed that there was no government budget line for the SF implementation, and the MoEYS's expenditure priorities were on increasing teacher wages and hiring and maintaining more skilled teachers, rather than on the SF implementation (The KonTerra Group, 2017). Moreover, it was found that the government had a deficiency of financial commitment to the program and deficiency of transparent decision-making about which provinces the government wanted to prioritize for a nationally owned model. If this program received financing from the government, it would help the government gather more data on program implementation and future implementation of the national HGSF program by providing them with additional expertise and best practices (Dunn et al., 2020).

Further, ambiguous legislation about the use of the Commune Development Funds (CDF) resulted in inadequate compensation for school chefs to maintain the school meals provision. Hence, the community and the governments through CDF should have provided more financial support to the school chefs since the program was one of the community development activities, and CSF was adopted to use for infrastructure and community activities within each commune. However, there was disagreement on the quantity and uniformity of this payment, and it was uncertain if this included schools and school-based programs such as school nutrition.

Monitoring Systems

It was evaluated that the monitoring system for the program implementation was substantial. A "Platforms for Real-time Information System (PRISM)", initially created by the WFP, was adopted to assist the program monitoring and improve the quality of the program implementation. It was found that the integration of the PRISM into the MoEYS Scholarship Office significantly improved the monitoring system at the local level. Likewise, a particular mobile application was created to monitor and report food stockpiles. The application was able to provide

real-time data on food needs at the school level. Hence, the top management of the MoEYS could review and make optimal policy options based on high-quality data. However, the capacity of the implementers was still limited to utilize and maintain this advanced technology.

In conclusion, as a result of the vital capacity of the MoEYS and implementing partners, financial support from donors, and technical assistance from implementing partners, it obviously shows that the program goals and objectives regarding children literacy improvement and nutrition practice could be achieved. It can be clearly seen that several policies were developed as a result of USDA assistance from 2017 to 2019, as indicated in **Table 7**. The MoEYS could produce effective policy frameworks, including a three-year concept paper, operational guidelines, and a transition strategy for the HGSF program that the government would implement fully.

Table 7: Number of policies as a result of USDA support (201-2019)

Policies	Target	Baseline	Endline
# of children's health and nutrition policies, regulations, or administrative procedures	1	1 (Stage 5)	1 (Stage 5)
# of educational policies, regulations or administrative procedures	4	0	1 (Stage 5) & 3 EGR standards developed

Source: WFP Endline Evaluation Report (2019)

4.1.3. Community Participation and Government Commitment

The strategy to strengthen community and government engagement was introduced in the Results Frameworks (RFs) of the McGovern-Dole program. The RFs showed foundational results of the program implementation, such as the increased capacity of government institutions, improved policy frameworks, increased government support, and increased engagement of local organizations and community groups (WFP, 2016).

Community Participation and Support

Active community engagement was encouraged in implementing the McGovern-Dole program activities. Several community committees with different roles, including LSFC, SFC, PTAs, and SSC, were established to discuss implementing strategy, mobilize community resources, and support school teachers implementing the program at schools. It is found that the level of community involvement in the program implementation was high. The community demonstrated a willingness to the program; however, the majority of community members suggested that the SFC should have been upgraded by establishing defined duties and responsibilities and a suitable number of committee members at all levels (Ham et al., 2017).

Moreover, the engagement of some parents and community people who were the school committee members was restricted in decision-making and program management even though a healthy gender balance was highly considered. Generally, the male members took the leadership position while the female handled the secondary responsibilities as finance manager. Nevertheless, the committee members were willing and able to support the program implementation in any way possible. Some parents and community members were affordable to provide supplementary ingredients, water, firewood, and vegetables for the school meals and provide financial support to purchase condiments and support the payment of the cooks. The committee members expressed that they were happy to provide whatever they could (Dunn et al., 2020).

