



A young boy sitting at a table about to eat a meal at school.

Kyrgyzstan McGovern-Dole Project

MIDTERM EVALUATION

November 2019

McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program - Kyrgyzstan

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MCGOVERN-DOLE INTERNATIONAL FOOD FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM - KYRGYZSTAN

2017-2021

MIDTERM EVALUATION REPORT

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Acknowledgments

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning	Acronym	Meaning
AYO	Ayil Okmotu	PD	Positive Discipline
COP	Chief of Party	PTA	Parent Teacher Association
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	SA	School Administrator
DDoE	District Department of Education	SN	School Nutritionist
DDS	Dietary Diversity Scores	SF	School Feeding
DSE	Department of Sanitation and Epidemiology, Kyrgyz Ministry of Health	SFP	School Feeding Program
ET	Evaluation Team	STA	Senior Technical Advisor
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	STC	Save the Children
GoK	Government of Kyrgyzstan	SES	Sanitation and Epidemiology Service, Kyrgyz Ministry of Health
GI	Group Interview	TL	Team Leader
KII	Key Informant Interview	ToR	Terms of Reference
MC	Mercy Corps	ToT	Trainer of Trainers
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation	TTR	Time to Read
MGD	McGovern-Dole	USD	United States Dollar
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
MoH	Ministry of Health	WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
MTE	Midterm Evaluation	WFP	World Food Program

Executive Summary

PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (McGovern-Dole 2017) in the Kyrgyz Republic aims to support the National School Feeding Program developed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Kyrgyz Republic, which continues to be a principal beneficiary and stakeholder for the McGovern-Dole 2017, along with selected primary schools. The project aims to support the implementation of the Kyrgyz government's national school feeding program within 430 primary schools and has the following core objectives, which include:

- Increasing knowledge of nutrition, health, and hygiene practices, safe food preparation and storage practices, and access to clean water and sanitation services by facilitating training for cooks, parents, and school officials and providing competitive grants to upgrade school facilities;
- Improving student attentiveness and reduce short-term hunger as a result of increased access to food by rehabilitating school kitchen infrastructure to meet government sanitation standards and providing daily school meals;
- Improving student attendance by providing daily school meals; and
- Improving the quality of literacy instruction by ensuring better access to school supplies and materials
- Increasing the skills and knowledge of relevant school staff, as well as enhancing community and family support for education.

The program aims to create an enabling learning environment through the creation of a sustainable school feeding program and school infrastructure projects, including Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – WASH, and winterization. The second aim is to improve learning outcomes through the promotion of literacy and learning.

Unlike the McGovern-Dole 2012 program, McGovern-Dole 2017 includes an active **literacy and learning promotion component** that seeks to increase the amount of time children in the targeted schools spend reading and writing, both inside and outside of school. This component of the program includes literacy promotion and behavior change activities aimed at children, teachers/librarians and parents, as well the positive discipline training for teachers.

While McGovern-Dole 2017 will run until 2021, this MTE will focus on 2017-2019, during this period the program supported 221 public schools across the country by providing over 2,000 metric tons of supplementary commodities (enriched flour, rice, split peas, and vegetable oil) to prepare daily hot meals for over 50,000 primary grade children in the 2019 school year.

The full map of the project can be found in Annex 2.

EVALUATION PURPOSE

Mercy Corps Kyrgyzstan and USDA have commissioned a midterm evaluation of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition program – Kyrgyzstan (2017-2021). As identified in the evaluation ToR this midterm evaluation report covers September 29, 2017- present to assess the following:

- Progress towards indicator targets established at baseline and within program agreement
- Relevance and effectiveness of program interventions to date
- Quality and efficiency of implementation
- Incorporation of lessons learned and recommendations from previous McGovern-Dole 2017 evaluations

The findings from the data collection and report provide insights regarding program performance thus far and mid-course corrections for all key McGovern-Dole 2017 stakeholders. For this reason, the focus of the MTE was relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and generating actionable lessons learned/recommendations. The midterm evaluation report provides USDA, MC, and partners the opportunity to gauge program performance and implementation quality with the specific aim of identifying any program design or implementation challenges, which will be communicated to program staff as a vehicle for empowering the implementation team, partners, beneficiaries, and donors with the information necessary to inform how to appropriately address them and reorient the program. The evaluation is participative and data is sought from all stakeholders including participating schools, MoES representatives, Save the Children (STC), and MC, and various stakeholders to ensure that all perspectives are considered and the data collection yields findings that will inform program implementation during the final two years of the project. In line with this aim, the findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the assessment exercise will be shared with all employees involved in the program, program partners, beneficiaries and the donor - more specifically USDA Washington, Mercy Corps, Government of Kyrgyzstan (GoK) institutions such the MoES, MoH, participating school administration staff, local community, and various partners and stakeholders.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This MTE employed three of the five key evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, which are appropriate given that this is the midpoint of McGovern-Dole 2017 and that the project is still being rolled out in a significant number of the targeted schools that have not received the entire McGovern-Dole 2017 program package of inputs and activities. The Evaluation Team (consisted of Lead Evaluator/Team Leader and Evaluator/Team Member) collaborated with Mercy Corps staff and a local data collection firm Erfolg. The MTE included three consecutive phases:

- Preparation and Desk Review, which included preliminary discussion and teleconference with MC clarifying expectations, limitations, approach, and methodology and resulted in Inception Report preparation.
- Data collection and fieldwork, the ET has employed several methods and collection tools to explore program results related to key program indicators and to answer evaluation questions. The data triangulation was ensured by a combination of qualitative KIIs conducted by ET, quantitative surveys executed by the local data collection company, and docs analysis, taken at the previous stage.
- A total of 2-3 individuals were interviewed at each of 78 sampled primary schools
 - The ET conducted interviews with 48 actors from primary schools and the GoK, District Departments of Education (DDoE), Ayil Okmotus (AYO), MC, and counterparts;
 - 171 respondents surveyed by Erfolg the local data collection firm
- Both the ET and local data collection firm conducted an **observation checklist** to verify and assess the quality and completeness of Winterization, Kitchen Rehabilitation projects and Reading Corners.
 - 77 Kitchens/Depot
 - 0 Winterization
 - 33 Reading Corners
- Data Cleaning and Analysis, to analyze and organize the data, the ET and MC used a quotes sheet to highlight key insights and findings across the sample that was coded and organized by evaluation criteria and key questions. The survey and observations were provided in a data set that was produced by the ONA mobile data collection platform. Statistical, content, trend and triangulation analysis were used to treat the data and inform the report.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS BY EVALUATION CRITERIA

Relevance Conclusion	Rating	Observations
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The McGovern-Dole 2017 School Feeding Program (SFP) component remains highly relevant and appreciated by respondents. However, the literacy component is viewed as necessary but not with the same level of appreciation as the SFP program. Challenges with duplication with TTR at the outset led to a redesign that shifted from literacy to literacy and learning promotion. Also, coordination with the TTR project disrupted the synchronization of the McGovern-Dole 2017 implementation as it relates to the rollout of the two components of the program.

Satisfactory

- Similar to the McGovern-Dole 2012 program design, the School Feeding Program (SFP) component of McGovern-Dole 2017 remains highly relevant and in line with the GoK policies and strategic aims.
- The literacy and learning promotion component had to be re-designed to address potential duplication with the USAID Time to Read project, which worked in the same schools as McGovern-Dole 2017, and the redesign shifted away from literacy to the promotion of literacy and learning. The project does not teach literacy techniques to teachers but focuses on positive discipline techniques.
- Combined with the fact that McGovern-Dole 2017 does not teach improved literacy techniques to teachers and the fact that TTR is working in the same schools on literacy, it will be hard for the design to have any attribution for the learning outcomes unless there is a comparative approach used at the evaluation stage to compare McGovern-Dole 2017 schools with TTR schools that do not participate in McGovern-Dole 2017 or McGovern-Dole 2012.

Effectiveness Conclusion	Rating	Observations
<p>The monitoring and evaluation data confirm that McGovern-Dole 2017 is by in large is achieving many of its milestones and is on target to achieve most pre-established aims. However, there were issues relative to the literacy and learning component and the infrastructure work that require some attention and reflection from MC leadership.</p>	<p>Moderately Satisfactory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most of the indicators are at 45% or above. In fact, several have surpassed the targeted levels. ● No winterization or WASH infrastructure projects have been conducted to date. ● The SFP component seems to be outperforming the literacy and learning component. In fact, the literacy and learning component alone is solidly in the moderately satisfactory, while the Winterization and WASH infrastructure is the only factor that brought the SFP component into the moderately satisfactory category.
Efficiency Conclusion	Rating	Observations
<p>McGovern-Dole 2017 is performing well across all the dimensions of efficiency. The evaluation data shows solid financial and personnel management performance; in addition, the MC leadership has been extremely adaptive and innovative in the face of high-level issues with sub-recipients' withdrawal, component, re-design commodities, and the closure of McGovern-Dole 2012.</p>	<p>Satisfactory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is an outstanding commodity problem that could leave many schools without one of the preferred commodity basket items, flour. ● As it relates to efficiency, the program is performing well in terms of financial and personnel management. ● The service contract approach provides strong advantages in terms of reduced cost and bringing capacity to the local level; however, contractors lose the right to benefits and job security. ● The kitchen rehab contribution was not a problem for the most; however, MC is shifting from the grant approach to a



needs-based approach for future WASH and Winterization projects.

- MC will be integrating oversight and management of the two components, which it was not doing before STCs withdrawal from Central Asia.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Relevance Recommendations	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
1. MC should also be clear with nomenclature and avoid calling the promotion activities a literacy component when TTR is clearly a literacy-focused project working in the same schools.	January 2020	MC and literacy team
2. MC should organize a meeting with the GOK, school reps, to take stock of the literacy and learning promotion activities and determine the appropriate way forward to maximize the outcomes associated with this element of McGovern-Dole 2017. Acceleration of activities may not be enough to yield meaningful results.	ASAP	GoK, School Reps, MC
3. Gender training is a critical step in ensuring that staff considers gender and diversity in their daily work and planning. It will be important for each of the staff to reflect and document how they individually will integrate what they have learned from the training into their work at the individual or component level.	ASAP	MC
4. It will also be necessary for the McGovern-Dole 2017 program and support staff to hold a workshop to determine how they will integrate findings from the gender assessment into the program during the final years of the project.	Once gender assessment complete	MC
5. MC should consider the recommendations from the program participants and assess what they can include in the next two years of program implementation, and the rest that is deemed relevant but unfeasible should be included in a report that MC will share with GoK regarding the status of their work, close preparations and key recommendations for the GoK as they continue the SFP leadership without donor support.	September 2020	MC
6. USAID and USDA should ensure that duplication is avoided and addressed between USG-funded projects at the proposal stage through a systematic verification and validation mechanism.	ASAP	USAID and USDA
Effectiveness Recommendations	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
1. SBC has no literacy component; MC should look at integrating literacy into the SBC planning and activities to the degree possible. (10/7/19, MC staff)	April 2020	MC,

2. (1)The impact study should be designed based on the results of the ongoing household study and should include clear questions regarding the SBC activities that occurred in the communities, their impact in addition to the questions regarding knowledge and behaviors at the household level. (2) Also, Literacy should be included in the impact study to look at community-level knowledge and behaviors linked to learning and literacy promotion at the community level.	May 2020	MC
3. MC will have to be very aggressive in the final two years of the project in order to ensure that all Infrastructure projects are completed in a timely and effective manner. It will be important to develop a very clear, well-coordinated strategy with the infrastructure team with external oversight from an infrastructure expert.	May 2020	MC
4. The evaluation data suggest extensive analysis/assessment is required of whether schools have received a comprehensive literacy and learning promotion package. In addition, as MC is merging the monitoring data from the literacy and learning promotion component into their databases, some work should be done to validate the quality and accuracy of that data.	April 2020	MC
5. MC senior leadership needs to apply some of the lessons learned from the SFP to the literacy and learning component regarding follow-up coaching and monitoring. Improved coordination and integrated management of the two components will also be important moving forward.	January 2020	MC
6. The findings suggest that McGovern-Dole 2017 needs to provide some support to schools for developing strategies for schools and the GoK to successfully manage infrastructure projects including the budget, oversight and quality control	September 2020	MC
7. MC should consider providing guidance and recommendations for schools and GoK/MoES (1) regarding regulations for the grading and staffing requirements for school nutrition programs and (2) administrative timeline and process for schools to submit paperwork for nutrition staff to be graded and salaried appropriately on time. Both these actions should help to address the challenges raised relates related to workload and salary.	September 2020	MC
8. MoES Ministry level infrastructure is lacking, all school nutrition and teacher training relies on one person; MC, WFP, and USDA to advocate and support the construction of a MoES team that can fully oversee responsibilities for SFP as they prepare for the closeout and handover	ASAP	MC, WFP, USDA, and GoK
9. MC, WFP, GoK, and USDA need to develop an exit and hand over strategy for all SFP interventions as they prepare to closeout. The sustainability model mentioned in McGovern-Dole 2017 guidance, as well as recommendations for MoES staffing and all other issues, should be addressed in the exit strategy.	ASAP	MC, WFP, USDA, and GoK
Efficiency Recommendation	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
1. If MC and the GoK is not able to find a solution for the banning flour that has tested positive for GMOs by the GoK, it should prepare a strategy with the GoK of	ASAP	MC, USDA, and GOK

how they will inform schools well in advance so that they can prepare for the change in the commodity basket that the schools will receive.		
2. MC should employ the best practices in oversight/monitoring and sustained/remote engagement across the components by conducting joint monitoring visits for Literacy and learning as well as SFP and introducing WhatsApp groups to the literacy and learning engagement and learning model.	January 2020a	MC
3. MC should consider a limited benefits package that can be offered to contractors that will provide some support for healthcare and consideration of sick days.	September 2020	
4. MC leadership should consider reinforcing the SBC and governance liaisons with regional/provincial level focal points to help expand the effectiveness and impact of the program and SBC activities.	February 2020	MC

Introduction

Program Background and Overview

Mercy Corps has been working in Kyrgyzstan since 1994. Since 2008, Mercy Corps has been implementing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (McGovern-Dole) in the Kyrgyz Republic; Mercy Corps was granted a second award in October 2017, and as such were implementing the two awards simultaneously for over two years. Like the 2012 program, the McGovern-Dole 2017 aims to support the National School Feeding Program developed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Kyrgyz Republic, which continues to be a principal beneficiary and stakeholder for the McGovern-Dole 2017, along with selected primary schools. The project aims to support the implementation of the Kyrgyz government's national school feeding program within 430 primary schools and has the following core objectives, which include:

- Increasing knowledge of nutrition, health, and hygiene practices, safe food preparation and storage practices, and access to clean water and sanitation services by facilitating training for cooks, parents, and school officials and providing competitive grants to upgrade school facilities;
- Improving student attentiveness and reduce short-term hunger as a result of increased access to food by rehabilitating school kitchen infrastructure to meet government sanitation standards and providing daily school meals;
- Improving student attendance by providing daily school meals; and
- Improving the quality of literacy instruction by ensuring better access to school supplies and materials
- Increasing the skills and knowledge of relevant school staff, as well as enhancing community and family support for education.

The program aims to create an enabling learning environment through the creation of a sustainable school feeding program and school winterization projects and WASH. The second aim is to improve learning outcomes through the promotion of literacy and learning. The School Feeding Program (SFP) and winterization components included the following activities:

- **Training School Administrators:** the program provides expert trainers to administer training to school administrators that will cover mentoring and coaching skills, effective classroom management and positive discipline since emotional factors can be critical in children's learning.
- **Building/Rehabilitation of Kitchens:** One of the core activities of the McGovern-Dole 2017, is support for the rehabilitation of school kitchens, including the purchasing of new kitchen equipment to support the execution of the improved hot meal program in participating schools¹.
- **Building/Rehabilitation of Latrines and Water Stations:** McGovern-Dole 2017 provides competitive school infrastructure rehabilitation grants to upgrade sanitation facilities in selected targeted schools.

¹ Eligible targeted schools that apply for grants, submit their proposed kitchen rehabilitation plans and confirm that, if they receive a grant, the community or local government will contribute a minimum of 30 percent of the total cost of the rehabilitation in the form of labor, cash, and materials.

These competitive grants support the building and rehabilitation of latrines and water stations in targeted schools².

- **Building/Rehabilitation of Schools:** McGovern-Dole 2017 supports school infrastructure rehabilitation grants to upgrade school facilities in selected targeted schools. These competitive grants support school infrastructure rehabilitation related to the winterization of facilities³.
- **Improving Potable Water Quality in Primary Schools:** McGovern-Dole 2017 supports improved access to safe drinking water through improving the water supply in 130 target schools, benefiting 26,000 primary grade students. Mercy Corps will categorize target schools by water consumption needs, available water sources, and identifies the ideal filtration/treatment solutions for each category of schools.
 - The establishment of the water treatment system at each school will be complemented by an educational component designed to sustain the project's initiatives.⁴
- **Capacity Building, Local, Regional, and National Level:** McGovern-Dole 2017 supports capacity development at the national, regional, and local levels through regional orientations, training, and follow-up coaching with government officials, school administrators, and parent committee members on accountability, management, and rational nutrition⁵. The part of the project also includes training for parents on financial accountability and advocacy to inform and influence policy surrounding nutrition and school feeding.
- **Provide School Meals:** The main aim of McGovern-Dole 2017 is to provide daily school meals to primary school children in grades 1-4 in targeted schools.
 - MC aims to provide daily school meals to children in 240 targeted schools during the first year of the project
 - 420 targeted schools during the second year of the project. The first two years will be the focus of the MTE
 - 350 targeted schools during the third and fourth years of the project, which does not fall within the scope of this evaluation.
- **Training on Food Preparation and Storage Practices:** McGovern-Dole 2017 trains school cooks in all the targeted schools to ensure they have the qualifications to prepare safe, nutritious meals for primary school children.
- **Training on Good Health and Nutrition Practices:** McGovern-Dole 2017 also provides professional seminars on clinical nutrition for nurses based in program schools and community health centers⁶.

