African Union

African Union Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding (2021–2022)

AUDA-NEPAD
AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

WFP
World Food Programme

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

CERFAM
CENTRE D'EXCELLENCE REGIONAL CONTRE LA FAIM ET LA MALNUTRITION

Programme Alimentaire Mondial

unicef
for every child

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

AfECN
Africa Early Childhood Network

Published in 2022 by the
African Union Commission
P.O. Box 3243, Roosevelt Street W21K19
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Recommended citation:
African Union. 2022. *African Union Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding (2021–2022)*. African Union, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

African Union

African Union Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding (2021–2022)

AUDA-NEPAD
AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

WFP
World Food Programme

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

CERFAM
CENTRE D'EXCELLENCE REGIONAL CONTRE LA FAIM ET LA MALNUTRITION

Programme Alimentaire Mondial

unicef
for every child

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

AfECN
Africa Early Childhood Network

Contents

Boxes, Case Studies and Figures

CASE STUDIES

FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2021–2022 continental report on the progress of home-grown school feeding in Africa was prepared with the engagement, assistance, coordination and expertise of several individuals and agencies.

The report was prepared by a technical working group composed of the African Union Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster, co-led by the UN World Food Programme and African Union ESTI. The African Union owes its deepest gratitude to those involved in the preparation of this important biennial report.

The African Union is thankful to the cluster members including the AUC ESTI, the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the WFP Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition (WFP-CERFAM), and the Africa Early Childhood Network (AFECN) for assigning competent technical personnel to the inter-agency technical working group.

The editorial group has done great job drafting the report, conducting several team meetings, communicating with Member States, and facilitating validation and clearance processes from their respective agencies.

The report was led by Edward Lloyd-Evans (Head of Research and Policy, School-Based Programmes Division, WFP), and the editorial team included the following members:

- Abraham Asha (PhD) (External Partnership Specialist, AUC ESTI/WFP): Foreword, acknowledgement and Sub-Chapter 3
- Azinwi Ngum Nkwah (WFP School-Based Programmes): Introduction, Sub-Chapter 3 on the impact of home-grown school feeding programmes on agriculture and local food systems, references, glossary and acronyms, data visualization for Chapter 1, review and coordinated the consolidation of the report
- Zewdie Adane (Economist, WFP African Union Global Office): Lead for Chapter 4, Key Messages, Conclusion, Sub-Chapter 3, and review of the report
- Sophie Jenter (WFP School-Based Programmes): Chapter 2 with support from Sandra Hittmeyer
- Miriam Karinja (WFP School-Based Programmes): Data analysis of Chapter 1 and cartography of map
- Christiani Buani, (Head of Operations, WFP-CERFAM): Sub-Chapter 4
- Kefilwe Rhoba Moalosi (Nutrition Project Manager, AUDA-NEPAD): Sub-Chapter 3
- Edwin Kimani (PhD) (Consultant, FAO): Lead for Chapter 3
- Kankou Kaba (Nutrition Officer, FAO Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, Liaison Office to the African Union and ECA): Executive Summary and Sub-Chapter 3

- Alleluia Delphine Dusabimana (Nutrition Programme Officer, AFECN): Sub-Chapter 3

The African Union also appreciates the technical experts who provided cases studies, inputs and reviews to the various chapters of the report. These include Sandra Camargo (WFP School-Based Programmes), Nail Lazrak (WFP, Corporate Performance and Planning), Neill Holland (WFP, School-Based Programmes), Sapna Gorajia (Partnership Officer, CERFAM), Odia Cisse (Partnership Officer, CERFAM), Pierre Tahe (charge de programme, CERFAM), Patrik Opono (Supply Chain Officer, CERFAM), Severine Giraud (Deputy Country Director, WFP-Cote d'Ivoire), Tamsir Cham (programme officer, WFP-Gambia). The report was edited by Catherine Simes.

The African Union also owes a debt of gratitude to all agencies for their willingness and patience in providing the information and data needed for this report.

The African Union is grateful to Prof. Donald Bundy, Professor of Epidemiology and Development and Director of the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition of the School Meals Coalition at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Dr Robert Akparibo, Associate Professor of Public Health at the School of Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield and Co-Chair of the Global School Health, and Nutrition Special Interest Group of the Nutrition Society, for peer-reviewing this report.

Last but not least, the leadership team who have encouraged and assisted the preparation of the report throughout the development of this important tool deserve great acknowledgement. In this regard, the African Union Commission would like to extend its deepest gratitude to:

- H.E. Prof. Mohamed Belhocine, Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union Commission, African Union
- Mr Hambani Masheleni, Ag Director for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union Commission, African Union
- Dr Hameed Nuru, Director of WFP African Union Global Office, and WFP Representative to African Union and ECA
- Ms Lydie Kouame, Deputy Director of WFP African Union Global Office
- Dr Christopher Toe, Senior Adviser, Strategic Partnerships, WFP
- Ms Carmen Burbano, Director of School-Based Programmes, WFP
- Ms Bibi Giyose, Special Adviser to the Chief Executive Officer, AUDA-NEPAD
- David Phiri, Director for the FAO Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, (Liaison Office to the African Union and Economic Commission for Africa)
- Dr Patrick Teixeira, Director of WFP Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition (WFP-CERFAM)
- Dr Lynette Okengo, Director for the AFECN

FOREWORD

This report is part of the implementation of the African Union Heads of State and Government decision Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI) article 17, which recommended that the African Union Commission report regularly on implementation of the decision to the Assembly through the Executive Council. Furthermore, this report has even more importance as it was prepared in the year the African Union endorsed "nutrition" as the 2022 Theme of the Year, with the motto of: "**Strengthening nutritional resilience and food security on the African continent: strengthening agri-food, health and social protection systems for the acceleration of the development of human capital, social and economic development**".

I wish to express our deepest appreciation to WFP for taking the lead in this respect both technically and financially. I am also grateful to other Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster Members and key actors, such as AUDA-NEPAD, FAO, CERFAM, Africa Early Childhood Network and others for their continued collaboration and technical support for the successful completion of this report. Our gratitude goes also, obviously, to all Member States for their continued collaboration and support. This report is the third of its kind after the African Union Assembly decision 589 XXVI on home-grown school feeding in Africa in 2016.

Not only the report indicates home-grown school feeding contribution to inclusive quality education in Africa, but it also describes the outcomes of other key sectors of nutrition, health, agriculture and local development. It intends to contribute to the facilitation of high-level policy discussions between national authorities, regional and continental bodies on possible strategic and value chained interventions to boost multisectoral outcomes. Moreover, the report provides evidence-based analysis putting from the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25) in line with the African Union Agenda 2063, specifically linking to poverty (SDG1), hunger (SDG2), health (SDG3), education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), economic growth (SDG8), reduced inequalities (SDG10) and strengthened partnerships (SDG17); and contribute directly or indirectly to the accomplishment of Agenda 2063 aspiration 1, 3 and 7.

Based on the results of the study, one can draw some clear orientations, like allocating more budget to school feeding in order for Member States to strengthen national ownership and control, strengthening multisectoral approaches, and the need to revitalize the role of Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster.

The African Union Commission and the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster Members, mainly WFP as co-chair of the Continental Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster, hope that all African

governments can act now to improve their education, nutrition, health and agricultural systems by further owing their home-grown school feeding operations despite the additional fiscal pressure created by the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks, including the Ukraine–Russia conflict.

In my capacity as the African Union Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, I am pleased to present the 2021–2022 biennial report on the operationalization of home-grown school feeding in Member States.