A variety of stakeholders in the community joined forces with schools to promote student cooking by providing resources such as time and money and food and other ingredients. Additionally, the community members served as cooks for school meal programs. It was common for a parent or grandparents to donate their time each day to prepare the school lunch for the students. Since the McGovern-Dole budget did not allocate financial

support to the chefs, this resulted in a significant challenge for some schools to sustain the daily food cooking, while some chefs at other schools received financial support from the community members. To resolve the issue, the MoEYS included payment for the cook of USD 25 per month in a program proposal to implement school meals in some schools from the school year 2019 to 2020. However, it was suggested that school administrators, commune officials, and other community members should have frequent meetings to foster communication and collaboration. Keep an eye on things to ensure that the school feeding programs function well and update monthly activities and expenses. Stakeholders must work together and understand each other's roles to solve problems effectively and quickly: from PoEs to school administrators and development partners; everyone must be included (Ham et al., 2017).

Excluding the assistance from the McGovern-Dole grant for the program implementation, it was found that other implementing agencies and donors supported this program. The government of Japan provided canned fish, while other private donors provided funds for purchasing the yellow split peas. On top of that, the MoEYS received assistance from many implementing agencies, including All Children Reading Cambodia (ACRC) and WEI, for the program implementation, which concentrated on literacy. The implementing agencies assisted the MoEYS in harmonizing Early Grade Reading (EGR) through implementing supported projects, namely the All Children Learning project, which was financially funded by USAID. The agencies' commitment bolstered the effectiveness of the project performance.

Government Commitment and Support

It is essential to have a strong commitment from the government from the central to sub-national level for the program implementation and to increase its coverage following the demand of the vulnerable children. The

SF Road Map 2015, jointly signed by the MoEYS and the WFP, demonstrated the mutual commitment to a strategic and sustainable handover to a government-owned and operated SF program. Towards this goal, the government has integrated school meal activities into national frameworks, including the ESP 2019-2023, the NSFSN 2019-2023, and the NSHP.

It was seen that during the program implementation from 2017 to 2019, the MoEYS provided support for the success of the program implementation through coordinating and mobilizing people to participate in the program activities. Since the program implementation was technically and financially supported and initiated by WFP, the MoEYS has had long-standing collaborations with various government stakeholders and development partners, particularly the collaboration with the WFP for over a decade. The close connection between them led to achieving great outcomes of the program, particularly in generating enthusiasm and commitment from the MoEYS staff to continue implementing the initiative. The MoEYS personnel worked closely and directly with school personnel through the government channel to provide practical guidance and reinforce the sufficient implementation. The MoEYS supported the designated schools in establishing school gardens for a pleasant learning environment, conducting training on commodity management and food planning and storage arrangement, and undertaking activities to improve students' literacy. The MoEYS constructed or rehabilitated school infrastructures to ensure a healthy learning environment for the target schools. In addition, the MoEYS staff at the central level invested significantly in capacity building at the school, provincial, and significant levels to ensure sustainability and government ownership in the program implementation (Dunn et al., 2020).

Moreover, it was found that different government ministries, such as the MEF, MoP, MoI, and CARD, were engaged in decision-making regarding school feeding implementation. The CARD working group,

namely the Technical Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition, provided a helpful opportunity for the WFP and other SF stakeholders to collaborate, share knowledge and experiences, educate policymakers and decision-makers, and facilitate the transfer to national ownership. The inter-ministerial collaboration was critical in advancing SF policy formulation and implementation and in determining the path of the program.

Implementers' Commitment

Staff commitment to the organizational goals and values is a significant input of engagement and a necessary condition for individual and organizational efficiency (Jackson, 2004). The employee commitment to organizational goals can be measured by three elements: (1) identification demonstrates organizational pride and internalization of the organization goals and values; (2) loyalty expresses a feeling of devotion to and fondness for the organization, a sense of belonging and desire to work; and (3) involvement reflects participation in task provided as a result of its values to the organization (Porter et al., 1974; Stride et al., 2007).