Unlike the McGovern-Dole 2012 program, McGovern-Dole 2017 includes an active **literacy and learning promotion component** that seeks to increase the amount of time children in the targeted schools spend

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 School cooks, teachers and support staff will be given key hygiene messages focusing on the link of water and sanitation with diseases, and to adopt safe hygiene and sanitation practices and how to maintain the water treatment systems.

5 Topics for training sessions will include management of school meals programs, government regulations and norms for school feeding, nutrition and sanitation practices, commodity storage, use of project monitoring forms and documentation, and monitoring the quality of meals provided.

6 These seminars are delivered by the WHO and UNICEF-certified national trainers and cover not only clinical knowledge, but also effective ways to communicate the information.

reading and writing, both inside and outside of school. This component of the program supports multiple activities which fall under five broad categories:

1. School-based activities: Story time sessions in which older community members (parents or grandparents) read stories to children in schools, competitions for the best home-made early reader books, and organizing “reading buddies.”
 2. Out-of-school reading clubs facilitated either by teachers or by older adolescents. In villages with no public libraries, reading clubs will be established using school libraries as a base.
 3. Parents program: A 5-10-page manual based on the USAID Time to Read (TTR) Community Engagement module will be developed, which will then be distributed to parents through PTAs or Boards of Trustees at program schools.
 4. Reading festivals: McGovern-Dole 2017 will organize several reading festivals at a location accessible to several schools in the area⁷.
 5. Public awareness campaign. McGovern-Dole 2017 will develop and produce 1-3 short videos with messages promoting reading at home. These videos will be targeted at parents and other caregivers and will be broadcasted through national and local TV stations. The scripts and scenarios for these broadcasts will be shared with the TTR and MoES, and their feedback will be received and incorporated into the final versions.
- **Provision of Books and Supplementary Reading Materials:** the program provides books and supplementary reading materials appropriate to reading levels, ages, and interests of early-grade readers in both Russian and Kyrgyz that meet these requirements and are approved by MoES.
 - **Training Teachers:** the program also provides school-based Trainer of Trainers (ToT) in Positive Discipline (PD) to two representatives from each school selected from among the Deputy Principals for primary grades, Heads of the Methodology Units, and advanced teachers⁸.
 - **Training Librarians:** McGovern-Dole 2017 provides one, two-day training for school librarians, as well as relevant members of the school administration, to ensure continuous support and alignment of the library-based activities with the rest of the school activities⁹.

While McGovern-Dole 2017 will run until 2021, this MTE will focus on 2017-2019, during this period the program supported 221 public schools across the country by providing over 2,000 metric tons of supplementary commodities (enriched flour, rice, split peas, and vegetable oil) to prepare daily hot meals for over 50,000 primary grade children in the 2019 school year.

The full map of the project can be found in Annex 2.

⁷ Reading festivals will include a range of literacy-related activities, performances, puppet shows, competitions, and quizzes. Examples include International Children’s Book Day (April 2nd) and the Day of National Literature in Kyrgyzstan (December 12th).

⁸ These trained staff then train other primary grades teachers in their schools during the mandatory Saturday teacher professional development workshops.

⁹ In communities with public libraries, these trainings will include public librarians as well to enhance and promote reading culture beyond the schools .

Evaluation Purpose

Mercy Corps Kyrgyzstan and USDA have commissioned a midterm evaluation of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition– Kyrgyzstan project (2017-2021). As identified in the evaluation ToR, this midterm evaluation report covers September 29, 2017- present to assess the following:

- Progress towards indicator targets established at baseline and within program agreement
- Relevance and effectiveness of program interventions to date
- Quality and efficiency of implementation
- Incorporation of lessons learned and recommendations from previous McGovern-Dole evaluations

The findings from the data collection and report provide insights regarding program performance thus far and mid-course corrections for all key McGovern-Dole 2017 stakeholders. For this reason, the focus of the MTE was relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and generating actionable lessons learned/recommendations. The midterm evaluation report provides USDA, MC, and partners the opportunity to gauge program performance and implementation quality with the specific aim of identifying any program design or implementation challenges, which will be communicated to program staff as a vehicle for empowering the implementation team, partners, beneficiaries, and donors with the information necessary to inform how to appropriately address them and reorient the program. The evaluation is participative and data is sought from all stakeholders including participating schools, MoES representatives, STC, and MC, and various stakeholders to ensure that all perspectives are considered and the data collection yields findings that will inform program implementation during the final two years of the project. In line with this aim, the findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the assessment exercise will be shared with all employees involved in the program, program partners, beneficiaries and the donor - more specifically USDA Washington, Mercy Corps, GoK institutions such the MoES, MoH, participating school administration staff, local community, and various partners and stakeholders.

Methodology

Evaluation Scope and Key Questions

This MTE report explores the McGovern-Dole 2017 program period from October 2017 - September 2019. The scope of the evaluation explores the entire project design, results, and outputs in order to gauge the performance of the program to date. Furthermore, to realize the pre-established objectives to implement a school feeding program in target schools throughout Kyrgyzstan and to improve the quality of nutrition/meal programming and education outcomes. More specifically, the MTE focuses on providing program stakeholders with critical information regarding targets, achievements, quality of implementation, and critical lessons learned and recommendations.

This MTE employed three of the five key evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, which are appropriate given that this is the midpoint of McGovern-Dole 2017 and that the project is still being rolled out in a significant number of the targeted schools that have not received the entire McGovern-Dole 2017 program package of inputs and activities. The evaluation was guided by the following questions and sub-questions as defined in the ToRs and revised by the consultant team during the inception phase.

Relevance: The extent to which the project interventions are meeting the needs of the project beneficiaries and is aligned with the country's school feeding, nutrition, and/or development investment¹⁰.

Is the McGovern-Dole program design appropriate and responsive to beneficiary needs and the program context? Key sub-questions include:

- Is the design appropriate to the context? (Training & Capacity Building, Commodities, Policy & Regulatory Work, Infrastructure (including WASH, Kitchens and Winterization and Literacy promotion)
- How do stakeholders perceive the program's design and its activities? Is the project design appropriate and responsive to beneficiary needs in establishing and organizing the school feeding program?
- To what degree is program implementation aligned with the goals and objectives of the relevant government ministries (MoES, MoH)¹¹?
- Does the project design and implementation approach integrate gender and diversity components?
- Is the program literacy component appropriate and conducive to the context, how might it be improved? What are the challenges to implementing the literacy activities?
- What changes or improvements to the project design or implementation approach could help improve the (1) impact and (2) sustainability of the project?

Effectiveness: The extent to which the project is on track to achieve its objectives. Effectiveness should also assess the extent to which the interventions contributed to the expected results or objectives¹².

To what extent is the McGovern-Dole program on track to achieve planned objectives, results, and outputs thus far? The sub-questions for effectiveness included:

- Is the program on track to meet indicator targets?
- Is the McGovern-Dole program executing all planned activities and outputs to date?
- Is the McGovern-Dole achieving the aims under each of the objective and project components?

¹⁰ <https://www.fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2014-03/evalpol.pdf>

¹¹ Must get information regarding the literacy component.

¹² Ibid.

- What factors are facilitating the program achievement or acted as obstacles to achieving the McGovern-Dole 2017 results and outputs?
- How do program staff and stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of the processes and resources used by the program?
- What key factors contribute to the variation in target schools' degree of feeding program progress thus far as it relates to each of the program components and core activities (Training & Capacity Building, Commodities, Policy & Regulatory Work, Infrastructure (including WASH, Kitchens and Winterization and Literacy Promotion)?
- What changes are required to reinforce and improve program effectiveness and McGovern-Dole 2017 executions rates during the next 2 plus years that remain in the project life?

This is a midterm evaluation; therefore, the aim will be to assess the likelihood of the program achieving its target and identifying the challenges and obstacles to McGovern-Dole 2017 progress moving forward.

Efficiency: The extent to which the project resources (inputs) have led to the achieved results. An assessment of efficiency should also consider whether the same results could have been achieved with fewer resources or whether alternative approaches could have been adopted to achieve the same results¹³.

How efficient is the McGovern-Dole 2017 project implementation and management? Sub-questions for efficiency will include:

- Has the program implementation had any major challenges, if so, what have they been?
- To what degree is feedback from the previous McGovern-Dole and stakeholder input incorporated into the program?
- Are program resources being managed efficiently?
- Is the management and oversight approach effective and appropriate to achieve the best project outcomes?
- Is the resource and personnel management for the McGovern-Dole project during the period under review?
- Have participating schools been able to mobilize the school contribution of 30% for infrastructure projects? What about in poor, high-altitude areas?
- Are there any critical ways that program efficiency and oversight (including M&E) could be improved at the beneficiary or MC level?

Evaluation Approach

This midterm evaluation design uses a mixed-methods approach with quantitative and qualitative components. As such, the data collection methodology includes desk review, systematic observation/diagnostics, surveys, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Group Interviews (GIs). To produce this evaluation, the report the process consisted of three principal phases; (1) preparation and desk review, (2) fieldwork and data collection, (3) data analysis, preliminary findings, and report writing and finalization. The evaluation methodology and report respect and fulfill USDA, MC, and DAC/OECD evaluation guidelines and policies; while balancing transparency, independence, and being as participatory as possible. Fieldwork for this evaluation was conducted from October 7th- 25th, 2019, by a two-person evaluation team and a local data collection firm.

¹³ Ibid

Preparation and Desk Review

Preparation for the evaluation began on September 23, 2019, with the signing of contracts, a close reading of the ToRs, and a preliminary discussion with the contracting officer to ensure that there was a shared understanding of the mission and aim of the evaluation exercise.

On September 17th, the evaluation team members and MC held a teleconference to launch the evaluation process. This call served as an opportunity for MC to clarify expectations and limitations for the evaluation exercise and answer questions regarding the way forward. MC Kyrgyzstan and MC HQ provided oversight and input to ensure quality control and alignment with agency and donor requirements.

MC has provided a comprehensive set of available documents to help inform the ET's understanding of the McGovern-Dole 2017 project design in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the evolution of project implementation from inception through to the launch of this MTE. Most of the relevant project documents were shared with the ET after the contract signing on September 23, 2017. The key documents that were shared include but are not limited to, the following:

- McGovern-Dole 2017 proposal narrative and annexes;
- McGovern-Dole 2017 annual workplans;
- McGovern-Dole 2017 M&E Plan;
- McGovern-Dole 2017 baseline data and report;
- Biannual donor reports;
- Performance Management Plan containing information on program indicators and data collection methodology and tools;
- List of beneficiary educational institutions and key stakeholders;
- Program databases with information on participating schools, conducted training, grants and commodities provided;
- Indicator-specific databases, namely: school enrollment, attendance, number of meals provided, dietary diversity, usage of provided food commodities, etc.;
- Monthly reports from the field monitoring team with qualitative information on program implementation quality;
- Grant agreements for kitchen rehabilitation and infrastructure projects;
- Program success stories;
- Training materials on WASH, proper nutrition, and other topics covered during the program.

Given the Kyrgyz context, the documents reflect a mix of languages (English, Kyrgyz, and Russian) that are employed throughout the implementation of the project, and this is reflected in the program documents. All resources were utilized to inform the preparation of the evaluation's methodological approach, data collection, analysis, and report writing. The fieldwork commenced on October 7th, 2019.

Data Collection and Fieldwork

Upon arrival in Bishkek, the evaluation team held a briefing meeting on October 7th, with the MC M&E Manager, local data collection firm and relevant MC staff to introduce the launch of the MTE, clarify the fieldwork and logistics, and prepare for the training of the local data collection firm. Erfolg was the local data collection firm recruited by MC for this assignment. In order to facilitate their work and comprehension, the ET provided a three-day training for Erfolg, which included testing the data collection tools in the field before launching the data collection.

ET Data Collection: In line with the inception report, the ET conducted in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of key informants; including relevant MC staff, GoK representatives from localities and structures including MoES, MoH and participating school administrators, as well as nutrition staff that was not previously interviewed during the McGovern-Dole 2012 final evaluation. The interviews were semi-structured and garnered a good portion of the critical insights from program stakeholders at all levels to inform this report. A total of 2-3 individuals were interviewed at each of the 10 primary schools that made up the sub-sample where the ET collected data. In addition the ET also interviewed a subset of GoK, DDoE, MC Representatives and counterparts, yielding a total of 48 interviews.

Type of institution	Type of respondent	Number of interviews
10 Primary Schools	School admin (director or deputy director)	10
	School cook	10
	Literacy Teachers	3
	Parents	10
Local government	Ayil Okmutu administration	2
DDoE	School Feeding Program focal points	3
National government	MoES	1
Partners	USAID TTR	2
	STC Education STA	
Mercy Corps	M&E Staff	7
	Program Director	
	Country Director	
	Senior Program Managers	
Total		48

The **local data collection firm** executed a survey that included several open-ended questions with school staff from the same primary school constituencies targeted by the ET in the KII. This approach was piloted to solicit viable data regarding the McGovern-Dole 2017 midline performance on a larger sample of schools and to determine if this method is more appropriate to use with data collection firms during future evaluations and assessments.

Type of institution	Type of respondent	Number of interviews
70 Primary Schools	School admin (director or deputy director)	68
	School cook	68
	Literacy Teachers	33
	Parents	n/a
Total		169

Systematic Observation/Diagnostics: Both the ET and local data collection firm conducted the observation checklist to verify and assess the quality and completeness of the Primary School Winterization rehabilitation and Primary School Kitchen Rehabilitation projects.

Type of Diagnostic	Number of Responses
Kitchen/Depot	77
Winterization	0
Reading Corners	33

Data Cleaning and Analysis

During fieldwork, the ET captured all field notes in electronic form. The team aimed to organize and quality check data weekly. The electronic notes were shared with MC and safely stored on a weekly basis. Each team member was responsible for translating and ensuring that their notes are finalized for analysis by November 10, 2019, following the conclusion of data collection. MC quality controlled the work of the Erfolg, reviewed and requested clarifications, when needed, on any internal discrepancies. As they collected data using a survey on a tablet, MC was able to assess data quality remotely using the ONA data collection platform.

Following fieldwork, once all data collection from the KIIs/GIs, survey data, document review, and structured site observations/diagnostic were completed, the ET assembled in the Bishkek office to prepare and conduct preliminary data analysis for an out brief which was conducted on October 23rd, 2019. To analyze and organize the data, the ET used a quotes sheet to highlight key insights and findings across the sample that was coded and organized by evaluation criteria and key questions. The survey and observations data were provided in a data set that was produced by the ONA mobile data collection platform.

Limitations

While the McGovern-Dole 2017 MTE, benefited from many lessons learned from the McGovern-Dole 2012 final evaluation, that process is not without several limitations and challenges. Here we highlight the most crucial challenges to providing context to the data and the report:

- **Evaluation Approach:** The evaluation was principally led with a participatory ethos, which means that the implementing partner, MC, had a hand in guiding the evaluation. As a result, the MC team contributed to determining the sampling based on their knowledge of field conditions and program locations. This process was discussed and agreed upon with the ET in advance.
- **Respondent bias:** Interviewees may temper their responses to questions based on their interest or expected outcomes linked to program continuation or future programming. The ET has sought to triangulate data from document review and various respondents within the schools, GoK, and the community to ensure a more accurate picture of program performance.
- **Oversight of external enumerators:** The local data collection company contracted for this evaluation received a three-day training from the ET, but due to time constraints worked independently with continuous oversight from MC. To counter this, the ET designed and tested a survey for the Erfolg team to execute in the field, Erfolg participated in the test, debrief and tool revision following the test. MC was overseeing the quality of work of the data collection firm because they were contracted directly by MC for all data collection services for the duration of the program.
- **Time:** The MTE was conducted in the context of several time constraints, which created pressure for the translation of materials, verification of the data collection tools, and planning of the sampling. This was compounded by **travel and transportation challenges** with flights to the South of Kyrgyzstan.
- **Implementation approach:** The McGovern-Dole 2017 has engaged a new cohort of schools in the SFP every year from 2017-2019. Literacy and learning promotion activities are still being rolled out. Therefore, the sampled schools are not at the same stage in the implementation process and the data must be contextualized to reflect this.

Results

To explore the performance of McGovern-Dole 2017, at the midpoint of its implementation, the report critically explores three evaluation criteria, which include relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. The criteria of impact and sustainability cannot be adequately explored at this stage of the program implementation. However, where possible, the ET will attempt to highlight any indicative data or findings regarding impact and sustainability. Therefore, this report will assess program performance and progress across the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency criteria, evaluation questions, and indicators/targets/ objectives. This chapter of the report will also highlight criteria specific conclusions, ratings, recommendations, and lessons learned. To guide the rating and evaluation process, the following rating system will be employed to gauge performance and rate the project performance:

Table 4: Performance categories

Rating System for Evaluation Criteria	
Highly Satisfactory	McGovern-Dole 2017 fully achieves and exceeds criteria standards and components
Satisfactory	McGovern-Dole 2017 almost entirely achieves criteria standards and components
Moderately Satisfactory	McGovern-Dole 2017 does not fulfill all criteria standards but demonstrates moderate completion of 70% of key components
Moderately Unsatisfactory	McGovern-Dole 2017 does not meet at least 50% of the criteria standards and aims
Unsatisfactory	McGovern-Dole 2017 does not meet 25% of the criteria standards and components
Highly Unsatisfactory	McGovern-Dole 2017 fails to address any of the criteria standards and components

Relevance

The report will begin with the relevance criteria to explore **the extent to which the McGovern-Dole 2017 project interventions are meeting the needs of the project beneficiaries and is aligned with the country's school feeding, nutrition, and/or development investments.** Here, the report will highlight the appropriateness and alignment of the project with GoK policy, interest in terms of school feeding and literacy, as well as examine the design, appropriateness, and opportunities for improvement as it relates to eventual impact and sustainability.

Relevance EQ 1: Is the design appropriate to the context? To what degree is program implementation aligned with the goals and objectives of the relevant government ministries (MoES, MoH)?