H.E. Prof. Mohammed Belhocine,
African Union Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

WFP/Martin Karimi

KEY MESSAGES

Chapter 1: School feeding programmes in Africa: scale, coverage and trends

- While the coverage and scale of school feeding programmes in Africa have increased and are now mostly funded by domestic sources, this progress has been challenged by a complex combination of emerging crises and pressures that have threatened millions of children's nutrition and capacity to learn.
- Despite the closure of schools continent-wide in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting almost complete loss of school meals everywhere, surveys now show that 65.9 million children are again receiving daily school meals in Africa, a marginal increase on the 65.4 million fed in 2020. This reflects the successful reopening and rebuilding of school systems across the continent after the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of coverage, 31 percent of school-aged children received school meals in 2022, a modest decrease from 33 percent in 2020 which, again, reflects the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the delivery of school meal programmes.
- There are significant differences in coverage across socioeconomic categories and geographic locations, with school meal coverage remaining lowest in countries with the greatest need. School meal programmes support 55 percent of students in upper middle-income nations, but just 15 percent of children in low-income countries.
- Overall, 84 percent of school meal programmes are funded by domestic budgets, although various disparities exist across income levels and geography. In upper middle-income countries, school feeding programmes are exclusively funded by domestic budgets. In lower middle-income countries, 90 percent of school meals are funded by domestic budgets.
- Despite other post-pandemic pressures and severe economic constraints, low-income nations increased their domestic support for school meals from around 34 percent in 2020 to 45 percent in 2022, while international donor support declined from 65 percent in 2020 to 55 percent in 2022.
- The average cost of school feeding remained affordable for governments, with an average cost of US$ 35 per child per year for 36 African countries in 2022. There is a significant variation between upper middle-income countries (a median cost per child of US$ 54) compared to that of both low and lower middle-income countries (a median cost per child of US$ 33 and US$ 34 across low and lower middle-income countries, respectively).

- In 2022, 89 percent of African countries had adopted a school meals policy, compared to 68 percent in 2020. The share of low-income countries that have an established policy framework for school meals has increased from 78 percent in 2020 to 83 percent in 2022; while in lower middle-income countries the increase is from 69 percent to 77 percent. Low-income and lower middle-income countries have outpaced upper middle-income countries in the adoption of school meal policy frameworks.
- In 2022, approximately 95 percent of African countries provided school meals in conjunction with at least one complementary school-based health and nutrition intervention. Only 10 percent provide a fully integrated package of 7 to 10 complementary interventions in conjunction with school meals (19 percent provide four or more complementary interventions as of 2022).

Chapter 2: School Meals Coalition: commitments and opportunities in the African continent

- The African Union and Member States have not only played a significant role in the establishment of the global School Meals Coalition but also showed strong commitment to implement comprehensive school feeding programmes and to establish and strengthen multisectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships for education at various levels.

- Following the devastating COVID-19 pandemic crisis and its consequences on education and school meals, which left 370 million schoolchildren without access to school meals worldwide, the African Union assisted in mobilizing a group of 33 African countries of the group of 76 countries, and 83 partners (as of the time of publishing), to form the School Meals Coalition during the United Nations Food Systems Conference in 2021. The African Union, one of the Coalition's key initiators, and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) are advancing the Coalition's main goal, which is to ensure that every child receives a healthy, nutritious daily meal in school, by 2030. The African Union played a critical role not only in campaigning for the inclusion of home-grown school meals in the global development agenda, but also in convincing African Union Member States to join the Coalition through multiple formal Declarations and Communiques.
- During a high-level side event at the Global Transforming Education Summit at the 77th United Nations General Assembly in September 2022, the African Union released a Declaration on Transforming Education in Africa, which further aligned the African Union's efforts with the goals of the Coalition by committing to strengthen implementation of comprehensive school feeding programmes and to establish and

strengthen multisectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships for education at country, regional and continental levels.

- The formation of the Coalition helped to shape perspectives and increased the level of political will around school meals. Many, African countries have been at the forefront for change; for example, Benin, Rwanda, Senegal but to name a few. Among other actions, these countries have substantially increased their allocated school feeding budgets to reach more children, thereby making education more widely accessible.
- The Coalition's first Ministerial Meeting and first year celebration of its establishment held in Helsinki (Finland) in October 2022 concluded with a Call to Action, endorsed by all partners; and a Leaders Declaration, endorsed by the 12 members of the Coalition's Task Force – which include the African Union, Kenya, Rwanda and Senegal.
- The next Coalition Ministerial Meeting in Paris, France in October 2023 offers African countries the opportunity to assess and celebrate national progress and announce national commitments that will help scale up programmes in Africa – ensuring that by 2030 every child receives a healthy and nutritious meal in school.

Chapter 3: Leveraging school feeding programmes to accelerate nutrition improvement, human capital, food systems, social and economic development in Africa

- School feeding, particularly home-grown school feeding, is a key instrument in reducing the triple burden of malnutrition; stimulating local economies and smallholder agricultural value chains; and promoting human capital development.

- African Union Member States are not on course to reach the nutrition targets set in the Malabo Declaration of ending hunger by 2025. Achieving this desired outcome in education and human capital development requires more than a mere investment in learning among school-age children. School feeding promotes investment in learners and helps to counter those factors that severely limit children's opportunity to participate in school and which diminish their ability to progress and achieve.

- Home-grown school feeding leads to increased and diversified food production, thereby enhancing food security and nutrition of schoolchildren and their communities. The increased adoption of home-grown school feeding programmes, and other school-based interventions leads to increased demand for school food inputs and creates an opportunity to link this demand to local smallholder farmers, including women and young farmers.

- School meals have well-documented positive outcomes on the education, health and nutrition of children from low-income households. Integrating smallholder farmers into school feeding through home-grown school feeding programmes protects famers' livelihoods and ensures they remain competitive. By linking smallholder farmers to home-grown school feeding markets, these programmes have contributed to increasing farm productivity and the incomes of smallholder farmers, creating a benefit for both farmers and children.

- Where school feeding programmes have included smallholders' products in their purchases, farmers have an opportunity to break intergenerational cycles of hunger and poverty in their families as school feeding creates additional demand for food commodities. For example, 9.2 million schoolchildren in Nigeria consume 6 million locally sourced eggs and 80 tons of fish every week via home-grown school feeding. Home-grown school feeding is, therefore, a stable and predictable market for local farmers.

- Home-grown school feeding has the potential to improve local food systems through its short and sustainable supply chain. It reduces transport costs and food waste as school food is sourced locally and reduces processing, ensures that learners receive fresh foods. The growing call to incorporate ecologically and culturally acceptable food items in school menus emphasizes the potential of home-grown school feeding to improve agrobiodiversity.

Chapter 4: School feeding in times of crises–the impact of and response to COVID-19 and food–fuel crises on school health and nutrition in Africa

- The combined impact of overlapping and interconnected crises associated with conflicts and instability, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and other growing global instability has increased the cost of living; had a negative impact on school feeding programmes; and has further harmed Africa's health, nutrition and human capital potential. COVID-19 related lockdown measures; delays in global supply chains; and the surge in food prices, has severely disrupted school feeding services worldwide, undoing the gains attributed to the introduction of school feeding. As the impact of COVID-19 lingered, partly due to new variants and the resurgence of the virus in many countries, there were delays and irregular patterns in school reopening in Africa. The post COVID-19 world has experienced increasing household food insecurity; the emergence of other crises still ongoing, posed limited access to affordable and

nutritious meals, which schools used to provide, affecting nutrition and human capital development in Africa.

- In the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and Southern Africa, worsening droughts, desertification and other climate-induced shocks have led to adverse consequences like land degradation, failed crop production, and death of livestock. This context led to significant loss of livelihood options.

- Rising incidence of domestic conflicts and unconstitutional changes of power have also fuelled instability and political polarization, which affects food security and a population's nutrition status especially the most vulnerable groups. Moreover, the Ukraine crisis has compounded the already dire food insecurity and malnutrition situation in Africa having triggered elevated fuel and food commodity prices, and affecting logistical costs, especially transportation.

- These challenges undermine governments' capacities to ensure that effective social programmes are in place and fully operational to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of shocks on the most vulnerable populations, especially women and children. Therefore, school feeding programmes are a key social safety net to counter impacts on children's food security and nutrition and to support the continent's investment in human capital and long-term development aspirations.

WFP/Arete/Arlette Bashizi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, the Head of States and Governments of the African Union acknowledged school feeding's contribution to human capital development in Africa in line with the aspirations of Agenda 2063, and the objectives of CESA 16–25. The 26th Assembly adopted the Home-Grown School Feeding decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI). The Sustainable School Food and Nutrition Initiative was adopted by the 31st Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council in July 2017 (EX.CL/1025(XXXI)) as a strategic programme towards implementation of the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (2015–2025), and fulfilment of the Malabo Declaration [Assembly/AU/Dec.490-516 (XXII)] 2014.

The African Union Assembly home-grown school feeding decision requests the African Union Commission, and more specifically the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster, to report regularly on implementation of the decision to the African Union Assembly through the Executive Council. In view of these continental frameworks, the African Union Commission conducted a study on the relevance and impact of school feeding in Africa and published and launched a book entitled *Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union* in 2018. This study has been recognized as a baseline for further reports, which includes the multiplier effect of home-grown school feeding programmes. Subsequently, the first edition of the Home-Grown School Feeding Biennial Report (African Union, 2018b) took the previous study as a benchmark. In addition, it produced on some important variables with data collected from Member States.