The baseline report 2014 of the McGovern-Dole program showed that the participation of the teachers, administrators, and officials in the program activities was examined. The statistics revealed that teacher attendance was still pretty excellent in meeting the program goals, with at least ninety percent attendance on ninety percent of school days. On average, teachers attended over eighty-five percent of planned school days. This again indicated an issue with educational quality, rather than a teacher's lack of commitment (WFP, 2014). It was also found that improved collaboration and assistance were obtained from the DSFCs and all other implementing partners. The DSFCs improved their grasp of the DSFC's functions and duties. To this end, they should have been aware that they must contribute to the cost of paying the cook's incentive. District Governors and District Education Officers had to work collaboratively with the MoEYS and the

MoI, ensuring that commune governments received adequate recommendations on using commune funds for SF programs.

During the consultation workshop with the government ministries, it was reaffirmed that the RGC had strong commitment to current and future HGSF and school nutrition programs as a form of social security. As a result of the discussion, the Cambodian Prime Minister recommended that the MoEYS submit a three-year concept paper for HGSF to MEF. Additionally, CARD committed during the session to integrating the HSGF into the NSFSN and NSDP. However, the government did not commit financial resources to the plan, and it was difficult for WFP to meet the 2015 Road Map's deadline for handover (Dunn et al., 2020).

4.2. Most Influential Factors Affecting the Success of the Program Implementation

Key factors that influence the successful implementation of the SF program have been identified distinctly based on country context and stages of program implementation. In Bangladesh, the key factors that contributed to the SF program implemented from 2015 to 2017 were characterized as: (1) consistency of program goals with national policies, (2) government capacity strengthening, (3) strong collaboration with government institutions and implementing agencies, and (4) policy design (Cano et al., 2018). Similarly, in Lao PDR, it was found that three main factors firmly influenced the implementation of the SF program implemented from 2014 to 2016. These factors include (1) close collaboration with government institutions, (2) capacity-building activities, and (3) government support (Goswami et al., 2018).

In the context of Cambodia, the SF programs have been implemented in different stages since 2000. It was reported that two main determinants led to the success and sustainability of the SF program implemented from

2000 to 2010: (1) high community participation and (2) government commitment (Nielsen et al., 2010). A high level of community engagement was required to guarantee that meals were delivered on time, that additional food items were provided efficiently, and that food stockpiles were managed wisely. The government's commitment included strategic, political, and financial assistance to the program implementation. It was found that the program was well-organized and well-functioning, with adequate community engagement and participation at each of the recipient schools. In the meantime, government ownership and strategic capacity-building activities were needed to further enhance the next phase of the program implementation. These are all aspects that contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of school feeding programs. Additionally, it was considered the major factors that certainly caused the program outcomes implemented from 2013 to 2016, counting government support and commitment, the capacity of the MoEYS staff involved at the provincial level, community support, program monitoring, strong collaboration with implementing partners, and the WPF innovation (WFP, 2019). However, for the implementation of the pilot HGSF implemented from 2017 to 2019, the reviewed reports do not precisely illustrate the key factors that positively affected the program implementation; the authors have alternatively noted general vital factors.

The abovementioned factors were reported as the significant factors that undoubtedly resulted in the successful program implementation. As observed, four factors, comprising government support and commitment, capacity strengthening, strong collaboration, and community participation, were commonly selective to explain and likely the most influential factors. However, these factors have not been discussed which one is more important than the others.

Backdated reports of events or programs that occur over several years

are likely to reduce the data accuracy and reliability associated with variables. Numerous interviewees may be required to acquire accurate data concerning the intricacies of program implementation, even though the respondents might have different perceptions (Scheirer & Griffith, 1990). Therefore, in this study, key informants' perspectives on the most influential factors of the program were investigated through an online survey and interviews.

As a result, the respondents selected and agreed that the provided factors are crucial for the success of the McGovern-Dole program implementation. Those factors include consistency of the program goals with the national policy frameworks, institutional capacity and coordination, stability of financial resources, government commitment and support, clarity of budget and action plans, the commitment of implementers, community participation and ownership, expertise and experiences of the program implementers, collaboration with stakeholders, and WFP's initiatives to the program implementation.