To answer the above question(s), the ET will reiterate and refer to several key findings and data highlighted in the McGovern-Dole 2012 final evaluation because the foundation for the two program's design, launch, and implementation manifest from the same root problems and social issues that USDA and MC sought to support the GoK to address and resolve. In line with the findings from the McGovern-Dole 2012 final evaluation results, McGovern-Dole 2017 is also highly relevant as it relates to school feeding.

Yes	137
Somewhat	1
No	1

The main factor fueling the creation and implementation of SFPs in Kyrgyzstan since 2006, is due to low-performance rates. In 2009 and 2006, Kyrgyzstan was the lowest performer in all three subject areas, including reading, mathematics, and science literacy, among all the participating countries in the PISA test administered by the OECD and a consortium of the world's leading international testing organizations. Over 80% of the Kyrgyz students did not achieve the global standard in any of the subject matter areas.¹⁴ While there are many potential causes for Kyrgyzstan's poor performance on the PISA test, one that is undeniable is linked to food security and malnutrition as, "There are several reasons behind the learning crisis. First, children come to school unprepared — not enough stimulation of development at an early age, malnutrition of children, lack of basic preparation for school has its effects."¹⁵ According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (quoted above), Kyrgyzstan is a low-income food-deficit country among 51 countries in the world, with around 26 percent of the population living in poverty.

Over the past decade, Kyrgyzstan has made significant progress in reducing both the prevalence of undernourishment from 9.7 percent to 6.4 percent and child stunting from 18.1 percent to 12.9 percent. However, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, and obesity increased significantly over the last few years, coexisting simultaneously. The levels of anemia and vitamin A deficiency in the population are high, above 35 percent and 30 percent, respectively. Given the importance of school meals for ensuring the adequate nutrition of children, the Government adopted Resolution No. 734, "On the main directions of development of school feeding in the Kyrgyz Republic." The Resolution tasks the MoES to take measures to improve the organization of school nutrition. In addition, on October 22nd, 2019, the GoK passed another law to support the sustainable institutionalization of the Kyrgyz national SFP¹⁶. This law will provide the legal and institutional foundation for funding, equipping, sustaining, and staffing of the school feeding program at all levels from the school to the

14 Halsey Rogers, March 23, 2018

15 https://24.kg/english/79321_Crisis_in_education_How_Kyrgyzstan_can_overcome_it/

16 There is a law that is being introduced into the legislation that improves on the 2006 law that focused on bun and tea. The law will cover the hot meal program needs, staffing, commodities, funding, and they will later develop regulations regarding the menu and tender and other issues. There will not be a standard menu because of regional differences, but they will have several standardized menus that the regions can choose between (Oct. 22, 2019 MoES representative).

national government. It reflects the work of WFP and MC in support of the GoK's launch of the school feeding program nationally, their support for the policy, and institutionalization of the SFP. It also further illustrates the appropriateness and need for the program.

There is continuity between the findings from the McGovern-Dole 2012 evaluation and the McGovern-Dole 2017 Midterm findings in terms of the relevance of the program. Participating schools and representatives felt that the school feeding program components are essential and highly relevant to their needs. One respondent stated:

“Before we did not have hot meals, we just had tea and buns or cookies, whatever the supplier offered. Maybe instead of tea, they could have compote (fruit-based infusion). We feel we needed the program to provide hot meals for primary school kids, and we would like it (the program) for all the kids; it influences the studies of the children. We feel it is useful, firstly, for the health of children; many do not eat in the morning before going to school. Also, some of the kids come to school to eat, and as a result, their performance is improved. There is also an improved impact on the (kids) performance in school. The education performance depends on the food.” (Oct. 21, 2019-SA)

The data suggests that the validity, relevance, and importance of the SFP across the actors from the national to school level is demonstrable and transparent. 171 of 172 survey respondents felt that the program was relevant and appropriate to their school's needs, including the schools that stated that they had an SFP before the rollout of McGovern-Dole 2017. In addition, to further reinforce why the program is relevant, most respondents highlighted the fact that there was no school feeding program before the introduction of the SFP; in fact, only 28 of 139¹⁷ respondents claimed to have had SFPs before the McGovern-Dole 2017 program rollout. The SFP components of McGovern-Dole 2017 are relevant, have value, and are universally appreciated by government officials and school beneficiaries.

Relevance EQ 2: How do stakeholders perceive the program's design and its activities? Is the project design appropriate and responsive to beneficiary needs in establishing and organizing the school feeding program?

When asked about the relevance of the program design and core components, respondents were very clear regarding the need for all the components that are included in the rollout of the school feeding program components of McGovern-Dole 2017, including the infrastructure, commodities, WASH, capacity building and winterization, which are all viewed as critical elements required for creating an enabling and empowering learning environment at schools for improved learning and academic performance outcomes. In fact, 171 of the 172 individuals surveyed felt that the program design was relevant and appropriate. Confirming and reinforcing that the SFP activities were deemed critical to the program, one respondent stated the following:

“It is very important that the program includes not just the feeding itself (equipment and commodities), but such important components like infrastructure and training & capacity building.” SA, October 14, 2019)

This respondent's perspective highlights the ideas espoused by most of the interview respondents, which is that the program, and all its components, are critical and essential to the SFP success. In addition, while all the respondents highlight the value and importance of all the SFP components, they tended to emphasize the commodities and infrastructure components as the most valuable and useful. In fact, most schools repeatedly advocated for the continuation of the commodities distribution beyond the project life as a critical contribution to maintaining the school feeding quality and dietary diversity. In addition, many of the schools expressed interest in infrastructure activities, especially winterization. The SFP remains critical and relevant to the Kyrgyz context as it relates to policy, national priorities in Kyrgyzstan, and as through interviews and surveys with beneficiaries and program participants.

Relevance EQ 3: Is the program literacy component appropriate and conducive to the context, how might it be improved? What are the challenges to implementing the literacy activities?

¹⁷ Literacy teachers were not asked about the SFP, hence the lowered number of respondents from the total number of surveys.

McGovern-Dole 2017, unlike McGovern-Dole 2012, includes a component to **Establish Activities to Promote Literacy**. The component seeks to increase the amount of time that children in the targeted schools spend reading and writing inside and outside of school. The program supports Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to organize and implement family and community literacy activities independently. The activities include training of teachers in participating schools in positive discipline, in-school Story time sessions, in-class reading corners, training of parents in the importance of literacy using the USAID TTR methodology, the provision of supplementary reading materials, and a community level awareness-raising campaign.

Yes	97
No	1
Unsure	6

It is worth noting that the content and design of the literacy promotion component of the McGovern-Dole 2017 was substantially altered to avoid some duplication between the activities in the USAID funded Time to Read program, which is a follow on from the USAID funded Quality Reading Program (QRP). When the McGovern-Dole 2017 was designed, and the proposal submitted, it was shared with a USDA and USAID for review. However, USAID raised no concerns regarding the McGovern-Dole 2017 design and only requested that MC and USDA coordinate the implementation with the TTR program to avoid duplication¹⁸. An MC staff clarified:

At the proposal stage, USDA and USAID did not catch this overlap. In the process of verification of the award, USAID read the proposal and just asked to coordinate with the TTR project. (As a consequence), STC could not work in the schools where MC had already worked because TTR was working in the schools where they had previously implemented (McGovern-Dole 2012 and 2017). TTR took the schools that they worked in the previous years. (10/23/19- MC Staff)

This quote highlights the factors that led to the duplication between the two programs and MC’s eventual redesign of the literacy component from a literacy component to a literacy and learning *promotion* component.¹⁹ Secondly, the quote highlights a factor that will be explored in more detail in the effectiveness section, which is that the project ToC and implementation approach had to be adjusted as part of the efforts to coordinate the McGovern-Dole 2017 literacy and learning promotion component with TTR; as a result of the scheduling and rollout of the SFP portion, to be followed by the learning and literacy promotion components, was abandoned due to the challenge of coordinating with TTR. This shifting in approach undermined the program's ToC and affected program implementation and success as it relates to this component of McGovern-Dole 2017. This will be further explored in the effectiveness section.

The literacy and learning promotion components of the McGovern-Dole 2017 relevance is not as clearly acknowledged and lauded as the SFP. It is important to note that a MoES staff clearly stated they would have preferred that the literacy component resources be shifted to the SFP program components.²⁰ At the school level, there was less knowledge and awareness of the literacy components, and most schools had not yet received the intervention. 33 of 33 Literacy teachers surveyed stated that the literacy and learning promotion components of McGovern-Dole 2017 were relevant. Some interview respondents were very positive about the benefits of the literary component stating:

¹⁸ The original approach assumed working directly with primary grade teachers to improve their skills with regard to teaching the five core reading sub-skills and introduce them to new and effective practical methods and techniques for teaching these skills, adjusted to the local Kyrgyz context. The approach also placed a strong emphasis on the reading comprehension and the use of formative assessments to sensitively identify and support struggling learners. However, the new TTR project was planning to use the same approach in most of the same target schools during the first two years of the McGovern-Dole 2017 program.

¹⁹ In various interviews, MC staff could not confirm whether GoK officials were involved in the re-design of the literacy component. Also, the MoES representative interviewed stated that they were not consulted in the re-design

²⁰ Interview with MoES representative on October 22, 2019.

“We learned (in the positive discipline training) that the act of shouting and punishing/humiliating the children is not the most effective way to teach them. We were provided with materials and handouts on a USB. I appreciated the training and wanted to come back and share what I have learned.

Maybe we knew these methods before, but time changes. When I was a child, the teacher could yell at us, now we want to improve our approach. Time and attitudes change. Of course, it is not pleasant when a child is being yelled at. The school should have a different approach (to teaching and discipline) (10/21/19, SA).”

Moreover, the fact that TTR is working in many of the same schools providing actual training in literacy for teachers creates substantial challenges relative to the logic of the design and the ToC that guided the project.

- MC should have worked with GoK and USAID to determine whether the literacy component should be abandoned or shifted to math or arts. Some discussion with the beneficiaries would have led to a less convoluted literacy and learning promotion component that is hard to distinguish from the TTR program. MC should also be clear with nomenclature and avoid calling the promotion activities a literacy component. TTR was clearly a literacy focused project working in many of the same schools.
- MC should have taken more time to assess proposed literacy and learning promotion activities and determine the appropriate way forward to maximize the outcomes associated with this element of McGovern-Dole 2017. Acceleration of activities may not be enough to yield meaningful results.

Relevance EQ 4: Do the project design and implementation integrate gender and diversity components?

One of the main findings that emerged from the McGovern-Dole 2012 evaluation was linked to Gender Assessment, which is to be conducted and used to help inform redesign of activities under McGovern-Dole 2017. The report stated:

Ensure that Gender and a Needs Assessment is conducted as part of McGovern-Dole 2017 launch planning for Year 3 and adjust the project design accordingly (McGovern-Dole 2012 Final Evaluation Report).

Mercy Corps took this recommendation on board, and while the ET was conducting the McGovern-Dole 2017 midterm evaluation, a gender assessment was being conducted to align with and fulfill this recommendation, which was accepted and acknowledged by both USDA in their review of the report and the Mercy Corps management response to the USDA comments and evaluation report.²¹ Given that the program had already started, the gender assessment was tailored to specifically address data needs of the Social Behavior Change (SBC) component that aimed to engage more men in its activities, but had experienced some difficulties with that earlier.

In addition, MC program staff were trained in gender and diversity as part of the recommendations proposed and accepted as part of the McGovern-Dole 2012 Final Evaluation. These findings show that within less than a years' time, MC has taken significant actions to address the integration of gender into the McGovern-Dole 2017 based lessons learned and recommendations emerging from the Final Evaluation that was conducted in April/May of 2019.

The next phase is to determine how the findings from the gender assessment, what the participants learned from the gender and diversity training, and how this can be integrated into the McGovern-Dole 2017 during the last two years of the program implementation.

²¹ The first training was done in February 2019 for the program staff following the recommendations from the McGovern-Dole 2012 Final Evaluation and focused on the overall gender dimension in programming. In June 2019, second training was conducted to address recommendations and remaining questions from the first one. Based on the results of the post-test, it focused on the HR aspects of gender sensitivity and dynamics in the program team.

- The training is a critical step in ensuring that staff consider gender and diversity in their daily work and planning. It will be important for each of the staff to reflect and document how they will integrate what they learned from the training into their work.
- It will also be important for the McGovern-Dole 2017 program, and support staff, to hold a workshop to determine how they will integrate findings from the gender assessment into the program during the final years of the project.

Relevance EQ 5: What changes or improvements to the project design or implementation approach could help improve the (1) impact and (2) sustainability of the project?

The reflections from program beneficiaries at the school level, regarding how the project design could be improved, were quite limited. Many focused on the continuation of the program, especially the commodities, more training opportunities, or the desire for infrastructure projects such as winterization, SFP related or WASH projects. Other ideas included contributions such as the following from various school level respondents:

- *We would like a fruit garden, but MC said it is not profitable to plant an orchard because there are only two schools in the district. We need help with how to create an estimation of costs for the school winterization proposal. We had a bad experience with the construction of the kitchen because we made a bad budget estimate, so we ended up needing more money than expected. We would like support to avoid this problem. This is important because our contribution is 30% and if it is not done right, it raises the burden on the school. (Oct. 14, 2019, SN and SA joint interview)*
- *Please ensure that nutrition staff is commensurate with the school size. (Oct. 16, 2019)*
- *If the program is launched in other schools, we would like to support and advise other schools on how to implement the program at their schools, and we can coach and advise because of our experience with MC. (Oct. 18, 2019, SN).*
- *We request more information from MC, regarding the innovations and general information so that they can continue to build our skills and knowledge. (Oct. 21, 2019, SN)*
- *...we would like to have more training. The last training was on the school management committee, and we would like more trainings like this. We find the trainings to be beneficial. After the trainings, we share what we learned with the school; we would like a ToT on how to properly disseminate the teachings and share with our colleagues and parents. We would like more promotional materials to give gifts to parents and children to inspire engagement and learning. We want branded items to give to the children. For example, UNICEF gives away more materials for branding and visibility. MC needs to improve visibility, so the community knows what they are doing. (Oct. 17, 2019, SA)*
- *Hot meals can be introduced in 5-6 classes as well. I already did the calculation, financed by parental contribution. The fact is that the parental contribution of 50 soms helps us a lot. (Survey respondent input)*

The comments above came principally from the ET interviews with respondents and beneficiaries. Outside of the contributions cited above, the core recommendations from respondents focused on continued training, extension of the McGovern-Dole 2017 in the form continued distribution of commodities, and some references to the need for staffing to be commensurate with work levels. As it relates to the literacy components, the main recommendation was almost equally distributed between a need for more training, training on more topics, or no recommendations whatsoever.

- MC should consider the recommendations from the program participants and assess what they can include in the next two years of program implementation. The rest that is deemed relevant, but unfeasible, should be included in a report that MC will share with GoK regarding the status of their work, close preparations, and key recommendations for the GoK as they continue the program leadership without donor support.

Relevance Criteria Conclusions, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned

Relevance Conclusion	Rating	Observations
<p>The McGovern-Dole 2017 SFP component remains highly relevant and appreciated by respondents. However, the literacy component is viewed as necessary, but not with the same level of appreciation as the SFP program. Challenges with duplication with TTR, at the outset, led to redesign that shifted from literacy to literacy and learning promotion. Also, coordination with the TTR project disrupted the synchronization of the McGovern-Dole 2017 implementation as it relates to the rollout of the two components of the program.</p>	<p>Satisfactory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like the McGovern-Dole 2012 program design, the SFP component of McGovern-Dole 2017 remains highly relevant and in line with the GoK policies and strategic aims. The literacy and learning promotion component had to be re-designed in order to address potential duplication with the USAID Time to Read project which worked in all the same schools as McGovern-Dole 2017. The redesign shifted away from literacy to the promotion of literacy and learning. The project does not teach literacy techniques to teachers but focuses on positive discipline techniques and literacy BCC activities. Combined with the fact that McGovern-Dole 2017 does not teach improved literacy techniques to teachers and the fact that TTR is working in the same schools on literacy, it will be hard for the design to have any attribution for the learning outcomes unless there is a comparative approach used at the evaluation stage to compare McGovern-Dole 2017 schools with TTR schools that do not participate in McGovern-Dole 2017 or McGovern-Dole 2012. (EGRA would not be fitting in this context).

Relevance Recommendations	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
1. MC should also be clear with nomenclature and avoid calling the promotion activities a literacy component when TTR is clearly a literacy-focused project working in the same schools.	January 2020	MC and literacy team
2. MC should organize another meeting with the GOK, school reps, to take stock of the literacy and learning promotion activities and determine the appropriate way forward to maximize the outcomes associated with this element of McGovern-Dole 2017. Acceleration of activities may not be enough to yield meaningful results.	ASAP	GoK, School Reps, MC
3. Gender training is a critical step in ensuring that staff considers gender and diversity in their daily work and planning. It will be important for each of the staff to reflect and document how they individually will integrate what they have learned from the training into their work at the individual or component level.	ASAP	MC

4. It will also be necessary for the McGovern-Dole 2017 program and support staff to hold a workshop to determine how they will integrate findings from the gender assessment into the program during the final years of the project.	Once gender assessment is complete	MC
5. MC should consider the recommendations from the program participants and assess what they can include in the next two years of program implementation, and the rest that is deemed relevant but unfeasible should be included in a report that MC will share with GoK regarding the status of their work, close preparations and key recommendations for the GoK as the continue the SFP leadership without donor support.	September 2020	MC
6. USAID and USDA should ensure that duplication is avoided and addressed between USG-funded projects at the proposal stage through a systematic verification and validation mechanism.	ASAP	USAID and USDA

Relevance Lessons Learned

1. When the problem with duplication between McGovern-Dole 2017 and TTR was identified, MC/STC should have worked with the GoK and other beneficiaries to develop and validate a revised approach and activities to ensure GoK and beneficiary buy-in. It is critical to work program stakeholders like GoK and USAID early on to determine the program redesign to encourage the best outcomes. For example, MC, USDA should have sought GoK regarding whether the literacy component should have been shifted to math, arts, etc. Meaningful discussion with the beneficiaries would have led to a less convoluted result than a literacy and learning promotion component that is hard to distinguish from the TTR program results, and that creates confusion at the beneficiary level.
2. It is great that MC has conducted gender training, and in the process of conducting the assessment, it will be pivotal that the training and assessments are used to inform program structure and implementation.