In the second edition, 2019–2020,[1] amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges and disruptions it caused, the reported data was compared against UN World Food Programme (WFP) data, a baseline collected in 2020 for the *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020* publication.

This third edition of the biennial report will cover the period 2021–2022. The methodology used for the biennial report was agreed upon by the African Union Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation department and its partners. Based on the methodology developed by WFP for *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2013* (WFP, 2013) and *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020* (WFP, 2020d), this report provides a snapshot of the current situation and explores historical trends.

This 2021–2022 Biennial Report builds on data and inputs collected by the African Union and its partners in the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster, including WFP, UNICEF, CERFAM and FAO. The report also builds on the school feeding database developed by WFP for its flagship *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022* publication,[2] which contains up-to-date and official data on school feeding programmes at the country level.

[1] https://au.int/en/documents/20210301/african-union-biennial-report-home-grown-school-feeding-2019-2020.

[2] To be published March 2023.

The objective of the 2021–2022 Biennial Report is to report on the state of school feeding in the African continent and provide a mechanism for accountability to the African Union. The report is structured into four chapters informed by several case studies from across the African continent, highlighting promising practices to help inform policies and programmes. Finally, the report aims to identify key priorities and necessary actions to advance school feeding and CESA objectives.

MAIN FINDINGS

Approximately 65.9 million children received school meals in Africa in 2022 compared to 65.4 million children fed in 2020

In 2022, 65.9 million children received school meals in Africa, a slight increase from 65.4 million in 2020. It should be noted that the 65.4 million figures in 2020 refers to children receiving school meals before the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of schools across the continent, depriving nearly all children of their access to school meals. Therefore, the 65.9 million figure indicates that across the continent, schools have re-opened and are again providing school meals at a level of coverage similar to pre-pandemic levels. Presently, 31 percent of children enrolled in primary schools receive school meals, down slightly from 33 percent in 2020. While this marginal decrease needs further monitoring, it is might be due to the parallel growth in the school-age population over the same period.

Despite the increase in the number of schoolchildren receiving school meals, indicating that countries have recovered to pre-pandemics levels of school feeding, significant coverage disparities remain between regions and income categories. For example, school meal programmes cover 55 percent of children in upper middle-income countries but only 15 percent of children in low-income countries. This reveals that recovery has been least effective in low-income countries where it is needed most.

Despite severe tightening of fiscal space, low-income countries have increased their domestic funding for school meals from 34 percent in 2020 to 45 percent in 2022

While donor support for school meal programmes has declined from 65 percent to 55 percent within the same period, low-income countries committed to strengthening their domestic funding of school meals by increasing their funding commitments from 34 percent in 2020 to 45 percent in 2022.

89 percent of African countries have now adopted a school meals policy

In 2022, 89 percent of countries had adopted a school meals policy, compared to 68 percent in 2020. In addition, low-income and lower middle-income countries have outpaced upper-

middle-income countries in adopting school meals policy frameworks. This is an important change, and a strong indicator of growing governmental commitment across all income levels.

The average cost of school meals is estimated at US$ 35 per child per year, a US$ 17 decrease from the average cost in 2020. On average, for every 100,000 learners fed, 757 direct jobs were created in 33 countries. Most of these jobs are cooks and caterers; however, there are also opportunities in more qualified roles, such as programme management.

It is estimated that 95 percent of all African governments provide school meals with at least one complementary school-based health and nutrition intervention. However, only 10 percent of African countries offer a fully integrated package of 7 to 10 complementary interventions in conjunction with school meals (as of 2022, 19 percent provide four or more complementary interventions). Evidence shows that the school system is an exceptionally cost-effective platform through which to deliver an integrated package of essential health and nutrition services, including school meals, deworming, iron and folic acid supplementation, vision screening and oral health. This reinforces the importance of school feeding programmes as catalysts of crucial interventions to promote well-being among schoolchildren and adolescents.

The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily left an estimated 50 million schoolchildren on the continent without access to school meals; however, countries have been able to build back better driven by political leadership at the highest levels and channelled through the School Meals Coalition

Globally, political leaders from 76 countries, 33 of which are from Africa co-created the School Meals Coalition during the United Nations Food Systems Summit in 2021, with the main goal to ensure that every child receives a healthy, nutritious daily meal in school by 2030.

The country-led Coalition is supported by 83 stakeholders, including five major UN agencies (FAO, UNICEF, UNESCO WFP and WHO) and development partners, all involved in shaping a new multilateral approach to development. The Coalition's actions and activities are based on independent evidence generated by the Coalition's Research, Sustainable Financing and Data and Monitoring initiatives.

Since the creation of the Coalition there has been a sea change in the level of political will around school meals. In Rwanda, for example, President Paul Kagame's administration has already met the commitment announced in 2021 of reaching universal coverage of school feeding. The country has moved from supporting 660,000 children in 2020 to 3.8 million in 2022. In Benin, President Talon announced a national budget commitment of US$ 270 million over the next five years to scale up Benin's national programme.

School feeding through home-grown school feeding creates a win-win opportunity for both children and smallholder farmers. It is a key instrument in reducing the triple burden of malnutrition; improving school enrolment and attendance; increasing cognitive and academic performance; contributing to gender equity in access to education; and has the added benefit of stimulating local economies

Home-grown school feeding offers a huge and predictable market for smallholder farmers and other actors within the school feeding value chain. For example, 9.2 million schoolchildren in Nigeria consume 6 million locally sourced eggs and 80 tons of fish every week through home-grown school feeding programmes.

School feeding programmes, including home-grown school feeding, offer a unique opportunity to address the underlying causes of malnutrition as a school meal accounts for a significant share of the daily required micronutrient intake for school-age children.

Integrating smallholder farmers into school feeding through home-grown school feeding can generate income multipliers for smallholder farmers and the local economy; reduce risks; and ensure farmers remain commercially competitive. Additionally, these programmes help stabilize livelihoods, leading to asset creation and investments, and a reduction in the use of negative coping strategies.

Home-grown school feeding has the potential to improve local food systems through its short and sustainable supply chain; reduce transport costs and food waste; and reduce processing which ensures that learners received fresh foods. The growing call to incorporate ecologically and culturally acceptable food items in school menus emphasizes the potential of home-grown school feeding to improve agrobiodiversity.

The cumulative effects of overlapping and interdependent crises arising from conflicts and instability, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other growing uncertainties has led to the rising cost of living crisis. These crises negatively affected school feeding programmes and Africa's health, nutrition and human capital potential

COVID-19 related lockdown measures, delays in global supply chains and the surge in food prices severely disrupted school feeding services worldwide, undoing the gains attributable to the introduction of school feeding.

In the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and Southern Africa, worsening droughts, desertification and other climate-induced shocks have led to adverse consequences like land degradation, failed crop production, and death of livestock. This context led to significant loss of livelihood options.

Rising incidences of domestic conflicts and unconstitutional change of power have also fuelled instability and political polarization, affecting the population's food security and nutrition status.

School meal programmes are an essential component of a truly integrated healthy and health-promoting education system that contributes to achieving adolescent well-being. Building human capital depends on high-quality education as well as good health and nutrition. School-age children and adolescents – spanning ages 5 to 19 years – require particular attention from both the education and health sectors. It is during these formative years that children and adolescents undergo physical, emotional and cognitive changes that will shape the rest of their lives.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The African Union, governments, School Meals Coalition and partners can collaborate to reduce these differences in the provision and coverage of school meal programmes among regions and prioritize areas where coverage is still low in developing school feeding programmes.

- The African Union and governments need to continue to work together with the School Meals Coalition to develop, adopt and implement policy frameworks to increase domestic funding as well as donor support for school feeding in Africa.

- The African Union and governments to make use of the School Meals Coalition platform and its initiatives, particularly, the Research Consortium, Sustainable Financing and Data and Monitoring Initiative, to fill the knowledge gaps and develop a core set of agreed indicators and data to inform better decision making for real-time tracking of progress.

- To confront the different shocks and crises described in this report, including COVID-19, Member States are encouraged to develop national school feeding programmes based on locally sourced food, integrated with local agricultural systems to mitigate the impacts of these various shocks on school health and nutrition.

