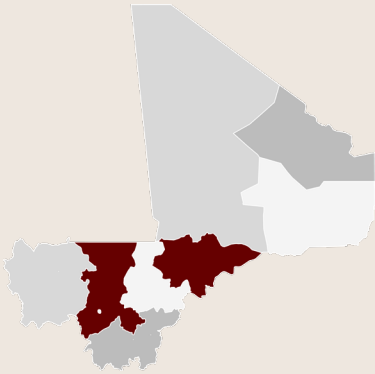




IMPAQ
INTERNATIONAL

MALI ENDLINE EVALUATION

MC GOVERN-DOLE INTERNATIONAL FOOD FOR
EDUCATION AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM



PROGRAM NAME

McGovern-Dole International Food
for Education and Child Nutrition
(McGovern-Dole) III

EVALUATION LOCATION

Mopti and Koulikoro regions, Mali

TIMELINE

2015-2020

FUNDER

United States Department of Agriculture
(USDA) McGovern-Dole International
Food for Education and Child Nutrition
(McGovern-Dole) program

IMPLEMENTER

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

PARTNERS

- Education Development Center (EDC)
- Ministry of National Education (MoNE)

INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR

IMPAQ International, LLC (IMPAQ)

A detailed explanation of the technical design, the findings, and recommendations are provided in the full report which is available upon request.



PROGRAM GOAL

McGovern-Dole III is a five-year program designed with two main strategic objectives - improved literacy of school-age children and increased use of health and dietary practices in two disadvantaged regions in Mali. McGovern-Dole III expands upon McGovern-Dole I (2007-2010) and McGovern-Dole II (2011-2015) which achieved positive results in enrollment and attendance rates. McGovern-Dole III was established to build on previous successes by improving the literacy, health, and nutrition of 77,104 school-aged children in 264 primary schools.



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

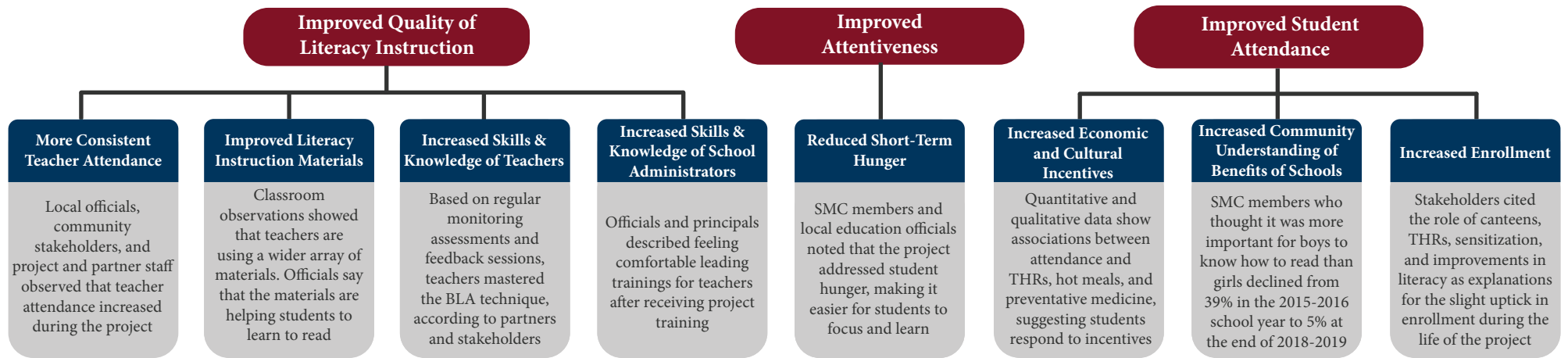
IMPAQ evaluated the McGovern-Dole III program using mixed methods at baseline (2016), midline (2018) and endline (2020). The purpose of the endline evaluation, was to assess whether the project achieved its expected results with consideration of the project results framework. Due to an inability to collect primary data due to the COVID-19 pandemic, IMPAQ used the following four strategies: 1) an in-depth document review; (2) remote qualitative data collection; (3) analysis of secondary quantitative data using the latest monitoring data available, and (4) rigorous triangulation of data to address the limitations of the other three approaches.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- **Literacy** - The evaluation found strong impacts from the balanced literacy approach (BLA) on foundational reading skills for Grade 1 students such as alphabet knowledge, decoding ability, and reading comprehension. These gains were aligned with expected project targets yet below the national standards. Students in Koulikoro drove most of these gains. Improvements in Grade 2 students' literacy achievement were limited, possibly explained by losses of instructional time due to persistent teachers strikes and/or political instability.
- **Quality of literacy instruction** - According to qualitative interviews, teachers' literacy instruction knowledge has improved including their attitudes towards students' learning and their use BLA resources. The findings also showed teacher attendance increased during the project, except during school disruptions due to teacher strikes, terrorist attacks, and COVID-19.
- **Student enrollment and attendance** - Analysis found strong correlations between the number of students enrolled in school and the amount of distributions from McGovern-Dole including hot meals, take home rations (THRs), deworming pills, and vitamin A pills. The findings also suggest the same strong positive correlations between students' attendance rate and McGovern Dole distributions
- **Health and dietary practices** - According to interview respondents, the safe food preparation and storage practices trainings for school management committee (SMC) members seemed to have had a positive effect on school canteens, which were serving good-quality food while respecting hygiene rules.

OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVE LITERACY OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN



External Factors and School Disruptions

External factors such as terrorist attacks, teacher strikes, and COVID-19 caused extensive disruptions to students' learning environments over the years. For example there were a string of teacher strikes in 2018-2019 that led to a loss of instructional time equivalent to approximately 64 school days. Another prevalent factor was political instability that mainly affected Mopti region.

OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASED USE OF HEALTH AND DIETARY PRACTICES

Improved knowledge of safe food preparation and storage practices

According to qualitative interviews, the safe food preparation and storage trainings for SMC members seem to have a positive effect on school canteens, which are preparing good quality food, and respecting hygiene rules.

Increased Access to Preventative Health Interventions

“ All communities in the area of Nara were able to purchase vitamin A and de-worming medication for their schools with the support of health structures. ”

-Project staff/implementing partner



Photo courtesy of Catholic Relief Services



“ I am confident in myself; I know how to manage a school, manage the issues with the SMC, manage a school with BLA, supervise a canteen and use tools for food storage management. ”

–Principal, Mopti

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Photo courtesy of Catholic Relief Services

Continue collaboration and engagement with communities and local governments



Respondents praised the level of engagement and collaboration between CRS and the entities involved in executing project activities. CRS trained local officials on monitoring school performance and taking greater initiative in supporting children’s education. SMC members collaborated with local governments to promote project activities. Stakeholders recommended encouraging communities to include continuing support for project activities in their planning.

Increase sensitization on savings and internal lending community (SILC) support for schools

Stakeholders provided positive feedback on the establishment and operation of SILCs. They saw the SILC groups as an example of a good practice to continue moving forward. SILC groups empowered women to contribute to children’s needs and carry out projects for the community. Most SILC groups provided funds for members’ income-generating activities. However, there is room for more sensitization to motivate SILC groups to increase contributions to schools.



Engage with communities to mobilize resources for school canteens



Respondents noted that community support in the form of funds and food for canteens was critical for sustainability. Although communities were able to mobilize for short periods in the face of shortages or delays, there were challenges with providing adequate quantities of food to canteens. Strengthening communities’ agricultural capacities, including assistance with water points and irrigation to promote school gardens, would allow them to produce and contribute more. Communities should continue selling crops harvested during the summer to generate extra income for schools.

Flexible program design and tailored activities to meet regional differences.

Although, certain external factors that might have resulted in limited improvements are more prevalent in Mopti, such as political instability, future program design should be flexible and tailored to deliver activities adapted to the regional context. For example, a tutoring activity that was added in Mopti in 2018 to address the same issue could be scaled up. Additionally, future programs could set separate targets tailored to each region allowing for a targeted approach to programming and resource allocation.