Effectiveness

To explore the effectiveness of the implementation of the McGovern-Dole 2017 at the midpoint of the McGovern-Dole 2017 program cycle, with just over two years left on the 5-year program, the ET examined achievements against the pre-established targets, indicators, and objectives, jointly determined by MC and USDA. In addition to exploring the performance thus far, this section of the report will seek to identify the facilitators and the obstacles to program success for each of the program components. By highlighting the enablers and hindrances for program staff and donors, this will empower them with the information and opportunity to build on the facilitators and address the barriers to ensure continued and increased success.

For further details regarding the output-level of McGovern-Dole 2017, a table with outputs and indicator results can be found in Annex 1.

Effectiveness EQ 1 & 2: Is the program on track to meet indicator targets? Is the McGovern-Dole program executing all planned activities and outputs to date? Effectiveness EQ 3: Is the McGovern-Dole achieving the aims under each of the objective and project components?

The McGovern-Dole 2017 program is a complex multi-sectoral program that has several components and key intervention areas as summarized in the program overview section of this report, however, for the purposes of analyzing the program we will structure the analysis into two principal clusters the first is SFP/enabling learning environment and the second is the Literacy and learning promotion. Within each of the clusters, there are various activities and outputs, which include capacity building, materials, infrastructure, and so forth, which the ET will examine relative to each cluster of activities and outputs.

School Feeding Program (SFP)		
Key Outputs	McGovern-Dole 2017 LoP Target	McGovern-Dole 2017 Status Sept 2019 (% of completion)
Number of Schools Served	434 (84+350)	84+138+219 = 511 (117%)
Number of Students Reached (SFP)	88,730	95,358 (107.5%)
Number of School Cooks certified	329	397 (F) 11(M) (124%)
# of SA trained in safe drinking water technologies	260	146 (56.2 %)
Number of daily meals provided	37,300,000	9,260,121 (24.8%)
Commodities provided to schools	2290	1492.821 (65%)
Number of individuals trained in child health and nutrition as a result of USDA assistance	121	290 (239.7%)
Number of Kitchen Rehabilitation	329	251 (76.3%)
Number of schools using an improved water source	413	411 (99.5 %)
# of Water Treat and Filtration Systems installed	130	135 (103.8%)
Number of individuals trained safe drinking water technology	130	459 (353.1%)

SFP and Enabling Environment

To create an enabling learning environment for primary school-age children, McGovern-Dole 2017 seeks to provide daily school meals to primary school children in grades one through four in targeted schools. McGovern-Dole 2017's approach aims to create a sustainable school feeding program at participating schools as a vehicle for improving learning outcomes for primary school children. To do this, the program begins with rehabilitating school kitchens, which includes infrastructure, both building rehabilitation, and water source improvement. To this end, McGovern-Dole 2017 monitoring data summarized above highlights that to date, over 261 school kitchens have been rehabilitated, which also includes purchasing of new kitchen equipment to support the execution of the improved hot meal program in participating schools and improved water sources. McGovern-Dole 2017 supported improved access to safe drinking water through improved water supply in 411 schools.

At this point in the project life, McGovern-Dole 2017 has reached the project has already achieved 76% percent of its target schools; according to the McGovern-Dole 2017 monitoring data, these schools have received all the requisite school infrastructure and equipment inputs as it relates to the improved water sources, 99% of the targets have been reached²². In both cases with the time left in the project McGovern-Dole 2017 is on track to achieve and surpass its targets. The evaluation data confirms that as far the kitchen rehabilitation, 123 of 138 surveyed respondents stated that the kitchen repairs and equipment had been completed on time, with the rest saying that they were planned or unsure. Also, only 12 respondents claimed that the work was done late due to government funding, school funding or other reasons. The data suggest that there is clear alignment between the monitoring data provided by MC and the findings emerging from the evaluation data. McGovern-Dole 2017 is on track and performing well as it relates to the rehabilitation and equipping of participating school kitchens.

Water filtration was not generalizable to all the schools; only schools with poor quality water from tap or source received this intervention (135 in total), so the performance on this variable must be interpreted. 59 of 129 survey respondents stated their school had received a water filtration system, while 28 said it was planned all the rest stated this was not an intervention the received or anticipated their school receiving. All those that had received this intervention noted that it was conducted on schedule. The establishment of the water treatment system at each school was also complemented by an educational component designed to sustain the system's proper usage and maintenance.

In terms of training of the school staff for SFP, including safe food preparation, management of commodities, and water systems, the McGovern-Dole Monitoring data highlights that all targets have been met relative to these variables. McGovern-Dole trains school cooks in all the targeted schools to ensure they have the qualifications to prepare safe, nutritious meals for primary school children. Moreover, the data for the school cooks trained followed the same trend, with 131 of 138 survey respondents stating that their school cook had been trained. In addition, interview respondents regularly lauded the quality of the training offered as illustrated by the interview excerpts below:

²² Improving water sources is typically part of the overall repairs done in selected schools over the summer, which must be completed prior to equipment installation. Therefore, at the time of the evaluation, more schools had completed repair works, including water sources, than received equipment, which was being delivered and installed in batches (usually grouped by district).

- *I received the vocational cooking course and received the certificate, and I learned the appropriate cooking combinations and the best food temperatures. I also learned how to make bread and buns in the training. And how to ensure a nutritious and diversified diet with the right calorie count. (10/16/19, SN)*
- *This is the second year that we have a hot meal program, and we have water treatment and training. I supervised the rollout. We received equipment, water filtration, and training. They received washing sinks, and rehab of the kitchen and all the conditions required for the SFP, doo maker, pots dishes. We have 458 primary students, and they have two 50% shifts of students that eat. I am thankful that Mercy Corps supports our school and provides commodities. All the parents are thankful and happy with the program; the children are happy. We received flour, oil, peas, and rice twice a year. We get the commodities on time, and our contribution is the transport of the commodities to the school, and there are no challenges associated with this. They like the flour though they need all the commodities. We are thankful because of this flour and products from the US. (10/18.19, SA)*

The quotes above highlight two key perspectives as it relates to the SFP interventions, the nutrition staff in the first quote highlight the benefit of the training for the school cooks emphasizing the knowledge that the individual gained that directly benefits and empowered them to do their work as a school nutrition staff, even going as far as to highlight technical knowledge related to food temperatures, calorie count and nutrition and diet diversity. The second quote, by a school administrator, reflects a wider appreciation for the program and how it works speaking to the equipment received, commodities, and training. Both quotes reflect the extensive experience that MC has with implementing the SFP and the successful results thus far.

Social Behavior Change

To support the effectiveness and reinforce the sustainability of the SFP program activities, McGovern-Dole 2017 includes an aggressive Social and Behavioral Change (SBC) component. Below we highlight the main outputs as of the McGovern-Dole 2017 SBC activities:

Table 8: Monitoring Data		
Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBC)		
<u>Key Outputs</u>	<u>McGovern-Dole 2017 LoP Target</u>	<u>McGovern-Dole 2017 Status Sept 2019 (% of completion)</u>
SBC Training Themes covered	Social mobilization, breastfeeding, complementary feeding, dietary diversity and anemia prevention, handwashing, and junk food	Social mobilization, breastfeeding, complementary feeding, dietary diversity, and anemia prevention, handwashing, and junk food

Number of Urban SBC events	n/a ²³	12 marathons to support healthy diets and active lifestyle in small towns
Number of community-based change agents trained including GoK representatives	2,105	872 ²⁴ (41.4 %) Sex dissag (3.8% M) (96.2% F)
Number of informational ads distributed through local media (TV, social media, etc.)	36	55 (152.8%)
Number of parents trained in child health and nutrition	2,105	872 (41.4%)
Number of SA trained child health and nutrition	260	146 (56%)

The McGovern-Dole 2017 SBC strategy is to work with parents and other community members. MC employs two separate approaches for the urban and rural populations. The outreach is different depending on the target community. They also work with mass media to distribute information regarding nutrition, sanitation, and hygiene. The two approaches and their implementation are presented below.

- Rural approach:** McGovern-Dole 2017 materials are produced in two languages, Russian and Kyrgyz. They organize and conduct training on each of the core themes. In the 2018-2019 cycle, topics included breastfeeding, supplemental feeding 6-24 months, diet diversity, handwashing, reducing anemia among childbearing age women and children, social mobilization. In the recently started 2019-2020 cycle, the topics are largely the same, but there will be additions and alterations based on the gender assessment results mentioned above. First, caretakers of the students in the school are trained to become volunteer Change Agents, and then they train other community members through informal information sharing. These Change Agents use informational materials, including brochures and leaflets, they then organize informal meetings, or they do door-to-door household visits, and they use the didactic materials provided by MC. McGovern-Dole 2017 seeks to engage 10 Change Agents per village who then reach out to 10-15 community members.

During the first cycle in 2018-2019, there were a total of 872 community Change Agents of the planned 2105. It should be noted that only those who attended the full cycle of training were counted under this indicator. In fact, there were over 6,000 Change Agents registered in total.

To date, 151 communities/villages were covered by this component. The program did not include communities that were participating in similar projects by another organization (i.e. World Bank APNIP).

²³ There was no established target for this activity in the Agreement since the activity was designed and proposed at a later stage.

²⁴ Trained in all 6 SBC themes.

- **Urban Approach:** Last spring, McGovern-Dole 2017 selected 12 small cities to conduct urban information campaigns that include marathons, roundtables, and trivia competitions. The roundtables included local authorities, business, and civil society reps and presented an opportunity to determine the approach and activities that they will use to influence city-level strategies and budgets in line with the information and data presented during the roundtable. Health promotion materials were also disseminated and shared during the events. MC also invited health workers to provide basic health screenings for free as part of the SBC day activity.
- **Mass media:** McGovern-Dole 2017 conducted a mass media campaign where they worked with radio and TV companies on the regional level so that broadcast videos and emissions related to the SBC topics reinforce the events. Last year MC used the STC Spring Project to broadcast through the participating TV companies. This year McGovern-Dole 2017 will create their own videos for the dissemination of their own materials and videos. The Regional TV approach is more appropriate and accessible in the cities. They will target more than 20 cities this year (2019-2020).

The SBC strategy for the SFP is quite comprehensive; however, it should be noted that SBC did not include the literacy component. STC managed the SBC for the literacy component, and there was no overlap in the geographical approach. The analysis here should be contextualized by the fact that the approach for schools in semi-urban/urban environments does not use a grassroots SBC approach like the one used in rural communities. Analysis of performance for SBC, from the interviews, is quite positive, as presented below:

- *The training was useful to the teachers and the parents. For the teachers, parents, and grandparents the training was helpful because they now use this knowledge at home. (10/16/19, SN)*
- *They now teach their children to wash their hands regularly, and they also teach women with young children to breastfeed their children properly and to make nutritious meals for the children. They learned that there should be exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months. I also want to thank the trainer (MC staff). (10/16/19, SN)*
- *SBC has no literacy component – they are treating this separately, and this may be a result of the fact that they were separately managed, now it might be good to merge the two. (10/7/19, MC staff)*

The monitoring and evaluation data suggest that the McGovern-Dole 2017 SBC is performing well. This component will be further assessed through a representative household study designed to measure various nutrition variables and explanatory factors in the target communities. During the impact study MC will be examining whether the program has been able to impart knowledge and change behaviors at the household and community level linked to the six thematic areas that SBC training cover. The first part of the study is planned for December 2019, with a potential follow up a year later.

Infrastructure/Winterization

Another core component of creating an enabling learning environment for primary school students is linked to the Winterization and WASH components of the project. McGovern-Dole 2017 plans to provide school infrastructure rehabilitation grants to upgrade sanitation facilities in selected targeted schools. These competitive grants support the building and rehabilitation of latrines and water stations in targeted schools. McGovern-Dole 2017 also supports school infrastructure rehabilitation grants to upgrade school facilities in selected targeted schools. These grants support school infrastructure rehabilitation related to the winterization of facilities. However, as the table below highlights, no infrastructure projects had been conducted at the time

of the evaluation in participating schools²⁵. This suggests that MC will have to be very aggressive in the final two years of the project to ensure that all Infrastructure projects are completed in a timely and effective manner.

Table 9: Monitoring Data		
Winterization and WASH		
<u>Key Outputs</u>	<u>McGovern-Dole 2017 LoP Target</u>	<u>McGovern-Dole 2017 Status Sept 2019 (% of completion)</u>
Number of Infrastructure/Winterization grants	50	0
Number of Latrines built or rehabbed	50	0

Literacy and Learning Promotion

Table 10: Monitoring Data		
Literacy and Learning Promotion		
<u>Key Outputs</u>	<u>McGovern-Dole 2017 LoP Target</u>	<u>McGovern-Dole 2017 Status Sept 2019 (% of completion)</u>
# of Supplementary Reading Materials Received	34,699	17997 (51.9%)
# of Librarians Trained	310	207 (46.5%)
# of Teachers Trained in Positive Discipline	1290	2045 (158.5%)
# of Reading Corners	2580	1175 (45.5%)
# of Reading Clubs/home-made book competitions	430	118 (27.4%)
# of Reading Festivals	42	14 (33%)
# of Parents trained in literacy promotion	6,450	3000 (46.5%)

McGovern-Dole 2017, unlike the McGovern-Dole 2012, includes an active literacy and learning promotion component that seeks to increase the amount of time children in the targeted schools spend reading and writing inside and outside of school. The principal components of literacy and learning are:

²⁵ Yet, 12 school administrators surveyed claimed to have received winterization projects, which is due to the fact that some of the McGovern-Dole 2017 schools had received grants through McGovern-Dole 2012 several years earlier while not being fully enrolled in the program (it was part of the program design).

- **Training:** McGovern-Dole 2017 provides school-based ToT in Positive Discipline (PD) to two representatives from each school selected from among the Deputy Principals for primary grades, Heads of the Methodology Units, and advanced teachers. These trained staff then train other primary grades teachers in their schools during the mandatory Saturday professional development workshops.
- **Literacy Promotion:** The program supports Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to organize and implement family and community literacy activities independently after the project ends, which includes Story time, reading clubs, parents training, reading festivals, and public awareness campaigns and supplementary reading materials appropriate to reading levels.

As discussed in the relevance section, this component of the project changed to avoid duplication with the TTR program and shifted to positive discipline training for educators and literacy promotion community-level activities to promote literacy outside of the classroom. Positive discipline is focused on praising children and redirecting behavior so that they get better performance; they concentrate on weaker children. The Kyrgyz education system focuses too much on the high performing students, and therefore it is not an inclusive system, and it is very formal²⁶. McGovern-Dole 2017 worked in 118 schools from 2018, and 325 were added for 2019²⁷. While the monitoring data here looks quite strong, the evaluation data suggest that the literacy and learning component has mixed results. For example, while 31 of 33²⁸ respondents claimed their school at received positive discipline training, only 19 stated that parents had been trained, and only 25 claimed librarians had been trained. Lastly, only 17 of the 33 claimed to have reading corners.

This mixed performance was also reflected in the ET interviews at several schools that had received the program but did not remember having had the training. In other cases, respondents confused some activities with TTR. Also, during some interviews, respondents mentioned that they had recently discussed with McGovern-Dole literacy staff the day before, or they were working with McGovern-Dole 2017 literacy team staff on the day of our visit to their schools. Some stated that they had received the training but were still waiting on supplemental reading materials, or they had not received any monitoring visits. The evaluation data suggest some analysis is required of whether schools have received a comprehensive literacy and learning promotion package. In addition, as MC is merging the monitoring data from the literacy and learning promotion component, some work should be done to validate the quality and accuracy of that data. Respondent stated:

“I participated in the positive discipline training; they (the STC staff) trained the teachers. The PD training was very beneficial to the teachers, 4 teachers were trained, and it was 70-80% successful, the teachers then trained other teachers in this methodology. The PD is useful because the teachers are using this with the students, and I feel that this is a better approach to working with the children in the classroom.” (10/18/19, Joint SN & SA interview)

“We received a positive discipline training, a 3-day training, and I also did a cascade training with my colleagues. The (MC) training was organized at the district level, 3 teachers at this school were trained during MC training, and then they provided a cascade training to the other teachers (at our school).”

²⁶ In literacy class, kids are expected to speak in very formal language, but this is not what they speak at home. They are using formal language that the kids are not comfortable with or use regularly. (see interview with MC staff on October 7, 2019).

²⁷ It should be noted that in the first cohort (118 schools), 2 schools eventually dropped out of the McGovern-Dole 2017 due to financial constraints, but the literacy promotion component had already been completed. Therefore, the total number of schools here is slightly higher than the total number of McGovern-Dole 2017 schools (84+137+219).

²⁸ While 46 of the 73 school administrators surveyed stated that their school had received literacy and learning promotion activities, we are only analyzing the data for the literacy focal points because it allows for exploration across several dimensions to comprehensively assess McGovern-Dole 2017 performance for this component.

The training by MC for positive discipline was last year in October 2018. The training covers how to work with parents, positive discipline, the attitude of the adult person toward the child, no shouting, and how to encourage the children, how to read to children. They (MC) also trained the librarians; they taught them to network with the rural libraries and how to encourage parents to read to the children and literacy promotion....We learned that the act of shouting and punishing/humiliating the children was not the most effective way to teach them. We were provided with materials and handouts on a USB. I valued the training and wanted to come back and share what I have learned.” (10/21/19; SA)

The evaluation data regarding the learning and literacy component suggest there are some very positive results, but they are inconsistent and require further verification and follow-up from MC. In addition, the senior leadership needs to apply some of the lessons learned from the SFP to the literacy and learning component regarding follow-up coaching and monitoring. Improved coordination and integrated management of the two components will also be important moving forward.

It should also be noted that there were initially no plans to collect midterm data for this indicator, only at the end of the program during the final evaluation. However, after MC took on former Save the Children staff, it was decided to conduct midterm data collection for this indicator using the same team of enumerators and experts to ensure consistency. Data collection is planned for the end of February-March 2020 (to be comparable with the baseline that was also conducted in February).