> *A WFP program policy officer (2022) agreed that "all the above are important for the success of the program implementation. However, it is still okay to run smoothly if the government has strong capacity and commitment to fully manage the program. The WFP can play a role as a technical supporter to the government, while other key stakeholders could also contribute as relevant."*

To acquire more comprehensive understanding of the priority factors, the respondents were requested to select three factors that are the most influential to the success of the program implementation and select three factors that are the least influential. Among these critical factors, it is noticed that the top three factors are the most popular and likely dominant to the program implementation, including (1) policy consistency, (2) institutional capacity and coordination, and (3) government commitment and support. As indicated in Table 8, 17 out of 19 respondents thought that

the consistency of the program goals with the national policy frameworks is the key factor, followed by the factors relating to institutional capacity and coordination and government commitment and support, respectively. This can be interpreted that the government, in collaboration with the line ministries and implementing partners, developed robust and sufficient regulatory and policy frameworks, and those documents were well connected to the program goals and objectives. To reinforce the policy frameworks on the ground more productively and efficiently, the vital capacity of institutions, including clear management structures, roles, and responsibilities, is necessary. In addition to policy consistency and the ability to implement the program, government commitment and support is essential to accelerate the program outcomes and sustain the implementation for the best interests of beneficiaries. In the meantime, it is perceived that the factor regarding WFP's initiative to the program implementation is the most negligible influential factor, followed by the factor relating to collaboration with stakeholders and expertise and experiences of the program implementers, respectively. These factors are identified as the essential and positive factors but not dominant to the successful implementation of the McGovern-Dole program.

Table 8. Key Factors affecting program implementation (Total Resp. N=19)

No.	Key Factors	# of Resp. (Most)	# of Resp. (Least)
1.	Consistency of the program goals with the national policy frameworks	17	0
2.	Institutional Capacity and coordination	13	0
3.	Government commitment and support	12	1
4.	Stability of financial resources	6	1
5.	Clarity of budget and action plans	3	3
6.	Commitment of implementers	2	5
7.	Community participation and ownership	1	7
8.	Expertise and experiences of the program implementers	0	7
9.	Collaboration with stakeholders	0	12
10.	WFP's initiative to the program implementation	0	17

*Note: **Most** = the most influential factor; **Least** = the least influential factor*

However, since street-level workers, including teachers and community members, have direct interactions with beneficiaries and play crucial roles in solving ground-level problems through their specific skills and experiences, they are likely the most influential to the program success (Lipsky, 2010). Additionally, it is found that the assistance of school administration, the accessibility of resources and space to obtain supplies and equipment, educator training, the connectivity of the garden into the education curriculum, sharing activities with the community, and the presence of an organizer to organize activities, are distinguished as significant factors that determine the outcomes and sustainability of the SF application (Dos Santos et al., 2022). Moreover, according to the SABER assessment as indicated in **Table 9**, it presents that community participation and ownership are strong while stable funding and program design and implementation were still latent. This counts community participation as the primary determinant of the successful implementation.

Table 9. Progress on the SABER for the HGSF Implementation (2017-19)

No.	SABER Standards	Baseline (2014)	Endline (2019)
1.	Strong policy frameworks	Unaparent	Increasing
2.	Strong institutional structure and coordination	Unaparent	Increasing
3.	Stable funding and budgeting	Unaparent	Unaparent
4.	Sound program design and implementation	Unaparent	Unaparent
5.	Strong community participation and ownership	Increasing	Increasing

Source: WFP Endline Evaluation report (2019).

Since this study focuses on the top-down approach to policy implementation, it is evaluated that the quality of high policymakers and implementers is the critical success of the program implementation, and the relevant factors are the center of this study. As illustrated in the Table 9, policy frameworks and institutional structures and coordination have been found to the substantial factors. In addition, government commitment and

support are perceived as one of the most important factors, while community participation is likely less influential (see Table 8).