- African governments are advised to investigate their education, health, agriculture and social protection investment strategies to promote the development of their human capital – the sum of a population's health, skills, knowledge, education, nutrition and protection services delivered – as the main driver of sustainable and inclusive long-term economic growth, in and through school.

- Enhance smallholder access to yield-enhancing inputs and services. Governments and stakeholders should implement programmes that increase access to improved seeds and planting materials, fertilizers and extension services.

- Member States are encouraged to support smallholders' financial inclusion and security by increasing access to financial services such as credit and insurance. This will enable smallholders to invest in expanding and protecting their enterprises and increase their contribution to home-grown school feeding food menus in their quantity and diversity.

- Governments should support smallholders to be more resilient to different shocks (weather, war, etc.) by investing in and promoting more climate-smart agriculture programmes.

- Member States are encouraged to develop and implement integrated national home-grown school feeding programmes that promote children's health, growth and development; and increase retention rates in schools with the intention of supporting children, acknowledging the role of healthy and nutritious diets throughout their lives.

- Member States should strengthen regional and global collaborative and cooperative frameworks such as the School Meals Coalition for a united effort to make school feeding programmes more sustainable and resilient to shocks.

- Governments should invest in enhancing institutional capacity, procedures and systems, as well as continue to ensure quality data capture and the effective building of robust monitoring and evaluation systems for home-grown school feeding programmes, so that the evidence generated may best inform policy and improve programme design and implementation across the continent.

WFP/Badre Bahaji

Introduction

Introduction

As part of its Agenda 2063, the African Union, has developed and adopted the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25), aligned with SDG 4 "Quality Education" and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme. These strategies recognize school feeding programmes as a common continental priority. School feeding contributes to multisectoral outcomes in education, nutrition, agriculture, local development and gender equality. It contributes to the achievement of SDG 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 17 (Partnerships). School feeding also contributes to the accomplishment of Agenda 2063 aspirations 1, 3 and 7.

The African Union's School Feeding Agenda

The Heads of State and Government of the African Union passed the decision Assembly/AU/Dec.589(XXVI) in January 2016, acknowledging the contribution of school feeding to the development of human capital in Africa, and thereby adding value to the realization of Agenda 2063, CESA 16–25 and efforts to reap the demographic dividend foreseen for the continent's outsized working-age population. Recognizing the value of home-grown school feeding, the decision provides for:

1. The creation of an Africa Day of School Feeding on 1 March every year, beginning in 2016.
2. The establishment of a multidisciplinary technical committee of African experts, under the chairmanship of the African Union Commission and the support of institutions such as WFP and its Centre of Excellence Against Hunger.
3. The realization of a general study on the relevance and impact of school feeding in the African Union Member States.
4. The requirement that the African Union Commission "report regularly on the implementation of the Decision 589 XXVI to the Assembly through the Executive Council".

Furthermore, the 31st Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council acknowledged school feeding as a strategic programme for implementation of the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (2015–2025), and fulfilment of the Malabo Declaration to improve nutritional status of school children (EX.CL/Dec.965-986(XXXI).

In view of these continental frameworks, the African Union Commission has advocated for school feeding in the last seven Africa Day of School Feeding events. The Commission has conducted a study on the relevance and impact of school feeding in Africa and launched a book in 2018 entitled *Study on Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union*.[3] This study has been recognized as a baseline for further reports, including the multiplier effect of home-grown school feeding programmes. Subsequently, the African Union's 2018 Biennial Report took the previous study as a benchmark and produced a report on some important variables that were collected from Member States.

The African Union Commission and key stakeholders also established a Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster to implement specific CESA objectives. At its launch in 2017, WFP agreed to be the coordinating agency for the cluster. The cluster aims to bring together actors working on school feeding and align their respective initiatives to achieve the CESA 16–25 and SDG expected results. Members of the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster were actively involved in preparing this current report.

REPORTING ON THE STATE OF SCHOOL FEEDING IN AFRICA

The African Union Commission has worked to secure high-level institutional engagement from Member States and partner agencies working in areas supportive of school feeding through the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster, which supports implementation of CESA as well as the realization of other continental policy frameworks goals for addressing child welfare, ending hunger and ensuring food security. The Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster is an African Union platform where stakeholders from different sectors engage and share technical information on the design and implementation of effective school feeding programmes. It provides the space to organize joint actions to support advocacy and resource mobilization in this area. Cluster members commit to working together towards the common African Union vision and to identify synergies and develop workplans to ensure enhanced efficiency and effectiveness. The cluster was officially launched in 2017 during the Third Continental Consultation of the African Union and WFP on Home-Grown School Feeding.

One of the key priories of the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster is to produce quality biennial reports for Africa as stipulated in the African Union Assembly Decision 589 XXVI, No. 17 which requests that the African Union Commission report regularly on implementation of the decision to the African Union Assembly through the Executive Council.

THE ORIGINS OF THIS PUBLICATION

The 2021–2022 Biennial Report builds on data and inputs collected by the African Union and its partners in the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster, including WFP, UNICEF, CERFAM and FAO.

[3] https://au.int/en/documents/20181008/sustainable-school-feeding-report

The report also builds on the school feeding database developed by WFP for its flagship *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022* report,[4] which contains up-to-date and official data on school feeding programmes at the country level.

This report aims to fulfil multiple objectives: it reports on the state of school feeding in the African continent and provides a mechanism for accountability to the African Union. Informed by several case studies from across the continent, it also highlights good practices to help inform policies and programmes. Finally, it identifies priorities and essential actions to advance school feeding and CESA objectives.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS PUBLICATION

This report is broken down in four core chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: School feeding programmes in Africa in 2021–2022: scale, coverage and trends provide an update on school feeding indicators in 2021–2022 and presents the scale of school feeding efforts, coverage rates, funding and policy trends, with analytics by region and by income level.

Chapter 2: School Meals Coalition: commitments and opportunities in the African continent provides an overview of the mandate and initiatives of the new global school meals communities of practice, highlighting how African governments, partners, UN agencies and civil society have come together to advance school health and nutrition with particular focus on the opportunities to advance school feeding within the African continent.

Chapter 3: Leveraging school feeding programmes to accelerate nutrition improvement, human capital, food systems, social and economic development in Africa provides a brief on the 2022 African Union year of nutrition, and shares emerging evidence on the possible pathways through which home-grown school feeding programmes can improve local food systems and highlights how the African continent is leveraging these programmes.

Chapter 4: School feeding in times of crises – the impact of and response to COVID-19 and food–fuel crises on school health and nutrition in Africa highlights the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and other multiple crises on school feeding in the continent and the efforts undertaken by governments to mitigate the dramatic impacts on education, health and nutrition.

[4] To be published in March 2023.

Chapter 1

School feeding programmes in Africa in 2021–2022: scale, coverage and trends

Chapter 1

School feeding programmes in Africa in 2021–2022: scale, coverage and trends

This chapter provides an overview of the status of school meal programmes in countries across the African Union. The numbers presented here are intended to serve as an update on progress towards Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable School Food and Nutrition Initiative adopted by the 31st Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council in July 2017 (EX.CL/1025(XXXI)).

This report also provides updates on implementation of Decision 589 XXVI (Assembly/AU/Dec.589). As such, this chapter provides information on the number and proportion of children receiving school meals; the scale of government investment; the cost of school meals; and key policy and programme features.

Based on a methodology developed by WFP for the *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2013* (WFP, 2013) and *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022*[5] reports, the analysis in this report provides a snapshot of the current situation and explores historical trends. This chapter compares findings on the 2022 school meal programmes in Africa with results previously published in 2020 to provide an up-to-date report of key metrics such as the number and proportion of children receiving school meals; the coverage of national school feeding programmes; institutionalization of school feeding policies; and the scale of government investment. The report draws on a combination of primary and secondary data sources gathered in 2013, 2020 and 2022.

The indicators presented in this chapter are based on publicly accessible information gathered from various sources, including the African Union, the Global Child Nutrition Foundation, WFP and the World Bank. This report constitutes the most comprehensive, currently available data source for school meal programmes in Africa. All data has been validated by the respective governments and/or drawn from official data published by international organizations.