McGovern-Dole 2017 Success Factors

Effectiveness EQ 3&4: What factors are facilitating the program achievement or acted as obstacles to achieving the McGovern-Dole 2017 results and outputs? & What key factors contribute to the variation in target schools’ degree of feeding program progress thus far as it relates to each of the program components and core activities (Training & Capacity Building, Commodities, Policy & Regulatory Work, Infrastructure (including WASH, Kitchens and Winterization and Literacy Promotion)?

There are several factors that are contributing to the success of McGovern-Dole 2017; the ET will discern the most significant contributors to program success; as well as the challenges to the program success so that McGovern-Dole 2017 program implementation team and stakeholders can use this information close out the next two years of program implementation successfully.

McGovern-Dole 2017 Success Factors (number of responses²⁹)				
Intervention	School Administration (78 respondents)	School Cooks (78 cooks)	Primary Grade Teachers (36)	Total
Govt support	29	8	2	39
Admin support	n/a	23	23	46
Parents support	0	18	14	32
Trainings	43	29	18	90
Kitchen repair	n/a	41	n/a	41

²⁹ More than one answer per respondent was possible; N/A means that the question or option was not asked of the respondent, because they did not receive or associate with this component or activity.

Commodities	n/a	27	n/a	27
High-quality materials	n/a	n/a	7	7
Other	0	12	5	17
Unsure	0	3	0	3

The table above highlights three key success factors based upon survey respondent feedback that factor that was highlighted by all respondents was the training and coaching that was provided by MC, this by far is the component that all actors across the components felt was critical to the success of the program.

- *There was a need for the program because the expertise that was offered has improved the quality and nutrition of the school feeding program. I also appreciate the WhatsApp group with other participants, and they share information and support one another. They discuss the equipment and ingredients and how to diversify the meals. (10/14/19, SN)*
- *I learned much that I did not know before, I gained valuable skills in the training that allowed me to gain skills and knowledge. After the training, I started observing what is happening in the kitchen. Now I have an idea of procedures and processes for cooking, now I cook fish in the oven and make porridge correctly. The food should not be overcooked to make sure that it is nutritious. (10/14/19, SN)*
- *... We are applying what we learned already. (I asked for an example and the vice principle stands up and states) I learned how to treat the school children, how to greet and interact with the kids to give them a positive spirit if the teacher is in a bad mood and just focuses on the negative the kids will perform negatively. So, every training has been high quality and useful and helped to develop our skills. Even the parents have participated in trainings on nutrition, the cook, the parents and teachers were all invited to a training at the outset of the program to launch the program, to explain the program and the approach. (10/17/19, SA)*

The quotes above illustrate the perspective of stakeholders of both components the utility of the training and support provided by MC to build skills and capacity to implement the program and essentially do their work with renewed skills and improved practices. The school nutrition staff highlights the new skills and capacity to do their work implementing school feeding and school admin highlight the value of the training for positive discipline for improving the quality of teaching in the classroom, as well as the SFP related trainings impact on the successful launch the SFP program. The data clearly illustrates the value and quality of the training as a key facilitator of the success of the McGovern-Dole 2017 program. For school administrators this (training) was the most important success factor for the program, while for the school nutrition staff the kitchen rehabilitation and equipment were the most highlighted facilitator of success for McGovern-Dole 2017 implementation. Literacy teachers highlighted admin support as the most critical success factor for McGovern-Dole 2017.

Given the performance of the McGovern-Dole 2017 until now, there are clearly several key factors that significantly contributed to the program's success thus far some of the other factors highlighted during the stakeholder engagement and participation. Stakeholder participation and engagement, the collaboration between the schools, parents, MC, and the GoK has for the execution of McGovern-Dole 2017. The engagement and commitment of these actors was mentioned repeatedly by interview respondents a few select quotes are highlighted below:

- *“The joint work with the parents and teachers and the community helps to make the school feeding program successful.” (10/14/19, SN)*
- *“The parents support the program as well, they provide 70 som per month with cleaning supplies and they also contribute fruit and vegetables.” (10/14/19, SN)*
- *“The willingness of all the actors and their contributions is the cause of success. The parent's support was valuable, and they were very motivated and interested; they participated in the trainings as well. The children also really wanted to study and have these improve hot meals. There is a poor family with a boy that comes to school just for the sake of eating- it is important for poor families.” (10/21/19, SN)*
- One respondent highlighted the true success factor, *“The fact that the children are excited about eating is the main success facilitation factor because they were not eating before. “All stakeholders are motivated to support the wellbeing and success of the Kyrgyz children from the donor to each of the program stakeholders, are all contributing to the success of McGovern-Dole 2017 for the sake of the primary school children. (10/21/19, SN)*

McGovern-Dole 2017 Implementation Challenges

Perceived challenges to program implementation will be treated at two levels in the report, here we will focus on the data from the survey respondents, later in the report we will look at the implementation issues and their consequences under Efficiency EQ1. The data suggest that most respondents feel like there were no major challenges to implementation:

McGovern-Dole 2017 Challenges and Obstacles (number of responses³⁰)				
General Challenges				
Intervention	School Administration (78 staff)	School Cooks (78 cooks)	Primary Grade Teachers (36)	Total
Insufficient support from GoK (AYO)	6	n/a	n/a	6
Insufficient parental support	3	n/a	n/a	3
Insufficient equipment	n/a	1	n/a	1
Insufficient funds	n/a	3	n/a	3
Lack of materials	n/a	n/a	3	3
Staff left	1	1	n/a	2
Commodities arrived late	n/a	1	n/a	1
MC delays	1	0	n/a	1
Other	28	n/a	8	36
None	38	44	23	105

³⁰ More than one answer per respondent was possible; N/A means that the question or option was not asked of the respondent, because they did not receive or associate with this component or activity.

Lack training	n/a	2	n/a	2
Personal Challenges				
Overworked	n/a	4	n/a	4
Lack funds for training	n/a	1	n/a	1
Lack admin. support	n/a	0	n/a	0
None	n/a	45	n/a	45
Other	n/a	21	n/a	21

In general, the respondents to both interviews and the survey were hesitant to identify any program challenges or obstacles, as the table above highlights most respondents stated that there were no challenges associated with general project implementation or personal challenges linked to their own work. One school administrator interviewee expressed the most consistent feeling regarding the program stating:

“This is the second year that we have a hot meal program, and water treatment and training. I am thankful that Mercy Corps supports them and provides commodities. All the parents are thankful and happy with the program, the children happy. We receive flour, oil, peas, and rice twice a year. We get the commodities on time, and our contribution is the transport of the commodities to the school, and there are no challenges associated with this.” (10/18/19, SA)

Other was the second most common response in both categories, analysis of the open-ended responses from the SA survey for the general responses highlight predominantly issues with the construction either quality, estimated cost, or timeliness of the work or funding the contribution by school or GoK. One reference is made to water supply issues and lack parental buy in and participation. As for SNs, 21 SNs stated that they had (or still have) personal problems in implementing the program. Some of these answers, however, simply duplicate the above options - for example, overload, and insufficient salary. Most of the answers to this open question boil down to the fact that in the first year, cooks experienced difficulties associated with a lack of knowledge and skills, and overcome these difficulties with the help of colleagues. The findings suggest that McGovern-Dole 2017 needs to provide some support to schools for developing strategies for schools and the GoK to successfully manage infrastructure projects including the budget, oversight and quality control. Also, to a much lesser degree some issues related to the workload were hesitantly raised or indirectly raised during interviews and within the survey, particularly for school cooks.

School Nutrition Staff:

- *My workload has increased substantially, I cook for 230 children, and there is one cook and 1 assistant in the kitchen. This is not to scale; 1 school has 43 students and while another school has 1 cook and just 1 assistant to help the cook for 230 students. This is a challenge. (10/16/19, SN)*
- *The assistant cleans the floor, and the dishes, and we are cooking, and we are cleaning the tables, and we have too much work to cook the meals as well. We need more support in the kitchen (10/16/19, SN)*
- *I work in the school alone and she does not have time to attend the other children. I cook for 250 kids this year, 290 last year. I also manage the commodities and clean by myself. I had a cleaning lady last year and I paid her 100 som out of my pocket. Last year she was self-financing by selling pies and materials to pay for all the supplies. In November a cook assistant will be hired to support in November. (10/21/19, SN)*

- *The main challenge was cooking because the recipes in the books and the practice of cooking are a bit different. The recipe in the cookbooks are wrong, in the book they say 12 kilos of rice, when she cooked it was too much and she had to adjust the recipes accordingly. The recipe proportions are off. 10/21/19,SN)*

School Administrators:

- *We have been in the program for 2 years, last year they had a problem with the cook. The DDoE was not paying the cook, and only this year they have entered the program with the cook and having extra staff. Last year she was paid as a cooking assistant. This year she will be paid as a cook and will have a cook assistant. The DDoE told them they must wait; they are resolving these issues. The cook is now paid at the right rate with retro from September 2019. (10/21/19)*
- *We have already communicated with MC regarding the issue of salaries and staff. The MC staff advised that they speak with the MoES and follow the process, we have done everything, and after one year they are still stuck. Nothing has happened. We were too late in submitting the required paperwork; the budget was already dispersed so most likely we will have the augmentation in the next school year. We would like MC to facilitate the process, we want their help with a letter or other assistance so that they can have the process sped. (10/17/19, SA)*

MC should consider providing guidance and recommendations for schools and GoK/MoES (1) regarding regulations for the grading and staffing requirements for school nutrition programs and (2) administrative timeline and process for schools to submit paperwork for nutrition staff to be graded and salaried appropriately on time. Both these actions should help to address the challenges raised as it relates related to workload and salary. The efficiency section EQ1 will also address the implementation problems experienced during the project implementation and their consequences.

Effectiveness EQ 5: How do program staff and stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of the processes and resources used by the program?

Table 13: Survey Data				
McGovern-Dole 2017 Most Successful Component (number of responses ³¹)				
School Feeding and Learning Environment				
Intervention	School Administration (78 staff)	School Cooks (78 cooks)	Primary Grade Teachers (36)	Total
Kitchen repair	57	4	n/a	61
Kitchen equipment	n/a	57	n/a	57
Winterization	5	n/a	n/a	5
Latrine	7	5	n/a	12
Water filter	23	16	n/a	39
Commodities	40	39	n/a	79
Admin Trainings	43	n/a	n/a	43

³¹ More than one answer per respondent was possible; N/A means that the question or option was not asked of the respondent, because they did not receive or associate with this component or activity.

Cooking courses	37	40	n/a	77
SBC	35	n/a	n/a	35
Literacy and Learning				
Intervention	School Administration (78 staff)	School Cooks (78 cooks)	Primary Grade Teachers (36)	Total
Positive Discipline Training	n/a	n/a	24	24
Parents Training	n/a	n/a	10	10
Librarian Training	n/a	n/a	7	7
Book Club	n/a	n/a	8	n/a
Reading Sessions	n/a	n/a	10	10
Reading Buddies	n/a	n/a	13	13
Homemade books	n/a	n/a	17	17
Home reading training	n/a	n/a	13	1
Audio books	n/a	n/a	13	13
Research Projects	n/a	n/a	3	3

The consensus regarding the McGovern-Dole 2017 program, from most participants was that the program was effective, most respondents spent quite a bit of time thanking MC and highlighting their interest in continuing their collaboration and participation in the McGovern-Dole 2017 program. Survey data demonstrates that the SFP activities viewed as most successful included the commodities coming in at #1 and cooking courses at #2.

Table 14. Survey Data			
Satisfaction with Commodities			
Choice	School Administration (78 staff)	School Cooks (78 staff)	Total
yes	68	66	134
no	3	2	5
Preferred Commodity			
Choice	School Administration (78 staff)	School Cooks (78 staff)	Total
flour	59	49	108
oil	6	6	12
peas	5	6	11
rice	1	7	8

Further analysis highlights that respondents were almost universally satisfied with the commodities, and when asked which commodity they preferred flour was by far the favor commodity. The kitchen repairs and equipment were very close 3rd & 4th response however, the SFP would not be possible without any of these contributions hence why the survey data clearly articulate this, and they also confirm that all components of the program are effective and successful.

The only components that were not mentioned often as successful were the Winterization and WASH infrastructure components which given that according to the MC monitoring data no Winterization or WASH projects have been implemented for McGovern-Dole 2017. The only schools that may have had these projects yet are Extension schools that were part of the McGovern-Dole 2012 extension and included in the McGovern-Dole 2017 project to ensure that they received a complete program package. The interviews reiterated this:

- *We get commodities every 6 months and it is enough for our school’s needs. The trainings helped me to my job because before she had none of this knowledge and they used to cook differently before. Now the make many types of soup and pilaf and noodles. They show me the menu on the wall which is visible. (10/18/19, SN and SA joint interview)*
- *I am proud to work with MC, I heard about them before working with them and everything that was said was very positive. I like the way that MC works with us, I would like to continue to work with MC. There is a WhatsApp group where the SDs are communicating with each other regarding SFP.*

Table 15: Survey Data

Additional Program Support Needed (number of responses³²)

Intervention	School Administration (78 staff)	School Cooks (78 cooks)	Total
Dining furniture	27	28	55
Utensils	18	27	45
Literacy training	12	2	14
Nutrition training	17	13	30
Follow up consultations	6	2	8
Community support	13	8	21
Local govt support	12	5	17
No request	15	22	37

The school feeding program is viewed quite positive by program participants; interview and survey data suggest that respondents are interested in continuing their work with MC and another program component like infrastructure. In addition, analysis of data regarding the timeliness of the program highlight the fact that very respondents stated the program was behind schedule in the few and limited cases were respondents responded that McGovern-Dole 2017 was behind schedule they mentioned that government funding or other/undefined was the cause.

As it relates to the Literacy and Learning Promotion activities, the survey respondents felt that the positive discipline training for teachers was the most successful component of the program. Homemade books were viewed as the second most successful component of the program. The findings linked to Literacy and Learning promotion could be influenced by the fact that in some cases the schools had not received the literacy component or did not receive the entire intervention at the time of evaluation. During the interviews a similar sentiment was expressed:

³² More than one answer per respondent was possible; N/A means that the question or option was not asked of the respondent, because they did not receive or associate with this component or activity.

I feel the training was very effective, and it helped us develop our skills teaching the kids in the classroom as he said it was 70-80% successful. The librarians will also be trained soon as well. (10/18/19, SN and SA joint interview)

Given the findings above, under effectiveness EQ1 and the issues raised during the ET interviews, MC may want to analyze the performance of the literacy and learning promotion component to assess the level of implementation at each school, gauge how to improve implementation and develop a strategy to close out activities in the remaining two years of McGovern-Dole 2017. The SFP portion of the project was perceived as highly effective by most program participants, the findings reflect MC’s extensive experience with previous SFP and McGovern-Dole programming.

Effectiveness EQ 6: What changes are required to reinforce and improve program effectiveness and McGovern-Dole 2017 executions rates during the next 2+ years that remain in the project life?

See lesson learned and recommendations section below.

Effectiveness Criteria Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

Effectiveness Conclusion	Rating	Observations
The monitoring and evaluation data confirm that McGovern-Dole 2017 is by in large is achieving many of its milestones and on target to achieve all pre-established aims. However, there were issues relative the Literacy and Learning component and the infrastructure work.	Moderately Satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the indicators are at 45% or above. In fact, several have surpassed the targeted levels. • No winterization or WASH infrastructure projects have been conducted to date. • The SFP component seems to be outperforming the Literacy and Learning component. In fact, the literacy and learning component alone is solidly in the moderately satisfactory, while the infrastructure is the only factor that brought SFP into the moderately satisfactory category.

Effectiveness Recommendations	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
1. SBC has no literacy component; MC should look at integrating literacy into the SBC planning and activities to the degree possible. (10/7/19, MC staff)	April 2020	MC
2. (1) Based on the household study results, an impact study should be designed to include clear questions regarding the SBC activities that occurred in the communities, their impact in addition to the questions regarding knowledge and behaviors at the household level. (2) Also, Literacy should also be included in the impact study, to look at community level knowledge and behaviors linked to learning and literacy promotion at the community level.	May 2020	MC

<p>3. MC will have to be very aggressive in the final two years of the project in order to ensure that all Infrastructure projects are completed in a timely and effective manner. It will be important to develop a very clear well-coordinated strategy with the infrastructure team with external oversight from an infrastructure expert.</p>	<p>May 2020</p>	<p>MC</p>
<p>4. The evaluation data suggest extensive analysis/assessment is required of whether schools have received a comprehensive Literacy and Learning Promotion package. In addition, as MC is merging the monitoring data from the Literacy and Learning promotion component into their databases, some work should be done to validate the quality and accuracy of that data.</p>	<p>April 2020</p>	<p>MC</p>
<p>5. MC senior leadership needs to apply some of the lessons learned from the SFP to the literacy and learning component regarding follow-up coaching and monitoring. Improved coordination and integrated management of the two components will also be important moving forward.</p>	<p>January 2020</p>	<p>MC</p>
<p>6. The findings suggest that McGovern-Dole 2017 needs to provide some support to schools for developing strategies for schools and the GoK to successfully manage infrastructure projects including the budget, oversight and quality control</p>	<p>September 2020</p>	<p>MC</p>
<p>7. MC should consider providing guidance and recommendations for schools and GoK/MoES (1) regarding regulations for the grading and staffing requirements for school nutrition programs and (2) administrative timeline and process for schools to submit paperwork for nutrition staff to be graded and salaried appropriately on time. Both these actions should help to address the challenges raised relates related to workload and salary.</p>	<p>September 2020</p>	<p>MC</p>
<p>8. MoES-level infrastructure is lacking, all school nutrition and teacher training relies on one person; MC, WFP, and USDA to advocate and support the construction of a MoES team that can fully oversee responsibilities for SFP as they prepare for the closeout and handover</p>	<p>ASAP</p>	<p>MC, WFP, USDA, GoK</p>
<p>9. MC, WFP, GoK, and USDA need to develop an exit and handover strategy for all SFP interventions as they prepare to close out. The sustainability model mentioned in McGovern-Dole 2017 guidance as well as recommendations for MoES staffing and all other issues should be addressed in the exit strategy.</p>	<p>ASAP</p>	<p>MC, WFP, USDA, GoK</p>

Effectiveness Lessons learned

1. There is a disparity between the effectiveness of the SFP and literacy and learning components that are linked to the attempts to address concerns regarding duplication with TTR at the outset of the project and the fact the SFP and Literacy and learning components are managed like to separate projects.