Therefore, the top three factors that are decisively selected are the priority factors for the successful implementation, and these factors are briefly scrutinized as the following:

4.2.1. Policy Consistency

The policy frameworks are the main umbrellas that cover the government's intentions, program design, and implementation. They give a clear direction and are the critical factors for effective program implementation. Without a clear path, the program implementers will not have a common goal and objectives, and they will not know where to go and what to do. Therefore, it is necessary to have the national frameworks, and program goals and activities must be well aligned with the frameworks. Otherwise, the government policy would fail to meet public goals and people's needs. Developing the policy frameworks can also reflect the government's commitment. The respondents confirmed that the pilot program was the social assistance program of the social protection system consistently connected to the main policy frameworks of the RGC, particularly the NSPPF 2016-2025. Regarding the importance of policy consistency, a respondent stated, *"the consistency between program objectives and the national works is the key indicator illustrated in the NSPPF 2016-2025. The program implementation was also approved by the donors."*

4.2.2. Institutional Capacity and Coordination

Institutional capacity is a key element essential for effective program and policy implementation. The capacity of the implementing and coordinating agency must be vigorous; otherwise, the program could not be implemented successfully. Despite the policy frameworks and action plans

being well designed, reckless coordination and implementation would result in the program being useless. Even though rigorous policies are produced with sufficient support for the policy implementation, the practical outcomes and ultimate goals cannot be accomplished in the absence of substantial institutional arrangement and resources, including institutional capacity, management structure with clear roles and responsibilities, and implementation mechanism. Adversely, the program implementation will lead to failure and ineffectiveness of the program or policy outcomes even though an ideal policy framework is constructed and adopted.

> *A MoEYS staff said*, *"without a clear coordination mechanism and enough capacity, the program implementation will not work well, regardless of a good quality of policy framework and sufficient financial resources. Therefore, the implementing agency shall have the capacity to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the management of the program."*

Since the capacity of the implementers was already equipped and strengthened, the MoEYS were able to implement the program and produce program guidelines for effective outcomes. Further, it was found that the MoEYS can implement the HGSF as the national program because the MoEYS already has existing human resources and clear management structures and roles from the central to local levels (Ham et al., 2017).

4.2.3. Government Commitment and Support

In addition to the consistent regulatory frameworks and strong institutional capacity, the government commitment and support are essential for successful implementation. The government is the primary decision-maker in deciding to what extent the program will cover, what modality of the program is preferred, whom the program centers on, and where to implement the program. Any substantial issues that happened

during the implementation could be solved correctly and efficiently. For instance, the government established the SF management structures and committees at national and sub-national levels to discuss and settle problems concerning ambiguous roles of program implementers and lack of community participation. The MoEYS allocated facilities and human resources for the program implementation, and the MoEYS staff regularly conducted field monitoring visits for program support. As discussed in section 4.1.3, the government strongly committed to producing several policy guidelines. The government commitment and support also resulted in more collaboration among stakeholders and more active community participation.

"It is important to have a strong commitment from the government ...SF Road Map in 2015 that demonstrates the mutual commitment to a strategic and sustainable handover to a government-owned and operated school feeding program. Towards this goal, the Government has integrated school meal activities into national frameworks: including the ESP 2019-2023 and the NSFSN 2019-2023, and the NSHP," a WFP staff said.

In conclusion, the policy consistency is likely the government vision indicating what the government desires to do and the map showing where and how to go. The institutional capacity is likely the main power to achieve the government goals, while the government commitment and support are likely the catalysts to drive for more power, collaboration, and participation the program implementation.

4.3. Main Features of the Program that led it to the Nationally Owned Program

The HGSF does not only encourage students to attend school frequently, provide healthy meals, and improve school health but it is also

found that the program provides numerous significant benefits such as social protection, investment programs, community economic growth, participatory attitudes, and health improvement. To continue providing enormous benefits to the beneficiaries and communities, program sustainability is fundamentally considered.

A feasibility study found that the program is more sustainable when adopted as the national program. The MoEYS can implement the HGSF as the national program by 2021 due to numerous factors, such as (1) existing human resources, (2) strengthening regular monitoring and evaluation based on the requirements by the provincial office of Education, Youth and Sport (PEO), District of Education, Youth and Sport (DEO), local authorities (district, commune), and (3) providing enough budget to implement the whole program (Ham et al., 2017).