Despite the efforts made since the last report to gather and validate school meals data, considerable unknowns persist in terms of the process through which school meals data are generated; who monitors them; the extent to which these data can be triangulated to school enrolment and attendance data; and which indicators are the most effective and reliable in describing the coverage and impact of these programmes. These questions align with the agenda of the School Meals Coalition's Data and Monitoring Initiative and further legitimize its establishment. The Data and Monitoring Initiative (of which the African Union and AUDA-NEPAD

[5] To be published in March 2023.

are members), with support from partners including Dubai Cares, will build on the lessons learned and experience gained through this second round of data collection to improve the quality of school meals data and support the creation of a truly global database. Such a repository would represent a global public good, enabling the school meals community of practice to systematically collect, store, curate and avail itself of real-time national data on school meals, school health and school nutrition interventions, worldwide.

In terms of findings, this chapter looks at how governments are increasing their financial and policy commitments to school meals and how this has continued to yield more extensive and high-quality school meal programmes for children.

Similar to the 2020 report (African Union, 2021), the analyses indicate that, except in low-income countries, the majority of school meal programmes in Africa are led by national governments. Approximately 65.9 million children in 54 countries now benefit from school meals in Africa, a massive increase from 38.4 million in 2013, and a slight increase from the 65.4 million fed in 2020. This increase is especially notable in Western Africa, where the number of school meal programmes increased by 11 percent (20.1 million in 2020 to 22.4 million in 2021) and doubled between 2013 and 2020.

WFP/Arete/Arlette Bashizi

Despite the sustained increase in the number of schoolchildren receiving school meals, wide disparities persist, with school meals coverage remaining the lowest in countries where the need is greatest.

Data indicate that most governments have increased their budget allocations to school meal programmes across all income categories. A similar trend is also observed in policy frameworks, with an increase in policy frameworks from 68 percent in 2020 to 89 percent in 2022, except for upper middle-income countries where it remains unchanged compared to 2020. As such, data suggest that most governments have now adopted a school meals policy or legal framework and are increasing domestic funding of their school meal programmes.

These efforts increased the number of schoolchildren who are fed, with almost all African nations (51 countries) providing school meals as part of an integrated set of nutrition and health interventions that are tailored to the needs of the learner.

1.1 NUMBERS OF CHILDREN RECEIVING SCHOOL FEEDING

It is estimated that 65.9 million children received school meals across Africa in 2021. The majority of these children live in Western Africa (22.4 million), followed by Southern Africa (20.5 million), Northern Africa (13.0 million), Eastern Africa (8.6 million) and Central Africa (1.4 million) (see Figure 1.1).

Note that the estimate for 2020 was based on surveys conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e., pre-pandemic levels. In 2020, nearly all schools across the continent were closed in an effort to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. The number of children fed in schools fell by an estimated 50 million, although efforts were made to mitigate the impact of this by delivering food through households and routes other than the school system. The surveys reported here describe the coverage achieved by school-based delivery in 2022 and represent the outcome of schools re-opening and governments rebuilding school-based meal systems. The evidence suggests that Africa today has re-established school meals coverage at or above pre-pandemic levels.

The largest school meal programmes are in Egypt (11.2 million children), Nigeria (9.9 million), South Africa (9.6 million) and Burkina Faso (3.7 million). These numbers represent a massive increase from 2013, when no more than 38.4 million children received school meals across Africa (and a slight increase from the 65.4 million fed in 2020).

As illustrated in Figure 1.2, the largest increases were recorded in Western Africa (+11 percent), followed by Central Africa (+6 percent), Southern Africa (+4 percent) and Northern Africa (+1 percent). The only region where school meals coverage has decreased since 2020 is Eastern Africa, with a decrease of 25 percent, which has been driven by four countries that had a significant drop in the number of children fed, due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and other shocks/droughts (Uganda, Madagascar, Ethiopia and South Sudan).

Figure 1.1 Children receiving school meals

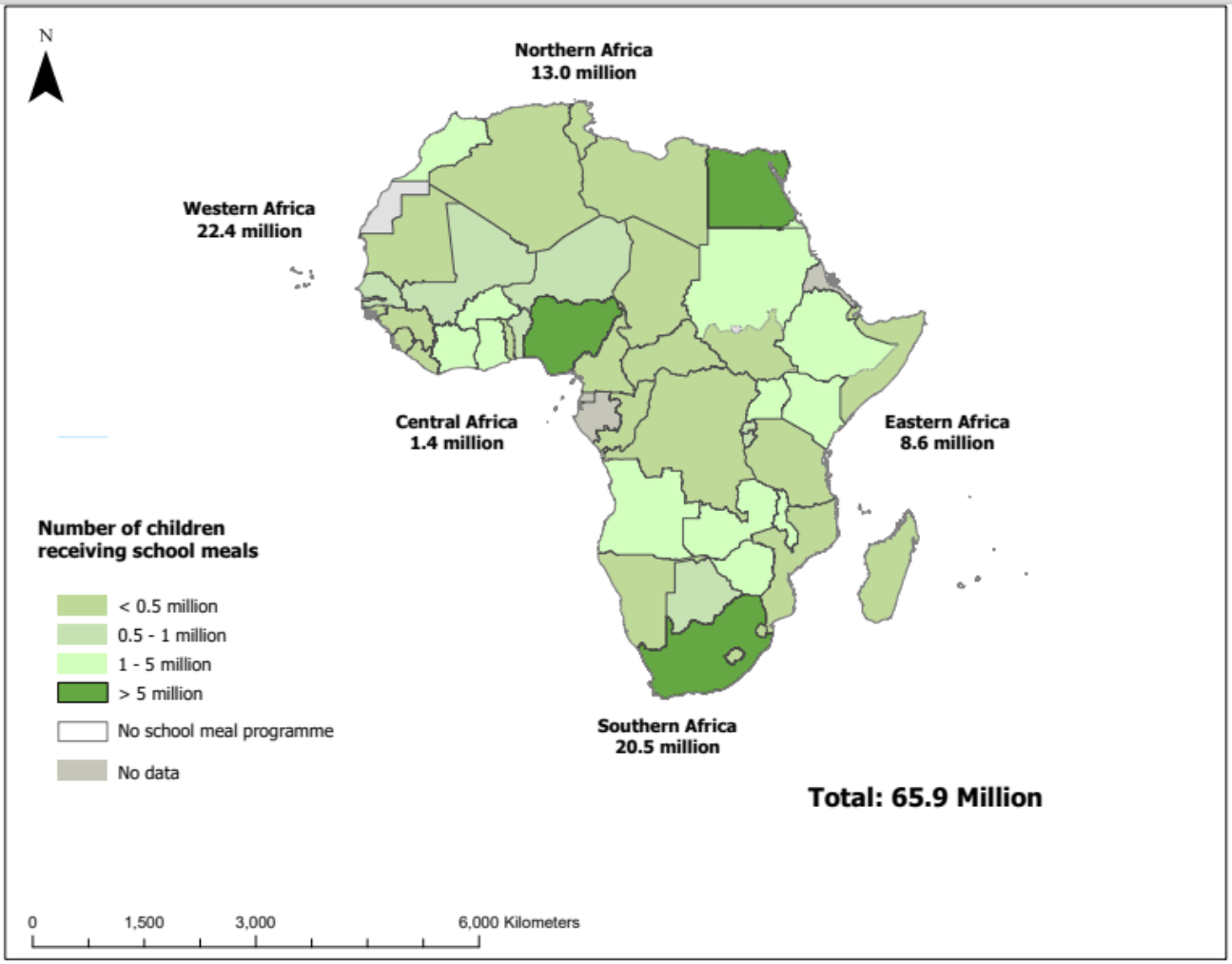


Figure 1.2 Change in the number of children receiving school meals between 2020 and 2022 by region