2. The MC monitoring approach and WhatsApp group are effective management and oversight tools that should be replicated across all components.
3. No Winterization or WASH infrastructure projects have been conducted thus far, therefore a substantial amount remains to be done in the remaining two years of the project. There were issues with the kitchen rehabilitation efforts that should be considered in developing a strategy for the future infrastructure project.

Efficiency

Efficiency 1: Has the program implementation had any major challenges, if so, what have they been?

The program implementation has been affected by several major challenges that the McGovern-Dole 2017 partners and stakeholders have had to work together to overcome. The challenges have included the following:

- At the outset of the McGovern-Dole 2017, the **literacy component had to be re-designed** due to overlap and duplication with the USAID TTR funded program. As a result, the literacy component was shifted to a learning and literacy promotion approach that focused on positive discipline and promoting literacy outside of the classroom. In addition, the program implementation approach was affected by the requirement to coordinate their work with the USAID funded TTR program, as such the McGovern-Dole 2017 led by STC, was not able to follow their original plan of implementing the SFP followed by the literacy and learning promotion component, they were forced to work haphazardly in various schools where TTR were not working or had already completed their activities. Therefore, the approach of leading with SFP and following literacy and learning promotion activities were abandoned and McGovern-Dole 2017 just worked in the schools that were available with no consideration for activities linked to the rollout and implementation of the SFP activities. This disturbed scheduling and activity planning for McGovern-Dole 2017 literacy and learning promotion activities³³.
- **Challenges with STC:** Save the Children, McGovern-Dole 2017 implementing partner for the literacy component, announced their withdrawal from Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia in December 2018. In response, MC informed the USDA and negotiated an exit strategy with Save the Children to ensure continuous implementation of literacy and learning promotion activities under McGovern-Dole 2017. MC began oversight of the literacy and learning promotion activities July 2019. They have recruited the STC literacy team members and engaged their field staff to continue the literacy and learning promotion activities. In addition, MC was able to negotiate a creative sub-agreement with STC, which sees Asia Area Education Advisor based in DC providing support to the McGovern-Dole 2017 implementation. This unconventional approach demonstrates the creative and commitment to results on the part of USDA, MC and STC.

While the shifts and modifications did create challenges for the successful implementation of McGovern-Dole 2017, the adjustments have yielded positive outcomes and sought to make up for the challenges to program implementation. It is also worth noting that before its pullout MC allowed STC to implement almost as though the literacy and learning component was a separate set of activities on to itself with limited coordination and oversight for STC work on literacy and learning promotion. As a result, ET interview data suggested that there was some confusion regarding whether the intervention had been implemented or not and in some cases schools attributed TTR activities to McGovern-Dole 2017 literacy and learning promotion activities. While this was the case for the ET data, it should be noted that the survey data had more straightforward results relative to the literacy components; however, the coordination of activities between MC and STC was not as strong as it could have been, MC staff stated the following:

³³ Interview with MC Staff Oct. 7, 2019.

“We (MC) had a focal point to help coordinate their work quarterly, these were not formalized meetings with minutes, and the main emphasis was on the bi-annual reporting. Otherwise, they only met with them quarterly for coordination and oversight. We were the interface with the partners so STC could not meet with the partners without MC. We never shared office space and we each worked independently.” (10/21/19. MC Staff)

As a result of the issues with overlap with TTR, STC pulling out of Central Asia and somewhat loose oversight and coordination of the literacy promotion component, there were some weaknesses in the quality of the performance observed by the ET during school interviews in addition (see effectiveness section for further details regarding literacy promotion component performance issues). Moreover, all schools either received the literacy activities this year 2019 or will be receiving them in the upcoming year.

- **School Selection:** school selection had to go through two rounds of assessment and verification this year due to a limited number of remaining schools not yet enrolled in either program (MC or WFP) but are meeting all program criteria. A MC staff member stated and clarified that:

“The school enrollment has been delayed by the Ministry’s participation in the selection process due to discrepancy in the selection and revisions from the MoES. In October 2018 we started the school enrollment was supposed to be completed in January 2019, but they are still enrolling, some of this is due to delays from the schools in meeting the requirements. we also worked on the enrollment of the schools in the summer ...the ministry (MoES) got involved, and they changed the list, and we had to work on this repeatedly; an (MoES rep) excluded a whole district except one school. Many eligible schools were excluded, and we (MC) had to do an assessment and revise the list ... in some cases, the school directors and administrators were not active, and MC had to push to get them involved and the schools to fulfill their requirements for eligibility. There was also some resistance to include the neediest schools because they lack the required infrastructure. We are able to work with the schools that required repairs and rehab to bring up to the existing standards, but we cannot build non-existent facilities and infrastructure.” (10/23/19, MC Staff)

The challenges with the school selection will affect between 20 and 40 schools that, as a result, were not in the process of preparing over the summer of 2019 and as such despite their eligibility may not be able to participate in the program.

- **Commodities:** despite being the most appreciated and solicited aspect of the McGovern-Dole 2017 program after the construction and rehabilitation of the kitchen facilities, commodities have been the subject of several challenges:
 - **First flour fortification levels were an issue:** in 2016, the Kyrgyz Republic adopted new standards of iron fortification in flour when it joined the Eurasian Economic Union. The new MoH regulations require a flour fortification standard of NaFeEDTA is 15 mg/kg, +/- 20%. The MoH requires that the all-purpose flour is tested on iron enrichment levels during the commodity certification process for the customs clearance procedure. In January 2018, Mercy Corps initiated high-level discussions with the MoH, UNICEF, WHO, and WFP, and the Association of Producers of Enriched Flour and Wheat Products of Kyrgyzstan to look for a solution. While these negotiations are ongoing, Mercy Corps has requested USDA to provide

fortified flour with the specified iron content in line with Kyrgyz standards in order to avoid delays in customs clearance and distribution³⁴.

- **There is an ongoing issue with the flour distribution, and over 64.2 MT of donated wheat flour out of the total 690.6 MT was not allowed for distribution** by the Minister of Health due to a trace amount of GMO identified. The donor was immediately informed, and intensive discussion is ongoing with high officials at all levels including the Ministry of Health and MoES, as well as the US Embassy. A final decision is expected by the end of 2019 calendar year³⁵.

According to MC staff, this final issue related to commodities could result in a substantial amount of schools not receiving flour in their commodity basket. Given that flour is one of the most appreciated commodities among the schools and program staff interviewed and surveyed, due to its diversity and range of uses, many schools will be unhappy should this issue not be resolved. It could also have a substantial impact on the diversification of diets feasible at schools that no longer received this commodity³⁶.

Efficiency EQ 2: To what degree is feedback from the previous McGovern-Dole and stakeholder input incorporated into the program?

MC has demonstrated a strong commitment to incorporate and build on the lessons learned during the McGovern-Dole 2012, a management response to the report, and the USDA comments can be found in Annex III. While the evaluation team was in the field, MC was concurrently executing and planning the following studies:

1. **A gender assessment** to examine how better address gender issues as feasible during the final two years of the program. These findings will also be quite useful to the GoK.
2. **Staff were trained on gender** in February and in June 2019, which is a critical step in ensuring that staff can use a gender-sensitive lens in the implementation of the program
3. **Needs assessment for infrastructure** and WASH was also being completed in October 2019. This reflects a change in the selection of schools for grant projects, the infrastructure study will allow them to select infrastructure projects based on need. The neediest and feasible will be prioritized. Winterization, latrines, water treatment. This is a significant design change from the previous 20 years of MC experience and work, it really seeks to be need-driven and will aim to prioritize those schools with the greatest needs for the infrastructure support and findings³⁷. This assessment addresses both the recommendation to address WASH needs more effectively and to ensure that procurement for SFP school kitchens is proportional to the needs and size.
4. **MC is also planning an impact study:** the ongoing household-level study will serve as the baseline for an impact study after the conclusion of the program. The household study has 3000 households, and they are primarily families with kids from the schools enrolled in 2018 and 2019, a total of 150 schools. The study will look at behaviors and practices linked to nutrition and reading at home to see the impact on the program children's health, nutritional and educational outcomes, as well as their families.

³⁴ MCGOVERN-DOLE17 Biannual Report #1, April 30, 2018.

³⁵ MCGOVERN-DOLE17 Biannual Report #4, September 30, 2019.

³⁶ Interview with MC Staff 10/23/2019.

³⁷ Interview with MC staff 10/23/2019.

5. **MC adjusted their team size following the closeout of McGovern-Dole 2012**, as such 17 staff were released, and MC recruited STC literacy staff and field consultants in line with the program implementation needs.
6. **MC has already held a Systems Review and Strategy session with a best practices document**, according to the MC response to the McGovern-Dole 2012 Evaluation.
7. **To improve collaboration with GoK (MoES and MoH)** MC has joint work plans with the MoES and MoUs to guide their work and formalize their collaboration and partnership. MC also recruited a Government Liaison Officer to focus full time on identifying and resolving issues related to GoK and MC collaboration surrounding McGovern-Dole 2017.
8. **Identifying Sustainability models**, MC is still working with WFP and FAO on looking at various sustainability models such as greenhouse farming, vegetable and fruit gardens, tripartite (school, parents and local authorities) management committees for SFP and renting of school kitchens to generate revenues.

The interview data and document review confirm that MC has already made extensive efforts to address and apply lessons learned from the McGovern-Dole 2012 to their work on McGovern-Dole 2017 and beyond. There has been a clear good faith effort on the part of USDA and MC to build on experience and share lessons learned and best practices across the GOK, Mercy Corps, WFP and program stakeholders.

Efficiency 3 & 4: Are program resources being managed efficiently? & Is the resource and personnel management for the McGovern-Dole project during the period under the review?

Table 16: Overview of McGovern-Dole 2017 Financial Performance						
27-Sep-17 through 30-Sep-2019 in USD						
33127 - KG USDA						
MCGOVERN-DOLE CCC						
2017-21						
USDA - CCC				Months Remaining:		24
KYRGYZSTAN				% Months Elapsed:		50%
Award Start Date:	27-09-17			Total % Spent:		38%
Award End Date:	30-09-21					
Attribute Description		Total Award Budget	Total Actual Expenditures	Unspent Balance	% Spent	
ADMIN - Benefits		680,206	193,820	486,386	28%	
ADMIN - Equipment		41,816	28,507	13,309	68%	
ADMIN - Office		551,036	140,720	410,316	26%	
ADMIN - Other		34,378	5,009	29,369	15%	

ADMIN - Professional Services	472,750	55,282	417,468	12%
ADMIN - Salaries	1,828,527	560,613	1,267,914	31%
ADMIN - Supplies	37,823	25,302	12,521	67%
ADMIN - Travel	118,215	67,357	50,858	57%
ITSH - Benefits	9,358	-	9,358	0%
ITSH - Internal Transportation	27,000	7,263	19,737	27%
ITSH - Salaries	54,252	13,046	41,206	24%
ITSH - Warehouse	82,800	47,609	35,191	57%
Building/Rehabilitation Kitchen	1,944,198	1,310,199	633,999	67%
Building/Rehabilitation: Sanitation facilities	277,423	4,597	272,826	2%
Building/Rehabilitation Schools	277,423	6,841	270,582	2%
Capacity Building - Local, Regional, & National	1,139,754	359,278	780,476	32%
Establish Activities to Promote Literacy	231,454	102,089	129,365	44%
Production of Books & Reading Materials	943,607	408,260	535,347	43%
Provide School Meals	987,914	190,616	797,298	19%
Training - Food Preparation & Storage Practices	165,824	103,456	62,368	62%
Training - Good Health & Nutrition Practices	344,279	205,426	138,853	60%
Training - Librarians	254,308	109,976	144,332	43%
Training - Teachers	340,711	156,215	184,496	46%
Improving Potable Water Quality	240,811	216,855	23,956	90%
Total Direct Cost	11,085,867	4,318,333	6,767,534	39%
Indirect Cost Allocation	<u>1,667,314</u>	<u>773,571</u>	<u>893,743</u>	46%
Total Award Cost	12,753,181	5,091,905	7,661,276	40%

The budgetary performance for McGovern-Dole 2017 is solid, as the Table 15, shows, to data globally, only 40% of the overall McGovern-Dole 2017 budget has been spent, leaving over 60% of the budget left. When questioned about budget lines that were excessively low and or lines that were almost fully exploited the feedback was the following:

- Regarding the 12% expenditure for **Admin Professional service category**, this budget line is dedicated to external Monitoring and Evaluation costs; as of now only the baseline evaluation has been executed, the mid-term is ongoing, and final evaluation will not occur until just before McGovern-Dole 2017 ends. Therefore, most of the cost and other related expenditures are still to come.
- **Internal Transport, Storage and Handling of commodities (ITSH salaries and Benefits)** are quite low. This is because MC hires warehouse employees on service contracts and not labor contracts. Therefore, they are not obligated to pay entitlements. Also, as the last batch of schools is integrated into the SFP, the staff salary and transport budget lines will reflect this augmentation in the expenditures.
- **Rehabilitation, Winterization, and WASH infrastructure projects** will all begin in the 3rd year of program implementation and given the project has not implemented any Winterization or WASH projects, 2% is appropriate.
- **Providing school meals:** at the proposal stage MC planned that employees would travel intensively to the field for monitoring commodity use; at the implementation stage, visits were decreased and refocused on quality and depth of visits rather than quantity. Also, instead of sending MC staff from Osh and Bishkek offices to the field, MC hired service contractors already based in the field. They are thus cutting expenses for travel. This reflects the MC decentralization approach with more field-based service contractors performing regular monitoring visits and reporting through WhatsApp and other electronic communication channels vs how it was budgeted originally when office-based MC staff would have been traveling from Bishkek for monitoring visits. Previously, MC had 8 full-time staff based in Osh and Bishkek who traveled for 2-3 weeks every month to monitor commodities consumption in schools. Because they were staff, there was a budget line for full-time staff drivers plus per diem / accommodation for all of them and then all the full-time benefits staff. MC estimates spending about 50-60% of the initial budgeted amount by the end of the grant. Therefore, "savings" have been reallocated to other program activities, mainly infrastructure.
- **Improving potable water quality** at 90%, however, given that all water filtration activities linked to kitchen rehabilitation for SFFP have been completed this expenditure rate is in alignment with program implementation.

The analysis of the budget and expenditure performance of McGovern-Dole 2017 as of September 2019, suggests that the budget management until now has been quite efficient and shows the strong alignment between program implementation and expenditure rates to date. Therefore, performance is rated quite highly on this dimension of efficiency³⁸.

Personnel Management

At the closeout of McGovern-Dole 2012, which, as discussed in the McGovern-Dole 2012 final evaluation, shared staff with McGovern-Dole 2017 some changes have been made in the personnel structure of MC, as well as the pull out of STC from the Central Asia Region. Below we summarize the key factors to note relative to the McGovern-Dole 2017 personnel management:

- They did not have sufficient budget to keep all the staff from the McGovern-Dole 2012, the proposal for McGovern-Dole 2017 only included 67 team members. In May 2019, 17 program officers (16 Program

³⁸ NICRA approved rate has changed from 18.5% to provisional rate 20.5%. MC has already submitted a budget modification request to USDA, and it is in the process of negotiation. Program implementation will not have substantial changes the program submitted adjusted Annual Work Plan for the donor approval as part of Modification process.

Officers and 1 Training Assistant) were released since their McGovern-Dole 2012 contracts ended, and now there are 72 full-time staff.

- MC utilizing hiring field-based service contractors so that they are not working during the summer when they have been no activities. The contractors are hired for a 9- or 10-month period when the program has activities that are ongoing, and they are released when schools are out of session. MC **seeks to hire service contractors locally** so that they diminished the cost for logistics and travel to the field. For the director level literacy staff, they were brought on as staff, but all the field staff is contractors with 9-10-month contracts. They are working independently with no office base. They have the scope of work; they have deliverables and deadlines, and they work independently. They interface with the managers regularly by phone and come into the office once a month.
- **The disadvantages to the service contractor approach:**
 - Contractors have no benefits beyond their fees, and they cannot sign for or represent MC. So, for signing and food and materials they get this from MC full-time staff. They are only paid based upon their performance. In addition, the recruitment process must be repeated every year for service contractor positions. As such, despite significant flexibility, the workers have no job security and no benefits. In addition, MC invests in capacity building into these service contractors, and this investment is lost for MC if these workers leave to join other agencies with full employment contracts.
 - Because MC is using the contract approach, the HR department is not leading or overseeing the hiring of contractors; the process is driven by procurement. HR is only supporting procurement HR is excluded from this process, and they are using an HR company to perform this part of the HR work.
- **Another significant advantage of the service contractor approach** is that it is not only cheaper, but it also allows MC to build and place capacity in the field at the local level.
- Another issue raised relative to personnel management is that the **Government Liaison and SBC Program Officers are overwhelmed trying to provide support to the McGovern-Dole 2017 at the national level** working independently, MC should consider creative ways to increase support for their work. For example, establishing regional/ provincial level focal points for governance and SBC that they can work with to do this work may increase the impact of their work to enable McGovern-Dole 2017 success³⁹.

Personnel is being managed efficiently under McGovern-Dole 2017, however there is some consideration that should be given to providing benefits to contract staff such as health care and other entitlements or even sick days. The ethos of fair and humane treatment must be balanced with the pursuit of efficiency in this case.

Table 17: Survey Data			
Program Resources were sufficient (number of positive answers)			
Choice	School Administration (78 respondents)	School Cooks (78 respondents)	Total
Yes	35	34	69

³⁹ Analysis and findings presented relative to the personnel performance.