Consequently, the MoEYS and the WFP signed a joint strategy, including agreement 2015 and SF Roadmap on the transition of the program to the nationally owned. The Roadmap envisioned a shift from international assistance toward full government management that has complete responsibility for a holistic, domestically owned program to SF. This strategy comprised perspectives and instruments that increase the institutional capacity to develop, fund, and administer the program over time. The Roadmap was divided into short-term (2015-2016), medium-term (2017-2020), and long-term (2021 onward) activities and adhered to the SABER approach's five quality requirements. As described in section 4.1.1, many connected policy frameworks supported the government to SF program after the transition period. To provide the government with practical guidance for SF implementation, the SF Policy was developed, and it was anticipated that the first draft would be released by the end of 2019. It was an essential step toward achieving government ownership and ensuring the program's sustainability. In addition to the supported

regulatory frameworks, vital human resources, institutional capacity, the financial commitment of the government, and further technical assistance of implementing partners are the critical features to maintaining the program sustainability.

4.3.1. Human Resources and Capacity

As indicated in section 4.1.2, the MoEYS had the potential to implement the HGSF program for a long-term period. The RGC already has staff who have skills, knowledge, and experience in implementing the program, even though they still need more capacity building and support. Additionally, the government has standardized structures, roles, and responsibilities for the program implementation. For example, policy-making institutions and implementing entities have already been established, including NSPC, PCC, SFTF, SDFC, DFE, and SSCs.

There was considerable variance in school capacity to implement SF programs at the school level. Some USDA-supported schools continued to use the traditional SF model, while others had been using the HGSF hybrid model for two school years. Others began utilizing the HGSF hybrid model in 2019. There were diverse capacities for implementing the HGSF, with some likely requiring central assistance from the WFP during the subsequent period. Most of the Department of Education officials and school administrators believed that they can coordinate the meals program through existing facilitating structures. However, a further evaluation of the PoE staff's ability to administer the National School Meals Program is needed (Ham et al., 2017). Management mechanisms at PoE-level have already been built, with the addition of merely a few more staff members at certain places and the strengthening of existing school feeding committees. Program infrastructures, such as cooking facilities, are already in place in most schools; however, some schools still utilize the chefs' plates, pots, knives, spoons, and other equipment.

4.3.2. Financial Commitment of the Government

As a national program, state budget allocation is one of the major components to ensure that the program can be implemented in the long-term run. The program is in a transition period from external support to government financing. Thus, there is a need to have sufficient financial resources to ensure sustainability. In this regard, the Royal Government is committed to reforming public finance and public sector management by implementing new financial technologies that will enable decentralized budget control. The government will directly allocate a certain amount of the annual state budget to the local level. When the program is fully managed and funded by the government, it can be expanded to additional target provinces and schools and becomes sustainable. It is possible to serve meals at a reasonable price that is in line with the country's economic situation, and many of the necessary ingredients are readily available in the neighborhood, including vegetables, fish, and meat.

It was noted that the short-term (2015-2016) and medium-term (2017-2020) activities were successfully implemented with financial and technical assistance from development partners (Dunn et al., 2020). Some schools' environments might be improved by increasing the budgets allocated to kitchens, stoves, dining areas, cooking utensils, and storage facilities for storing goods separately. Increased budgets for these items should be prioritized. Students may benefit from a better learning environment if kitchen management, utensils, and dining areas are improved (Ham et al., 2017).

According to the NSPPF and roadmap that indicated the HGSF implementation by 2021, the MEF approved USD 2 million per year for the next three years as part of the Education Budget. However, it was likely impossible to implement the program since the MoEYS made a late announcement of a preference for the HGSF model and the following demand for extra capacity support on this model. To settle the issue, the

MoEYS decided to start implementing the program as a pilot in only six provinces in the school year 2019-20 and 205 schools where it had been implemented and supported by WFP and McGovern-Dole grant. The program would expand its scope to other provinces and schools when the MoEYS had enough resources. This would be expanded to roughly 650 schools by the 2024-25 school year.