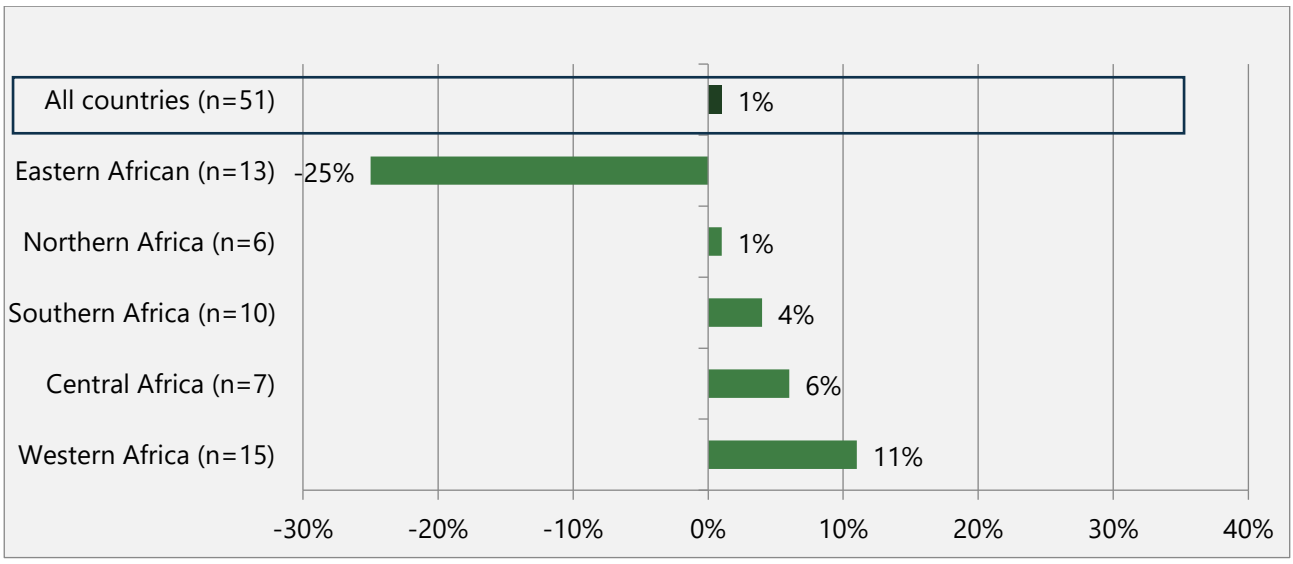
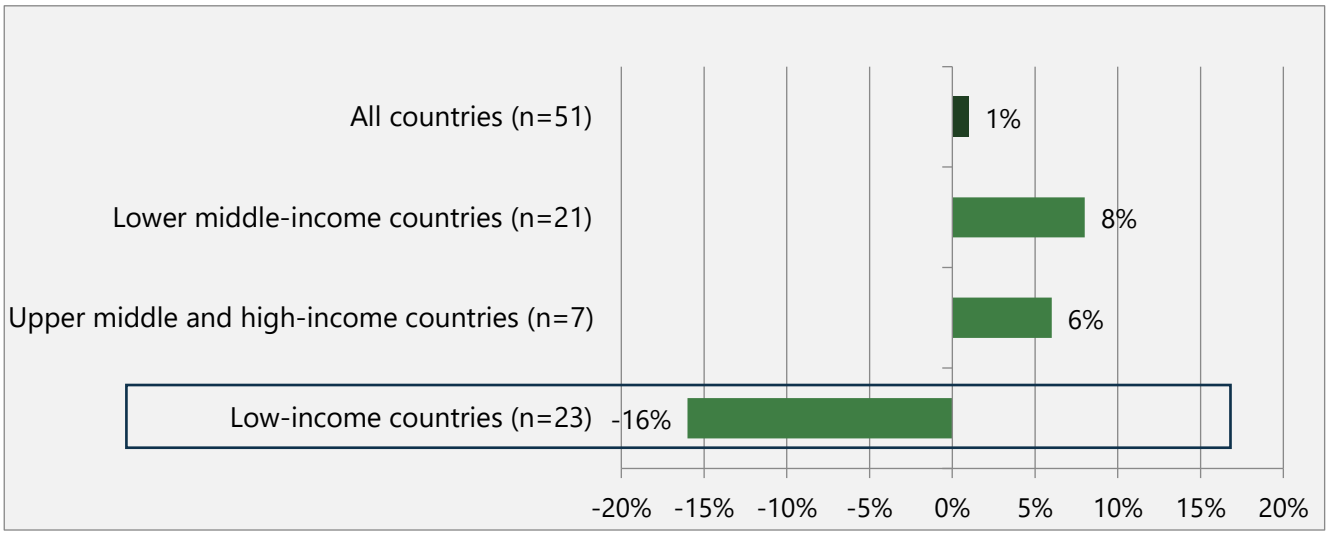


Figure 1.3 Change in the number of children receiving school meals between 2020 and 2022 by income level



Box 1.1 Methodology and data sources

This report builds on a methodology validated by the African Union Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Department in November 2020. Similar to the 2020 report, and due to the COVID-19 crisis, it was agreed that existing data collected by official institutions and validated or signed-off by respective Member States' ministries or officials would be used, instead of engaging in a new data collection exercise from African Union Member States, which would have required resources used to address the COVID-19 pandemic. In keeping with the methodology agreed by the African Union ESTI Department, in this report the 2021–2022 data are compared to baseline data collected in 2021 for the *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022* publication by WFP. This was due to data availability, comparability of indicators and because individual country governments had validated and cleared their respective data. In an effort to further enhance data quality, the Data and Monitoring Initiative of the School Meals Coalition, whose steering committee members include the African Union and AUDA-NEPAD, is working with other Coalition partners to improve the quality of school meals data and the creation of a truly global database.

The findings presented in this chapter are based on publicly accessible, official sources, including the African Union (African Union, 2018a), the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (Global Child Nutrition Foundation, 2022), the World Food Programme (WFP, 2020a), the World Bank (World Bank, 2018) and a government report (Republic of Rwanda/Ministry of Education, 2018). Based on the methodology developed by WFP for the *State of School Feeding Worldwide* series, this report draws on a combination of primary and secondary data sources, selected on four criteria:

1. Relevance: sources that contain standard indicators on school feeding

2. Credibility: sources published by official or academic institutions
3. Availability: sources in open and public access
4. Timeliness: sources published recently.

When more than one data source was available for the same country, only the most recent data source was used, provided that all the other criteria were met – including relevance and credibility. Under the credibility criteria, particular attention was paid to only using data that were either provided, validated or cleared by relevant government authorities.

Based on this approach, this chapter presents confirmed and reported data from 54 of the 55 African Union Member States, representing at least 98.8 percent of children enrolled in primary schools across Africa and 99.4 percent of children receiving school meals in Africa. As such, this dataset can be considered highly representative of the status of school meals in Africa.

In four countries (Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Comoros and Gabon), no available source met the four listed criteria. As such, the data table in Annex I reads "no data" for these countries.

In two additional countries that are known to have a school meal programme (Guinea and Seychelles), no available source met all the criteria, but it was possible to calculate an estimation of the number of children receiving school meals using the standard methodology developed by WFP for the *State of School Feeding Worldwide* publication series. This estimation was calculated by applying the average rate of coverage, as observed in the income group, to the number of children enrolled in primary schools in a particular country. In Guinea, a low-income country, it is estimated that school meals are provided to 21 percent of children enrolled in primary schools – the average rate of coverage for low-income countries globally. In the Seychelles, a high-income country, using the same approach, it is estimated that school meals are provided to 85 percent of children enrolled in primary schools.

1.2 COVERAGE OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES

Coverage is defined as the proportion of school-attending children who benefit from a school meal programme. While the data presented in Section 1.1 covers pre-primary, primary and secondary education, the analysis of coverage data is limited to primary schoolchildren only, due to the paucity of data on children enrolled in pre-primary and secondary education levels.

Coverage in each country was estimated using the number of children reported to have received school meals in primary schools, divided by the total number of children enrolled in primary schools as reported by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2021). Coverage was calculated for each country, by income group and by region and in each case, the coverage rate was weighted by the number of children enrolled in primary school in each country.

As shown in Figure 1.4, 197 million children were enrolled in primary schools in Africa in 2022, up from 188 million enrolled in 2020. In 2022, 97 million children were enrolled in schools in low-income countries, 87 million in lower middle-income countries and 14 million in upper middle-income countries. Figure 1.5 shows coverage by regional grouping in 2020 and 2022, while Figure 1.6 shows coverage by country in 2022.