Mostly	22	22	44
Somewhat	14	11	25
No	0	11	1

Also, interviews with the SBC and governance liaison suggest that some increased support for their efforts could be beneficial to increase staff effectiveness and results. The performance of the McGovern-Dole relative to personnel management suggests that McGovern-Dole 2017 is demonstrating a high-level performance on this dimension of efficiency.

As it relates to financial and personnel management, McGovern-Dole 2017 demonstrates strong results, while there are some caveats to consider, particularly as it relates to the use of service contracts and need for increased support for the Government liaison and SBC program officers, the project is generally rated high across these dimensions. From the perspective of program beneficiaries, the data suggest that most beneficiaries feel that the program resources were enough, see table 17 for further detail. This data indicates that the alignment between implementation and expenditures is also reflective of the beneficiary experience relative to program inputs and efforts to date.

Efficiency 5: Is the management and oversight approach effective and appropriate to achieve the best project outcomes?

The evaluation data suggests that there were some challenges with integrating the overall management of the two core components of the McGovern-Dole 2017 program. As discussed earlier, this can partially be attributed to the issues with re-design at the outside of the project which changed approach and synchronization of implementation as discussed in the relevance section. However, this is also due to the treatment by MC and STC of the two program components as two separate projects. In interviews with MC staff, they shared that they acquiesced to STC the literacy component because MC did not have literacy expertise and viewed STC as a peer organization not requiring oversight. When explaining how they coordinate their work, one MC staff stated:

“We had a focal point to help coordinate our work quarterly; these were not formalized meetings with minutes. The main emphasis was on the bi-annual reporting. Otherwise, we only met with STC quarterly for coordination and oversight. MC was the interface with the partners so STC could not meet with the partners without MC. We never shared office space, and we were working independently. Even the STC database was not integrated with the MC USDA database. We did not coordinate the baseline; at the time, it was not coordinated; they treated it like two different projects. We (MC) participated, but there was not one integrated baseline.” (10/21/19, MC staff)

This quote highlights the lack of integration between the SFP and the literacy and learning component; as a result, the literacy and learning component did not have joint monitoring visits with SFP monitors or use the MC WhatsApp approach to creating shared learning communities for learning and literacy teachers or directors. In addition, the ability to validate and oversee implementation on a real-time basis was not afforded MC. During the interviews, the ET found that the WhatsApp groups and monitoring visitors were viewed as highly beneficial and helpful by school staff, who felt that them to maintain the quality of their work, this is expressed by a school nutrition staff in the quote below:

“... (Field Specialist) from MC come, and she provides monitoring and coaching on how to do my work, he comes once every 2 months. It is helpful; it is very good. If I do something wrong, they help me to do better.” (10/14/19, SN)

This quote, as well as the data from table 18 regarding monitoring visits, illustrates that the majority of respondents had received monitoring visits, and almost all those school officials that had received monitoring visits found them to be useful. Conversely, during the interviews with school staff regarding the literacy and learning component activities, several stated that they had not heard from the literacy team since the previous training activity or event. They also mentioned that there was no use of WhatsApp to maintain contact or engagement remotely.

Table 18: Survey Data			
MC Monitoring Visits Experienced (last year)			
Choice	School Administration (78 respondents)	School Cooks (78 respondents)	Total
Yes	55	51	106
No	16	17	33
MC Monitoring Visits Useful			
Choice	School Administration (78 respondents)	School Cooks (78 respondents)	Total
Yes	55	50	105
No	15	0	15
Unsure	1	1	2

The data suggest that MC should not only more closely integrate the oversight and coordination of the two components, which it must do now as a result of the withdrawal of STC from Central Asia, they should also apply lessons learned from their previous SFP experience and employ joint monitoring visits so that participants link the literacy activities to McGovern-Dole 2017. And like SFP, use WhatsApp groups as a means of sustaining engagement and learning between beneficiary teachers around learning and literacy promotion remotely. MC has substantial success with oversight and management of their SFP activities; they must employ some of the transferable practices and systems for oversight and quality control to the literacy and learning component.

Efficiency Q6: Have participating schools been able to manage to mobilize the school contribution of 30% for infrastructure projects? What about in poor high-altitude areas⁴⁰?

Table 19: Survey Data	
School Kitchen Rehabilitation Contribution Assessment	
Assessment	School Administrators (78 respondents)
Acceptable	37
Too high	12
Low	16

⁴⁰ This question was included in the MTE TOR at the beginning of the program before schools were enrolled. However, at the time of enrolment the majority of participating schools are not high-altitude, which actually reflects the population density and distribution in the country. No clearly high-altitude schools were included in the random sample due to their low proportion in this program compared to McGovern-Dole 2012.

Unsure	6
Source of Contribution	
Source	School Administrators (78 respondents)
Local govt	59
Parents	8
Private	0
donors	0

The data suggest that most survey respondents (37 of 71) found the contribution to the kitchen rehabilitation to be acceptable. However, there were a few (12 of 71) that felt the contribution requirement was too high. During interviews and in the survey data a few respondents shared challenges with getting inputs from the GoK or issues with contractors as the main challenge experienced during program implementation, which aligns with the findings in table 18 above.

It should also be noted that while most contributions were provided by the GoK, in some cases parents and community members provided the financial contribution. Learning from its previous experience, MC is adjusting its approach to future infrastructure, moving away from a grant-based approach MC will be managing these activities directly. All construction, latrines specifically, will no longer be provided through a grant making scheme, but instead, based on the ongoing infrastructure assessment, MC will determine the infrastructure projects through a needs-based approach and give the money to the contractors, which will in turn allow MC to conduct closer oversight and quality control of the construction process. MC is currently waiting for an amendment signature from USDA, so they will contract construction companies directly to implement the infrastructure projects. The priority infrastructure projects are critical and therefore will no longer depend on the school contributions. Also, the schools will no longer have interest to accept lowest bids with inferior quality work⁴¹. MC is building on the experience garnered through previous iterations of McGovern-Dole and evaluation findings to identify solutions to challenges previously experienced with both school kitchen rehabilitation, winterization and WASH infrastructure projects. As previously stated, it will be necessary for MC to ensure that they have appropriate expertise and systems in place to oversee and quality control the infrastructure projects.

Efficiency 7: Are there any critical ways that program efficiency and oversight (including M&E) could be improved at the beneficiary or MC level?

See recommendations and lessons learned.

⁴¹ Interview with MC Staff on October 21, 2019.

Efficiency Criteria Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

Efficiency Conclusion	Rating	Observations
<p>McGovern-Dole 2017 is performing well across all the dimensions of efficiency. The evaluation data shows solid financial and personnel management performance; in addition, the MC leadership has been extraordinarily adaptive and innovative in the face of high-level issues with sub-recipients' withdrawal, component, re-design commodities, and the closure of McGovern-Dole 2012.</p>	Satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an outstanding commodity problem that could leave many schools without one of the preferred commodity basket items, flour. • The program is performing well in terms of efficiency in terms of financial and personnel management. • The service contract approach provides strong advantages in terms of reduced cost and bringing capacity to the local level; however, contractors lose the right to benefits and job security. • The kitchen rehab contribution was not a problem for the most; however, MC is shifting from the grant approach to a needs-based approach for future WASH and Winterization projects. • MC will be integrating oversight and management of the two components, which it was not doing before STCs withdrawal from Central Asia.

Efficiency Recommendation	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
<p>1. If MC and the GoK is not able to find a solution for the banned flour that has tested positive for GMOs by the GoK, it should prepare a strategy with the GoK of how they will inform schools well in advance so that they can prepare for the change in the commodity basket that the schools will receive.</p>	ASAP	MC, USDA, and GOK
<p>2. MC should employ the best practices in oversight/monitoring and sustained/remote engagement across the components by conducting joint monitoring visits for Literacy and learning as well as SFP and introducing WhatsApp groups to the literacy and learning engagement and learning model.</p>	January 2019	MC

3. MC should consider a limited benefits package that can be offered to service contractors that will provide some support for healthcare and consideration of sick days.	June 2020	MC
4. MC leadership should consider reinforcing the SBC and governance liaisons with regional/provincial level focal points to help expand the effectiveness and impact of the program and SBC activities.	February 2019	MC

Efficiency Lessons Learned

1. MC should always fully integrate the coordination and implementation of the McGovern-Dole activities, regardless of the partner or agency background, to ensure consistent implementation, quality control and complete information in real time.
2. Many of MC SFP oversight and monitoring best practices can be transferred to the literacy and learning component to improve the quality and consistency of implementation.

Cursory Impact and Sustainability Observations

At this stage in the project, it is too early to discuss impact or sustainability; however, here will present a few quotes from participants regarding the indications of impact and sustainability.

Impact:

- *“There is a big difference between last year and this year; the children can feel the difference because they call the bread clever because they know that it is fortified with iron. (A parent has joined the evaluation, and I asked about the clever bread); I hear from the children and the staff about the program. I am very thankful for the program. Sometimes the kids bring the bread home in their bag from school to share with their siblings. I sometimes compare the difference from his childhood, and the kids are doing much better now the program is helping his children.” (10/17/19, SA)*
- *“I have been involved in the program for two years as kitchen staff and was promoted two days ago to the school cook status. On the 15 of October, I had a birthday and learned that I was to be promoted from assistant rank to cook. I was so happy I was jumping up and down.” (10/21/19, SN)*
- *“My workload has increased substantially, I cook for 230 children, there is one cook and one assistant in the kitchen. This is not to scale: one school had 43 students and one cook vs 230 and just one assistant to help the cook.” (10/16/19, SN)*
- *“We only had tea and bun before the MC program. I feel that the SFP was needed for the school; the children are now eating well and learn. I came when the program launched, and it has helped the kids to learn more successfully.” (10/18/19, SA)*

Already the project demonstrates some anecdotal positive impact on learning and child health as well the increase in school nutrition staff workload as highlighted by these excerpts from ET interviews above.

Sustainability:

- *“I would like MC to continue to support the school because if the program stops, we will not have enough food to supplement the portions.” (10/16/19, SN)*
- *“The parents support the program as well; they provide 70 som per mouth with cleaning supplies and also contribute fruit and vegetables.” (10/14/19, SN)*
- *“The support that we have for the orchard is very helpful and the water treatment center, these things help the older kids as well as the younger kids. They all drink the filtered water and take fruit from the orchard. We can make more drinks and juices and have more fruit for the children.” (10/16/19, SN)*

There is anecdotal data that suggests that like in McGovern-Dole 2012, parents remain the principal sustainability mechanism for the SFP. However, some schools have stated that they will be able to manage even after MC pulls out on the 7 som and tender provided by the GoK. MC must continue to work with WFP and the GoK on the sustainability model guidance and recommendations as part of their exit strategy and handover plan.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned

Conclusions

Relevance Conclusion

The McGovern-Dole 2017 SFP component remains highly relevant and appreciated by respondents. However, the literacy component is viewed as necessary but not with the same level of appreciation as the SFP program. Challenges with duplication with TTR at the outset led to redesign that shifted from literacy to literacy and learning promotion. Also, coordination with the TTR project disrupted the synchronization of the McGovern-Dole 2017 implementation as it relates to rollout of the two components of the program.

Rating

Satisfactory

Observations

- Similar to the McGovern-Dole 2012 program design, the SFP component of McGovern-Dole 2017 remains highly relevant and in line with the GoK policies and strategic aims.
- The literacy and learning promotion component had to be redesigned to address potential duplication with the USAID Time to Read project, which worked in the same schools as McGovern-Dole 2017, and the redesign shifted away from literacy to promotion of literacy and learning. The project does not teach literacy techniques to teachers but focuses on positive discipline techniques.
- Combined with the fact that McGovern-Dole 2017 does not teach improved literacy techniques to teachers and the fact that TTR is working in the same schools on literacy, it will be hard for the design to have any attribution for the learning outcomes unless there is a comparative approach used at the evaluation stage to compare McGovern-Dole 2017 schools with TTR schools that do not participate in McGovern-Dole 2017 or McGovern-Dole 2012.

Effectiveness Conclusion

The monitoring and evaluation data confirm that McGovern-Dole 2017 is by in large is achieving many of its milestones and is on target to achieve most pre-established aims. However, there were issues relative to the literacy and learning component and the infrastructure work that require some attention and reflection from MC leadership.

Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

Observations

- Most of the indicators are at 45% or above. In fact, several have surpassed the targeted levels.
- No winterization or WASH infrastructure projects have been conducted to date.
- The SFP component seems to be outperforming the literacy and learning component. In fact, the literacy and learning component alone is solidly in the moderately satisfactory, while the Winterization and WASH infrastructure is the only factor that brought the SFP component into the moderately satisfactory category.

Efficiency Conclusion

McGovern-Dole 2017 is performing well across all the dimensions of efficiency. The evaluation data shows solid financial and personnel management performance; in addition, the MC leadership has been extremely adaptive and innovative in the face of high-level issues with sub-recipients' withdrawal, component, re-design commodities, and the closure of McGovern-Dole 2012.

Rating

Satisfactory

Observations

- This is an outstanding commodity problem that could leave many schools without one of the preferred commodity basket items, flour.
- The program is performing well in terms of efficiency in terms of financial and personnel management.
- The service contract approach provides strong advantages in terms of reduced cost and bringing capacity to the local level; however, contractors lose the right to benefits and job security.
- The kitchen rehab contribution was not a problem for the most; however, MC is shifting from the grant approach to a needs-based approach for future WASH projects.
- MC will be integrating oversight and management of the two components, which it was not doing before STCs withdrawal from Central Asia.

Recommendations

Relevance Recommendations	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
7. MC should also be clear with nomenclature and avoid calling the promotion activities a literacy component when TTR is clearly a literacy-focused project working in the same schools.	January 2020	MC and literacy team
8. MC should organize a meeting with the GOK, school reps, to take stock of the literacy and learning promotion activities and determine the appropriate way forward to maximize the outcomes associated with this element of McGovern-Dole 2017. Acceleration of activities may not be enough to yield meaningful results.	ASAP	GoK, School Reps, MC
9. Gender training is a critical step in ensuring that staff considers gender and diversity in their daily work and planning. It will be important for each of the staff to reflect and document how they individually will integrate what they have learned from the training into their work at the individual or component level.	ASAP	MC
10. It will also be necessary for McGovern-Dole 2017 program and support staff to hold a workshop to determine how they will integrate findings from the gender assessment into the program during the final years of the project.	Once gender assessment complete	MC

11. MC should consider the recommendations from the program participants and assess what they can include in the next two years of program implementation, and the rest that is deemed relevant but unfeasible should be included in a report that MC will share with GoK regarding the status of their work, close preparations and key recommendations for the GoK as the continue the SFP leadership without donor support.	September 2020	MC
12. USAID and USDA should ensure that duplication is avoided and addressed between USG-funded projects at the proposal stage through a systematic verification and validation mechanism.	ASAP	USAID and USDA
Effectiveness Recommendations	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
10. SBC has no literacy component; MC should look at integrating literacy into the SBC planning and activities to the degree possible. (10/7/19, MC staff)	April 2020	MC,
11. (1)The impact study should be designed based on the results of the ongoing household study and should include clear questions regarding the SBC activities that occurred in the communities, their impact in addition to the questions regarding knowledge and behaviors at the household level. (2) Also, Literacy should be included in the impact study to look at community-level knowledge and behaviors linked to learning and literacy promotion at the community level.	May 2020	MC
12. MC will have to be very aggressive in the final two years of the project in order to ensure that all Infrastructure projects are completed in a timely and effective manner. It will be important to develop a very clear, well-coordinated strategy with the infrastructure team with external oversight from an external oversight from an infrastructure expert.	May 2020	MC
13. The evaluation data suggest extensive analysis/assessment is required of whether schools have received a comprehensive literacy and learning promotion package. In addition, as MC is merging the monitoring data from the literacy and learning promotion component into their databases, some work should be done to validate the quality and accuracy of that data.	April 2020	MC
14. MC senior leadership needs to apply some of the lessons learned from the SFP to the literacy and learning component regarding follow-up coaching and monitoring. Improved coordination and integrated management of the two components will also be important moving forward.	January 2020	MC
15. The findings suggest that McGovern-Dole 2017 needs to provide some support to schools for developing strategies for schools and the GoK to successfully manage infrastructure projects including the budget, oversight and quality control	September 2020	MC

16. MC should consider providing guidance and recommendations for schools and GoK/MoES (1) regarding regulations for the grading and staffing requirements for school nutrition programs and (2) administrative timeline and process for schools to submit paperwork for nutrition staff to be graded and salaried appropriately on time. Both these actions should help to address the challenges raised relates related to workload and salary.	September 2020	MC
17. MoES Ministry level infrastructure is lacking, all school nutrition and teacher training relies on one person; MC, WFP, and USDA to advocate and support the construction of a MoES team that can fully oversee responsibilities for SFP as they prepare for the closeout and handover	ASAP	MC, WFP, USDA and GoK
18. MC, WFP, GoK, and USDA need to develop an exit and hand over strategy for all SFP interventions as they prepare to closeout. The sustainability model mentioned in McGovern-Dole 2017 guidance, as well as recommendations for MoES staffing and all other issues, should be addressed in the exit strategy.	ASAP	MC, WFP, USDA and GoK

Efficiency Recommendation	Timeline and Prioritization	Duty Bearer
5. If MC and the GoK is not able to find a solution for the banning flour that has tested positive for GMOs by the GoK, it should prepare a strategy with the GoK of how they will inform schools well in advance so that they can prepare for the change in the commodity basket that the schools will receive.	ASAP	MC, USDA, and GOK
6. MC should employ the best practices in oversight/monitoring and sustained/remote engagement across the components by conducting joint monitoring visits for Literacy and learning as well as SFP and introducing WhatsApp groups to the literacy and learning engagement and learning model.	January 2019	MC
7. MC should consider a limited benefits package that can be offered to contractors that will provide some support for healthcare and consideration of sick days.	June 2020	MC
8. MC leadership should consider reinforcing the SBC and governance liaisons with regional/provincial level focal points to help expand the effectiveness and impact of the program and SBC activities.	February 2019	MC

Lessons Learned

Relevance Lessons Learned

1. When the problem with duplication between McGovern-Dole 2017 and TTR was identified, MC/STC should have worked with the GoK and other beneficiaries to find to identify and validate a revised approach and activities to ensure GoK and beneficiary buy-in. It is critical to work program stakeholders like GoK and USAID early on to determine the program redesign to encourage the best outcomes. For example, MC, USDA should have sought GoK regarding whether the literacy component should have been abandoned or shifted to math, arts, etc. Meaningful discussion with the beneficiaries would have led to a less convoluted result than a literacy and learning promotion component that is hard to distinguish from the TTR program results, and that creates confusion at the beneficiary level.

