

Continued from page 17

that he did not get satisfied when he ate the food. He, however, said he enjoyed the free meals and always looked forward to it every day he came to school. A source at the school also complained that the rice which was usually served to the pupils on Mondays was poorly cooked. When our reporter visited on Thursday, March 21, 2019, the pupils lined up, waiting with plates and polythene bags to be served beans pottage with bread and awara, a locally made soya beans pudding.

The Programme Manager of NHGSF in Niger State, Umar Shaba, said all the concerns raised by the pupils would be addressed as he was in constant touch with the 2,847 schools partaking in the programme.

#### Enrollment drops in Niger and Nasarawa schools

Shrinking enrollment figures at the LEA Primary School in Matandi shows that the programme has failed to achieve one of its objectives. The pupils' population from ECE classes to Primary 3 in the 2016-2017 session when the NHGSF had not taken off in the state stood at 216; that of 2017-2018 session when the programme took off in the first term was 194. This shows that there is over 10 per cent drop in school enrollment since the first session when the programme started in the school.

The day our reporter visited, the entire school population was 140 from ECE to Primary 6. Barring any miracle, the school enrollment will drop further to over 27 per cent based on the current school population.

Also, at the LEA Primary School, Danu, Paikoro, the Assistant Headmaster of the school, Mr. Stephen Daniel, told our reporter that enrollment had dropped despite the free food served the pupils.

Mr. Daniel said the school had 278 pupils during the 2016-2017 session but that the figure dropped to 167 in the current 2018-2019 school calendar, over a year after the NHGSF programme started in the school. This represents over 39 per cent decrease in the school's population.

In Nasarawa State, the enrollment figures are not encouraging, though the free meals have been served for only two terms. At the Central Pilot Primary School, Akwanga, the programme kicked off on January 24, 2019, and the current enrollment shows that there is over seven per cent drop in the figure compared to what was in the 2017-2018.

The population of pupils from Primary 1 to 6 in the school is 1,765 currently, but the 2017-2018 session had 1,914 pupils. Even in the beginners' classes, ECE to Primary 3, the 2017-2018 session had 1,186 enrollment while the 2018-2019 session has 1,080 pupils.

#### Pupils risk cholera in Nasarawa

Suffocating stench of faeces wafted across the hot March air as this reporter approached Keana South Primary School, Keana. The school has been turned into an Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp for Tiv people who have been dislodged from their homes as a result of herders' attacks



■ Pupils scramble for pasta at NKST Primary School, Akile, Makurdi LGA, Benue State

## The North Central: Where school enrolment has dropped and pupils are fed rotten fish and stale bread

on farming communities in the area.

Since there are no toilet facilities at the camp, they defecate openly in and around the school premises, polluting the classrooms and the school compound.

The same unhealthy environment pervades Obene Primary School, Keana, where IDPs share classrooms with pupils.

Also, our reporter learnt that most schools in the southern part of the state go through a similar experience.

This clearly violates the pupils' right to freedom from disease or right to health as contained in the policy document of NHGSF, which the feeding programme aims to uphold. This also implies that despite the millions spent,

the programme has not actualised the objective of improving the children's nutrition and health. The National Coordinator of NHGSF, Mrs. Abimbola Adesanmi, said the FG provided technical support and 100 per cent funding for the meals, but that it was the states that had the responsibility to provide infrastructure in the schools.

#### Pupils served rotten fish and stale bread in Kogi

At the LEA Nursery/Primary School, Lokogoma, Lokoja, Kogi State, the school feeding programme commenced on February 11, 2019, but pupils were allegedly served rotten fish and stale bread for the two weeks that it lasted. A source at the school said the quantity of food served was alright but raised concerns over

the quality of the food.

A total of 552 pupils were being fed in the school according to the Headmistress, Mrs. Mariam Mundi.

Mrs. Mundi said when she noticed the fish served the children was rotten, she asked the cooks to serve the food without the fish. She also said the pupils were served incomplete menu on some of the days.

She said, "Sometimes they will serve biscuits without milk, and some other times, they serve only bread without beans contrary to what is on the feeding timetable."

According to her, the cooks blamed the development on their inability to get the required food materials from the suppliers who were known as aggregators.

Records show that the children were served for only 13 days since the programme commenced as at the time our reporter visited the school on March 26, 2019. The last time the pupils were fed was on March 6.

At St. Luke's Nursery and Primary School Model II, Adankolo, Lokoja, the same concerns were raised. The headmistress was not available to talk to our reporter, but a school official who did not want to be named said the food served the pupils was small and was not nutritious. She said the fish was rotten and the bread was stale.

A register of the food served at the school showed that the authorities were not satisfied with the quality and quantity of the food, so they scored the vendors poorly.

One of the vendors who our reporter spoke with on phone, admitted that the fish they brought to feed the pupils with was rotten, but she defended herself saying, "We only serve what we have been given by the aggregators. We don't buy the food ourselves, we go and collect from the store where it is supplied by the aggregators, so there is nothing we can do about that."

#### Pupils sit on dirty floors, eat rationed meals

When this reporter visited Central Primary School, Akwanga, in the last week of March, the pupils were not fed because the cooks were not paid.

Two cooks, Salamatu Yakubu and Benedette Moses, who spoke with our reporter, said they were feeding more than the number of pupils they were officially allocated. Yakubu said she was allocated 70 pupils and she ended up cooking for 104, Moses said she was allocated 70 as well, but that she now fed 100 pupils.

She also said they stopped serving fruits just a week after they started feeding the pupils, saying the cost of purchasing the fruits was more than what they could afford.

#### National data contradicts state data

List of schools benefitting from the free meals as contained on the NHGSF data contradicts what is physically on ground. For instance, the data obtained from both the national office of the NHGSF

Continued on page 19



■ Pupils sit on the floor at Central Primary School, Akwanga, Nasarawa State

COOKS SCHOOL FEEDING SCHEDULE			
NHGSFP			
NO 002317			
SCHOOL	St. Luke's Model II	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	Lokoja
COOK	Hassan masin	ID NUMBER	044
ED PUPIL	70	NUMBER OF PUPILS FED	70
TE	21/3/19	DAY (MON-FRI)	Thursday
SERVED	Small bread	TEACHER'S REMARK (POOR, SATISFACTORY, GOOD)	not satisfied
HEADMASTER:	R. (Sp) Mth	NAME OF TEACHER:	NAME OF NTEACH/PTA:
3/19		SIGNATURE:	SIGNATURE:
		DATE:	DATE:

■ Headmistress of St. Luke's Model II, Lokoja, Kogi State, is not satisfied with the bread served the pupils