Figure 1.4: Children enrolled in primary schools in Africa between 2020 and 2022, by income level

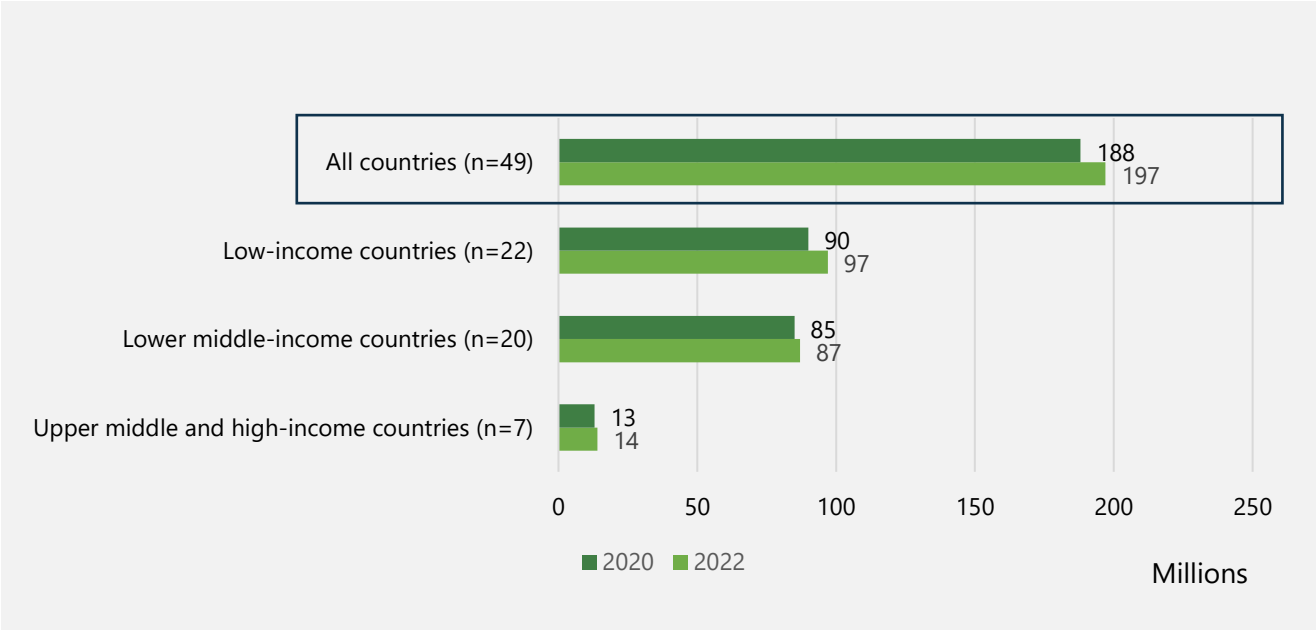


Figure 1.5: Children enrolled in primary schools in Africa between 2020 and 2022, by region

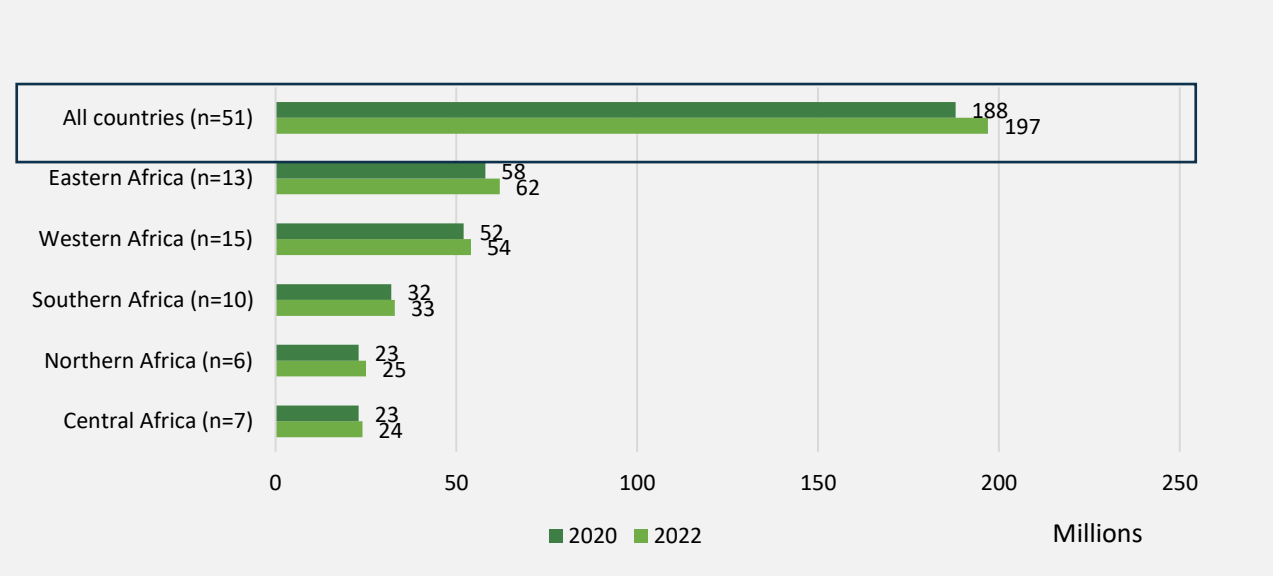
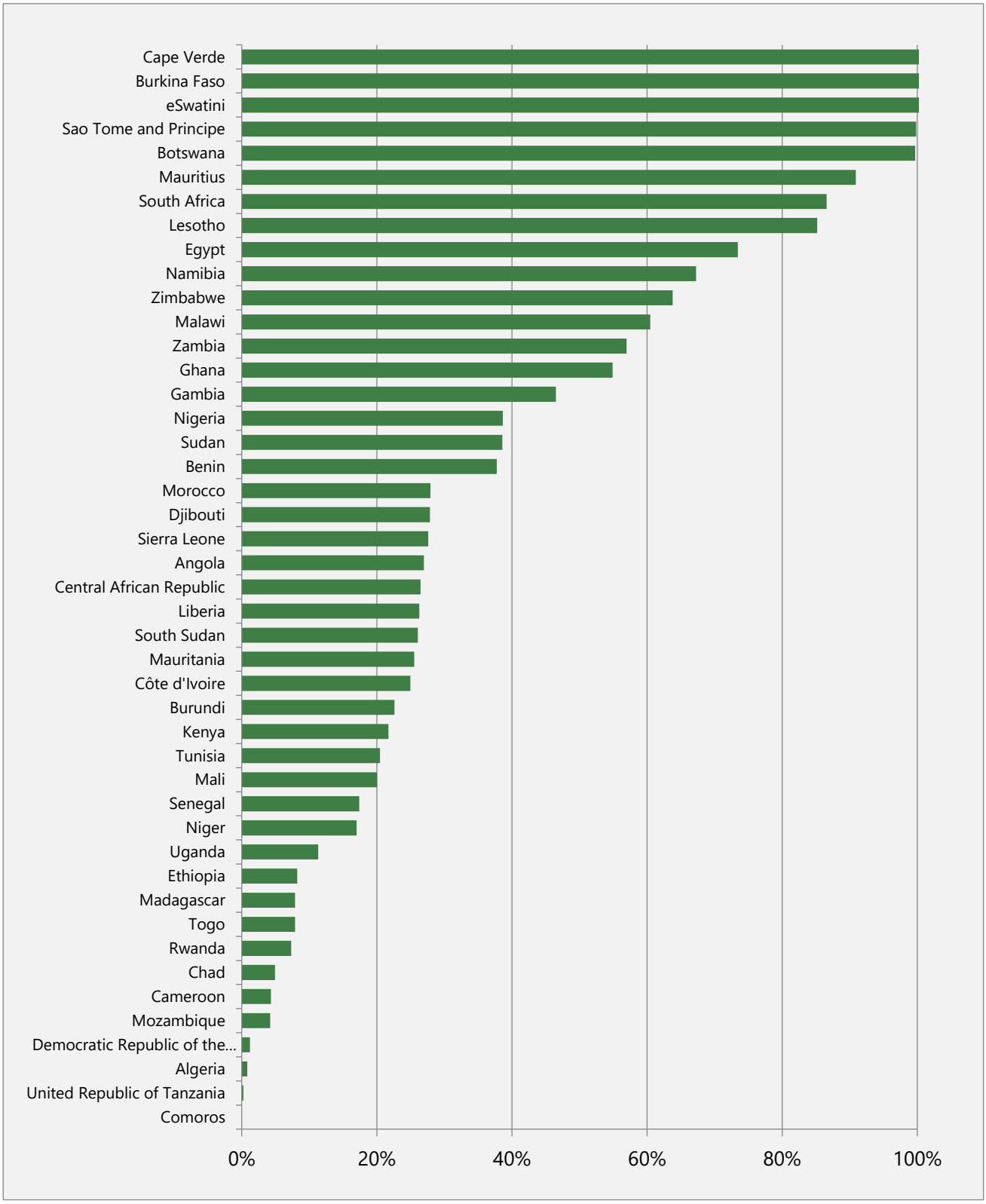