4.3.3. Technical and Financial Assistance

The ongoing transition to the national ownership under the HGSF model has been scheduled to take place over the following five years until 2025. The WFP and the government will assess the timetable and number of schools to be turned over regularly. The USDA McGovern-Dole offered a new grant for a four-year term 2020-2023 to expand the program coverage and foster national ownership, such as aiding the development of a budget line for school meals and assisting the government with fiscal management. This will help enable the transition to the national ownership to be completed over a more manageable time frame, allowing the MoEYS to assume complete control of the school meals program and build adequate extra capacity to operate the program via the HGSF model.

The program operations have been anticipated to continue throughout the next implementation stage and potentially beyond the expiration of donor financing. The transition to the MoEYS enhances the stability of school feeding-related services. The transition to the HGSF model was documented, with external assessors confirming that the MoEYS has been prepared to begin implementing the HGSF model in schools in the school year 2019-20. The existing McGovern-Dole initiatives, including nutrition and hygiene improvement and food safety preparation, were included in the new HGSF guidelines implemented in 2020. Additionally, the infrastructure development work undertaken by PI and WV is likely to be maintained with community involvement and advice via school support committees (Dunn et al., 2020).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Summary of the Findings

This study has found multiple factors that led this program to the success. However, the preliminary information from the key informants' perspectives shows that only the top three factors are the most dominant in the program implementation, while other elements are the least influential. The results indicate policy consistency as the ultimate key factor, followed by the institutional capacity and government commitment and support. This can be interpreted that the government, in collaboration with the line ministries and implementing partners, developed robust and sufficient regulatory and policy frameworks, which were well connected to the program goals and objectives. To reinforce the policy frameworks at the ground level more productively and efficiently, the vital capacity of institutions, including clear management structures, roles, and responsibilities, is necessary. Further, the government's commitment and support to the program implementation is the catalyst that drives more collaboration and active community participation. Moreover, to sustain the implementation of the HGSF, the program has been operated as the national implementation because the government has existing human resources and financial commitment.

The study results would be taken into consideration as an input for the current and future Home-Grown School Feeding program fully managed and implemented by the government. It is believed that the results of this study would help policymakers, policy implementers, and implementing partners acquire a better grasp of the critical aspects of factors influencing a successful program. It would take a considerable human resource, time, and budget to improve the implementation mechanism and service quality that serve those in need while also achieving the government's objectives.

5.2. Policy Recommendations

These are some proposals for enhancing the HGSF implementation in Cambodia, both now and in the future.

1. The MoEYS employees should remain to request technical assistance from the WFP and other implementing agencies to support the current and future management and implementation of the HGSF because these stakeholders have expertise and experience in implementing this program.

2. The MoEYS should undertake a capacity review of its staff at all levels to ensure that all implementing stakeholders with significant roles and responsibilities in SF can implement the HGSF program. The capacity of the MoEYS is considered vital, but there is no measurement of staff capacity. As a result, the MoEYS does not know how strong its ability is.

3. The MoEYS, in collaboration with the NSPC, should discuss the accessibility to initially implementing the HGSF program in schools that already have experience in implementing this program by utilizing existing human resources and school infrastructures. The program coverage could be expanded to other provinces when the transition strategy is adopted, and the capacity to implement the program in other areas is strong enough.

4. The MoEYS, in collaboration with the WFP, implementing partners, and other stakeholders, should ensure that the transition plan is fully documented and widely communicated locally. The program should be adequately thorough to include a timeframe, milestones, specific roles for all partners, and the sites and schools where the MoEYS would conduct the next phase of programming.

5. The MoEYS, in collaboration with the MoI at the national and sub-national levels, should allocate the state budget to support the cooks

since they were not financially supported by either the government or the McGovern-Dole grant in the pilot phase.

6. The MoEYS should continue to collaborate with the stakeholders to ensure that the MoEYS's capability for reviewing program implementation is sufficient in the program sites selected for government implementation. The MoEYS officials at all levels should be trained in using the new SF monitoring system and ensure that the schools have enough digital monitoring equipment and that relevant MoEYS officials have access timely and accurate information.