2. It is excellent that MC has conducted gender training, and in the process of conducting the assessment, it will be pivotal that the training and assessments are used to inform program structure and implementation.

Effectiveness Lessons Learned

1. There is a disparity between the effectiveness of the SFP and literacy and learning components that are linked to the attempts to address concerns regarding duplication with TTR at the outset of the project and the fact the SFP and Literacy and learning components are managed like to separate projects.
2. The MC monitoring approach and the WhatsApp group are management and oversight tools that should be replicated across both components.
3. No Winterization or WASH infrastructure projects have been conducted thus far. Therefore, a substantial amount remains to be done in the remaining two years of the project. There were issues with the kitchen rehabilitation efforts that should be considered in developing a strategy for future infrastructure projects.

Efficiency Lessons Learned

1. MC should always fully integrate the coordination and implementation of the McGovern-Dole activities, regardless of the partner or agency background, to ensure consistent implementation, quality control and complete information in real-time.
2. Many of MC SFP oversight and monitoring best practices can be transferred to the literacy and learning component to improve the quality and consistency of implementation.

Annex 1: Indicator Results

Results from October 2017 up to and including September 2019

Indicator	LoP Target	Result to date	Status
Number of educational facilities (i.e. school buildings, classrooms, and latrines) rehabilitated/constructed as a result of USDA assistance (kitchens)	329	251	76.3%
Number of schools using an improved water source	413	411	99.5%
Number of schools using an improved water source (water filtration systems)	130	135	103.8%
Number of educational facilities (i.e. school buildings, classrooms, and latrines) rehabilitated/constructed as a result of USDA assistance (schools)	50	0	0.0%
Number of educational policies, regulations, or administrative procedures in each of the following stages of development as a result of USDA assistance (stage 1)	3	1	33.3%
Number of educational policies, regulations, or administrative procedures in each of the following stages of development as a result of USDA assistance (stage 2)	2	1	50.0%
Number of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) or similar “school” governance structures supported as a result of USDA assistance	413	221	53.5%
Number of public-private partnerships formed as a result of USDA assistance (education)	453	327	72.2%
Value of new public and private sector investments leveraged as a result of USDA assistance	479,000	954330	199.2%
Value of new public and private sector investments leveraged as a result of USDA assistance (host government)	323,200	817336	252.9%
Value of new public and private sector investments leveraged as a result of USDA assistance (private sector)	155,800	131082	84.1%
Value of new public and private sector investments leveraged as a result of USDA assistance (other public sector)	0	5912	n/a

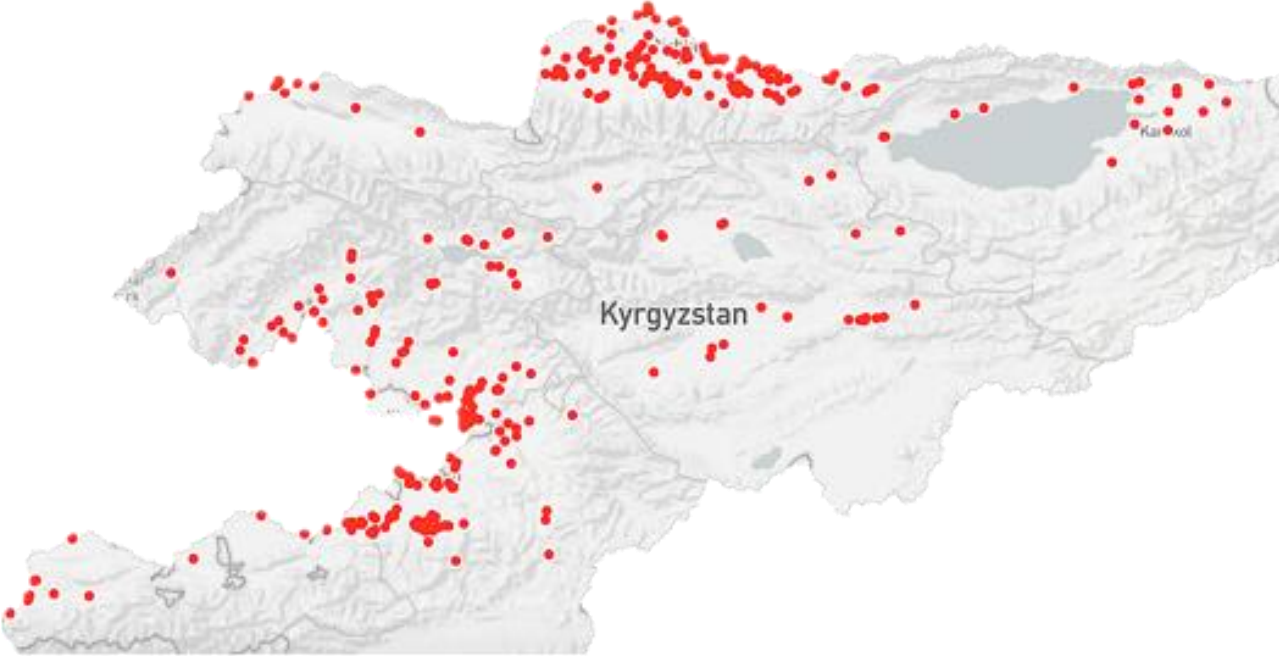
Percent of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text	49	n/a	n/a
Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials provided as a result of USDA assistance	34,699	17997	51.9%
Number of daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) provided to school-age children as a result of USDA assistance	37,300,000	9260121	24.8%
Number of individuals benefiting directly from USDA-funded interventions	93906	102431	109.1%
Number of individuals benefiting directly from USDA-funded interventions (new)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of individuals benefiting directly from USDA-funded interventions (continuing)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of Individuals benefitting directly from USDA-funded interventions (water filters)	26,520	31372	118.3%
Number of individuals benefiting indirectly from USDA-funded interventions	133,000	143037	107.5%
Number of school-age children receiving daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) as a result of USDA assistance	88,730	95358	107.5%
Number of school-age children receiving daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) as a result of USDA assistance (new)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of school-age children receiving daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) as a result of USDA assistance (continuing)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of social assistance beneficiaries participating in productive safety nets as a result of USDA assistance	88,730	95358	107.5%
Number of students enrolled in schools receiving USDA assistance	88,730	95358	107.5%
Number of students regularly (80%) attending USDA supported classrooms/schools	79857	53590	67.1%
Number of individuals trained in safe food preparation and storage as a result of USDA assistance	329	408	124.0%

Number of individuals trained in safe food preparation and storage as a result of USDA assistance (male)	n/a	11	n/a
Number of individuals trained in safe food preparation and storage as a result of USDA assistance (female)	n/a	397	n/a
Number of individuals trained in safe food preparation and storage as a result of USDA assistance (safe drinking water technology)	130	459	353.1%
Number of individuals who demonstrate use of new safe food preparation and storage practices as a result of USDA assistance	230	109	47.4%
Number of individuals trained in child health and nutrition as a result of USDA assistance	121	290	239.7%
Number of individuals who demonstrate use of new child health and nutrition practices as a result of USDA assistance	84	n/a	n/a
Number of school administrators and officials trained or certified as a result of USDA assistance	1,021	435	42.6%
Number of school administrators and officials trained or certified as a result of USDA assistance (safe drinking water technology)	260	146	56.2%
Number of school administrators and officials in target schools who demonstrate use of new techniques or tools as a result of USDA assistance	714	215	30.1%
Number of teachers/educators/teaching assistants trained or certified as a result of USDA assistance	1,290	2045	158.5%
Number of teachers/educators/teaching assistants in target schools who demonstrate use of new and quality teaching techniques or tools as a result of USDA assistance	645	95	14.7%
Number of community-based change agents trained	2,105	872	41.4%
Number of informational ads distributed through local media (TV, social media, etc.)	36	55	152.8%
Number of child-friendly reading corners supplied with materials as result of USDA assistance	2,580	1175	45.5%

Number of librarians trained or certified as a result of USDA assistance	310	207	66.8%
Number of cluster-level follow-up workshops conducted	87	23	26.4%
Number of reading festivals held by Parent-Teacher Associations or similar school governance structures	42	14	33.3%
Number of parents/caregivers provided with support as a result of USDA assistance	6,450	3000	46.5%
Number of home-made books competitions conducted in target schools	430	118	27.4%
Number of filtration systems installed	130	135	103.8%
Percentage of the installed filtration systems adequately operated and maintained by the school they serve	70	n/a	n/a

Annex 2: Program Map

The map below shows the location of the 350-program school added in 2018-2019 program years in all seven provinces of the Kyrgyz Republic



Annex 3: Terms of Reference

McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition 2017-2021

Midterm Evaluation

Mercy Corps is seeking a team lead to plan for and conduct a midterm evaluation (MTE) for the **McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition 2017-2021** program funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). This Midterm Evaluation is commissioned by Mercy Corps Kyrgyzstan.

Date: Aug 6, 2019

1) Program to be Evaluated

McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program

Funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Implemented between October 2017 and May 2021

This Evaluation will cover the implementation period of October 2017 – August 2019

2) Purpose of the Evaluation

This Midterm Evaluation will serve to assess the following:

- Progress towards indicator targets established at baseline;
- Relevance and effectiveness of program interventions to date;
- Quality and efficiency Implementation; and
- Incorporation of lessons learned and recommendations from previous McGovern-Dole evaluations.

The findings will be used to develop mid-course corrections and inform all key stakeholders on Program's progress. For this reason, the main focus of the MTE will be effectiveness and generating actionable lessons learned.

3) Background

Mercy Corps has been working in Kyrgyzstan since 1994. For over fifteen years, Mercy Corps has been providing nutritional and technical support to education institutions in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, including public schools, kindergartens, and vocational schools. Since 2017, Mercy Corps has served as the implementing partner of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition program (McGovern-Dole). This program will run until 2021 and supports the National School Feeding Program developed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), which is a key stakeholder for this program.

In 2017-2019, Mercy Corps supported 221 public schools across the country by providing over 2,000 metric tons of supplementary commodities (enriched flour, rice, split peas, and vegetable oil) to prepare daily hot meals for over 50,000 primary grade children. In the new 2019 school year, MC plans to enroll another 200 schools with almost 40,000 primary grade students into the program.

Another important program activity is rehabilitation of school kitchens and purchasing new kitchen equipment to enable them to serve hot meals to primary grade students on a regular basis. Mercy Corps also provide a number of infrastructure grants based on school needs, including construction or repair of sanitation and handwashing facilities, installation of heating systems and improved windows, etc. All infrastructure grants and kitchen rehabilitation are supported by local community contributions.

Aside from providing commodities and infrastructure support for a successful school feeding program, Mercy Corps also builds and improves capacity of key stakeholders through a series of workshops and trainings on program management for members of school administrations, local government, and other beneficiaries. Moreover, Mercy Corps works with parents of primary school children to improve nutrition and hygiene behaviors at home through a network of trained community activists who distributed up-to-date information on key nutrition and hygiene topics.

Last but not least, all cooks working in the target schools attended professional courses to upgrade their skills with a focus on child nutrition and learn safe food preparation and storage methods.

4) Evaluation Design

i. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology will be a non-experimental study that will employ several collection tools to explore program results related to key program indicators, and to answer evaluation questions listed above.

Bidding evaluation entity is required to design and propose evaluation methodology including, but not limited to the following data collection methods:

- Quantitative analysis of existing monitoring data collected throughout the program against set indicator targets;
- Semi-structured interviews with key program staff, stakeholders from MoES and other relevant government bodies at district and community level;
- Structured interviews and observations carried out in a sample of program schools⁴²;
- Document review;
- Qualitative methods such as contribution analysis, to understand the effectiveness of program interventions and how they led to the observed changes.

The details of the evaluation approach, including methods and design, will be further discussed and negotiated with the selected evaluation entity.

ii. Existing Program Information Sources

Mercy Corps will provide the selected evaluation entity with the following documents and data to support carrying out agreed upon evaluation activities:

- McGovern-Dole 2017 proposal narrative and annexes;
- McGovern-Dole 2017 annual workplans;
- McGovern-Dole 2017 M&E Plan;
- McGovern-Dole 2017 baseline data and report;
- Biannual donor reports;
- Performance Management Plan containing information on program indicators and data collection methodology and tools;
- List of beneficiary educational institutions and key stakeholders;
- Program databases with information on participating schools, conducted trainings, grants and commodities provided;

⁴²Appropriate sample size and sampling approach should be suggested by the consultant upon document review; it should be taken into consideration that the program is implemented in all 7 oblasts in the country.

- Indicator-specific databases, namely: school enrollment, attendance, number of meals provided, usage of provided food commodities;
- Monthly reports from the field monitoring team with qualitative information on program implementation quality;
- Grant agreements for kitchen rehabilitation and infrastructure projects;
- Program success stories;
- Training materials on WASH, good nutrition, and other topics covered during the program.

5) Team Composition, Roles & Responsibilities

This evaluation will be led by an independent consultant working in cooperation with the MC MEL Manager, key program staff (including Country and Programs Directors), government officials, and beneficiary institutions and individuals.

To successfully carry out this assignment, the consultant is expected to meet the following criteria:

- Lead Evaluator/Team Leader with at least 10-15 years of evaluation experience, particularly of long-term development programs and complex and dynamic contexts;
- Experience with evaluating food assistance and/or school feeding programs will be a significant advantage;
- Expertise in designing mixed-methods evaluations and data collection tools, including providing training, troubleshooting during data collection, and conducting interviews and/or FGDs.

In addition to the technical skills and expertise outlined above, it would be advantageous to have the following:

- Technical expertise in nutrition, child nutrition, or food security;
- Knowledge of and field experience in the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Previous experience with carrying out evaluation assignments for USDA;
- Previous experience with Mercy Corps;
- Experience with programs based in educational institutions, particularly in the post-Soviet space.

For the data collection, MC Kyrgyzstan has a dedicated team of external local enumerators and interviewers that will carry out all required data collection assigned by the Team Leader.

i. Chart of Responsibilities

Level of Effort ⁴³ (workdays)	Activity	Stakeholder
1 day	Finalize MTE scope of work and timeframe	Evaluation team, MC MEL Manager and key staff
2 days	Conduct document review	Evaluation team
5 days	Develop evaluation methodology and necessary data collection tools	Evaluation team

⁴³ Suggested Level of Effort should be used by the bidding evaluation entity to estimate budget based on the daily rates for the suggested team members and other associated expenses.

3 days	Develop inception report outlining methodology, data collection plan and tools	Evaluation team
1 day	Plan logistics: domestic travel, translators, translation of evaluation tools, drivers, vehicles, etc.	MC KG staff in coordination with HQ Desk and Evaluation team
½ day	In-country briefing with the key program staff	Team Leader, MC MEL Manager and key staff
4 days	Train data collection team; test and finalize data collection instruments	Team Leader, Evaluation team
18 days	Implement data collection (KIIs, FGDs, site visits and observations); simultaneous data entry	Evaluation team
½ day	Post-fieldwork briefing with the key program staff	Team Leader, MC MEL Manager and key staff
5 days	Analyze data, including data provided by MC	Team Leader, Evaluation team
5 days	Prepare draft evaluation report	Team Leader, Evaluation team
3 days	Second draft	Team Leader, Evaluation team
2 days	Report finalization and presentation	Team Leader

6) Description of Deliverables

i. Preliminary Schedule

The activities listed in the table above with the suggested level of effort should be carried out within the following preliminary timeline:

Document review, methodology design, tools development, inception report drafting and review	September 2019
Inception report submission with the data collection plan and finalized tools; in-country training of the data collection team	Last week of September 2019
Field data collection in-country, including training on tools (3 weeks)	October 2019
Data analysis and report drafting	November 2019
Final MTE Report submission	December 16, 2019

Exact dates for key deliverables and the overall evaluation timeframe will be discussed with the selected evaluation entity and specified in the contract.

ii. Report Structure & Content

The report must be written in English and follow the structure outlined below:

- **Cover Page, List of Acronyms**
- **Table of Contents**
- **Executive Summary:** This section should be a clear and concise stand-alone document that gives readers the essential contents of the evaluation report, including a summary of major findings, lessons learned, and recommendations.
- **Methodology:** This section should be sufficiently detailed to help the reader judge the accuracy of the report and its findings.
- **Limitations:** This section should address constraints and limitations of the methodology, and the implications of these limitations for the findings, including whether and why any of the evaluation findings are inconclusive.
- **Results:** This section should provide a clear assessment of progress with respect to indicators / targets / objectives and evaluation questions.
- **Synthesis, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned:** This is space for the evaluation team to think about the data and results and make concrete recommendations for current or future program improvements, pull out organization lessons learned, and generally comment on data and results.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Disclose any conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest, including the interest of program staff in having a successful program.
- **Annexes:** These should include a complete file of data collection instruments in English and translations; list of stakeholder groups with number and type of interactions; TOR, data collection protocols used, etc.

The evaluation team is also required to submit cleaned datasets and original transcripts of all primary data collected for this evaluation and all photographs taken during field visits in electronic format.

7) Stakeholder Involvement and Plans for Dissemination

The key audiences for this FE will be USDA, MC program management and staff, local community and government partners such as the MoES and MoH, whose activities will be addressed in the evaluation, and other actors working to improve child nutrition and educational environment Kyrgyzstan.

MC Kyrgyzstan Senior Management Team will discuss the results and recommendations of this midterm evaluation and make a plan to address them to the extent possible during the remaining implementation period.

The midterm evaluation findings and recommendations, as well as the action plan, will be an important part of the final evaluation preliminary scheduled for the Spring 2021.

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About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within.

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