5.3. Limitation and Future Consideration

Firstly, since this study used the top-down approach, it focused more on primary information from policymakers and implementers at the central level. This approach might ignore essential factors that could be found from the direct program implementers, such as school teachers, community members, students, parents, and cooks. Therefore, the study results lack the perspectives from the ground level as it shows only the key factors relating to the top levels of the program implementation.

Regarding the research methodology and information sources, the study used a qualitative approach and chiefly relied on secondary sources to explore the main factors. The most needed documents, particularly the critical program reports, were not stored on the internet. Therefore, it was difficult to collect them from implementing institutions. Additionally, as the relevant reports are not peer-reviewed, the evidence quality, data accuracy, and data reliability remain low. An online survey with open-ended questions was purposefully sent to 16 key program stakeholders, and three additional respondents were contacted for the interviews. The primary data acquired was not sufficiently balanced and comprehensive; it created difficulty in evaluating the data to get a helpful conclusion. Consequently,

the findings may not accurately represent the reality of program implementation.

Finally, since this study focused on the top-down approach and numerous factors, the subsequent study should focus on the synthesis approach and study a few elements and study more deeply. The data for the analysis extracted from in-depth interviews with key informants and secondary sources is more reliable. Therefore, the findings would be generalized.

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Abstract in Korean

국문초록

캄보디아의 국가사회지원정책
추진방안에 관한 연구
학교 급식 프로그램 시행에
영향을 미치는 요인

Lart Souy

서울대학교 행정대학원

글로벌행정전공

자체 육성 학교 급식 프로그램(HGSF)은 현재 캄보디아 왕립 정부(RGC)가 시범 프로그램과 개발 파트너 및 기부자들의 오랜 기술 및 재정적 지원을 받아 소유하고 운영하고 있다. 이 프로그램은 취약계층 아동에게 매일 학교급식을 제공해 학교 아동의 출석과 영양을 개선하고 지역농업을 활성화하기 위한 사회지원 프로그램으로 꼽힌다. HGSF는 세계식량계획(WFP)이 기술적으로 지원하고 미국 농무부(USDA) 맥거번돌 그랜트가 자금을 지원하는 맥거번돌 프로그램(EF)의 시행을 통해 2017년부터 2019년까지 시범 운영되었다. 이 프로그램은 구현 과정에서 상당한 난제가 남아있음에도 불구하고 수많은 요인의 지원을 받아 효과적이고 성공적인 프로그램으로 평가되었다.

따라서 본 연구는 구현 연구의 하향식 접근방식을 활용하여 프로그램

구현의 성공과 효과에 영향을 미친 영향요인을 분석하고 면밀히 조사하고자 한다. 분석을 위한 주요 정보를 수집하기 위해 이론적 프레임워크와 관련 문서를 검토했다. 또한, 개방형 질문이 포함된 온라인 설문조사는 몇몇 주요 정보 제공자를 대상으로 면접을 통해 시행되었다. 이전 연구의 대다수는 어떤 요인이 다른 요인보다 더 중요한지를 분명히 식별할 수 없으며, 그러한 저자들은 성공적인 프로그램 구현에 영향을 미치는 변수에 대한 합의를 보지 못하고 있다. 그러나 이 연구는 특히 상위 세 가지 주요 요인이 McGovern-Dole 프로그램 구현의 성공에 가장 우세하다는 것을 발견했다. 정책 일관성을 최우선으로 꼽은 결과이며, 제도적 역량과 정부의 약속과 지원이 각각 그 뒤를 잇고 있다. 연구 결과에 따르면, 정부는 HGSF를 국가 프로그램으로 시행하면서 이 세 가지 요소에 상당히 집중해야 한다. 충분하고 일관된 정책 프레임워크 외에도 효과적인 프로그램 구현을 위해 구현자를 위한 역량 구축이 필요하다는 의견이 제시된다. 한편, HGSF의 현재와 미래의 구현을 위한 프로그램 결과를 개선하기 위한 정부의 약속과 지원이 필요하다.

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