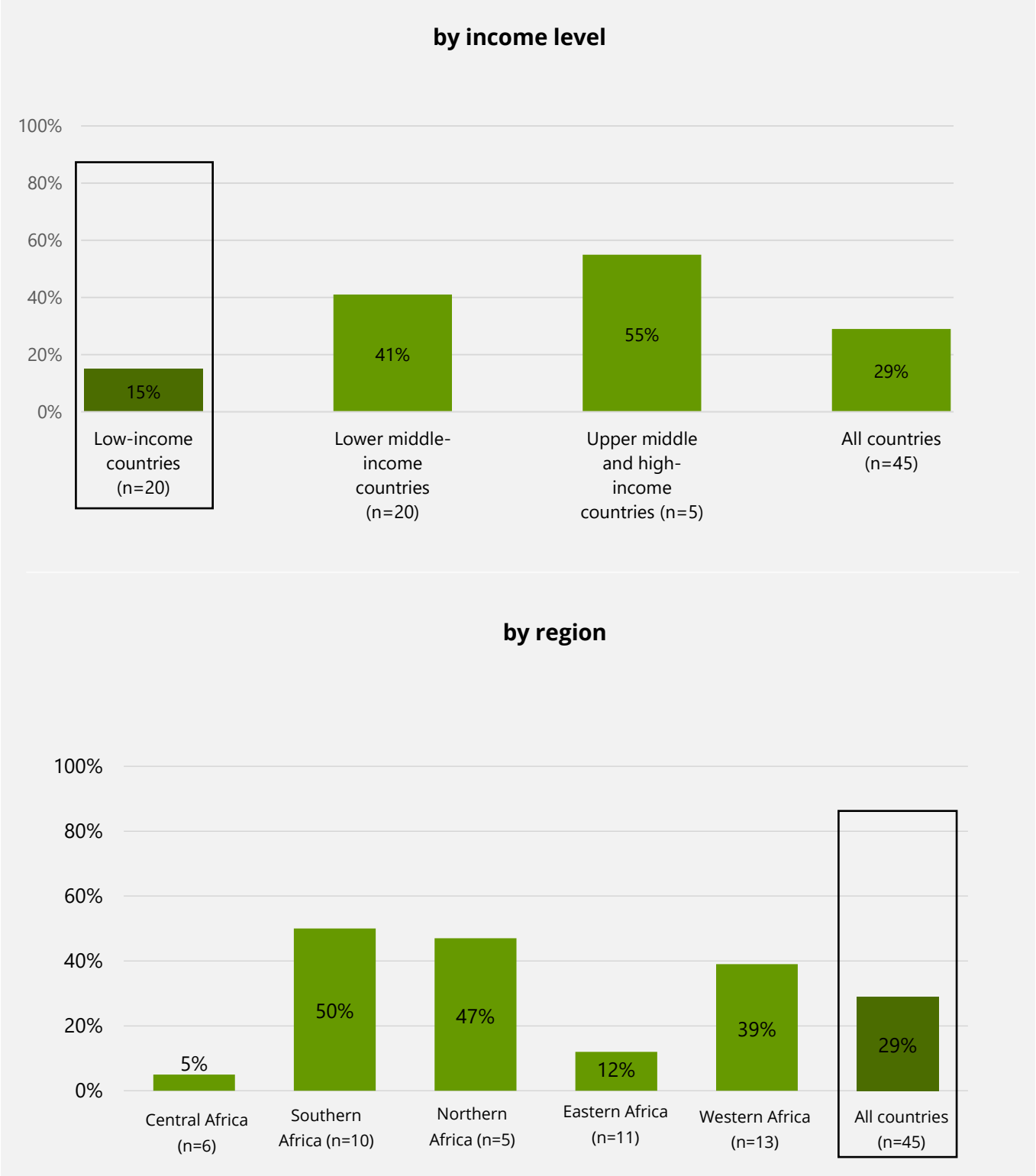
Figure 1.6 Coverage of school feeding programmes by country



Coverage of school meals in 2022 by income level and by region is shown in Figure 1.7 for the 45 countries for which data is available in both 2020 and 2022. Overall, the coverage of school meals across the continent increased with income level.

Across the regions of the continent, coverage of school meals was highest in the Southern Africa region (50 percent) followed by the Northern Africa region (47 percent) and lowest for the Central Africa region (5 percent).

Figure 1.7 Coverage in 2022 by income level and by region

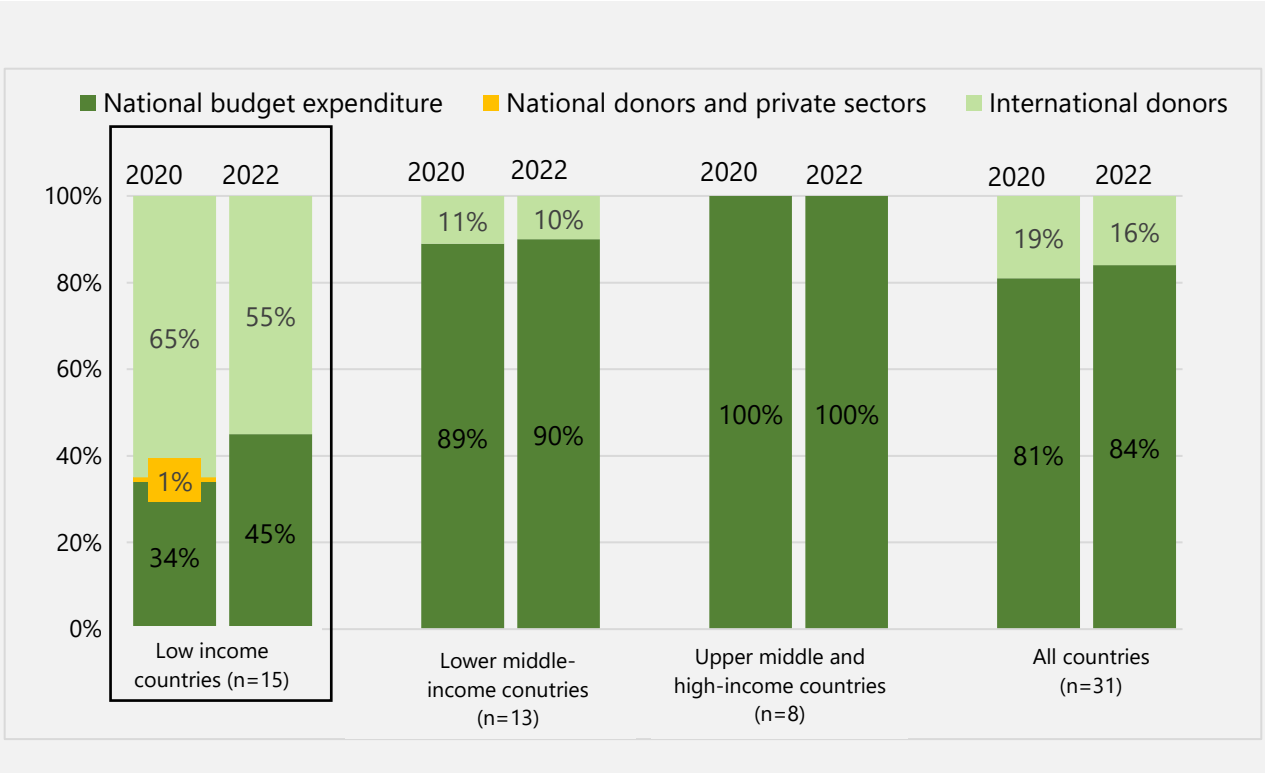


1.3 FUNDING FOR SCHOOL FEEDING

Three types of funding sources were identified for school meal programmes in Africa, in declining order of scale: domestic funding from national budgets; national-level donors and the private sector; and external donor funds channelled through UN agencies, including WFP, and other non-state actors.

Domestic budgets make up the main source of funds for school meal programmes in most countries. As shown in Figure 1.8, national budgets were the major source of funding in middle-income countries in both 2020 and 2022. In upper middle-income countries, school meal programmes are exclusively financed by domestic budgets. Despite international donor funding declining for low-income countries where the need is greatest, these governments still managed to increase their funding commitments to school meals, from 34 percent in 2020 to 45 percent in 2022.

Figure 1.8 Breakdown of aggregate expenditure by source of funding in 2021 and in 2022, by income level



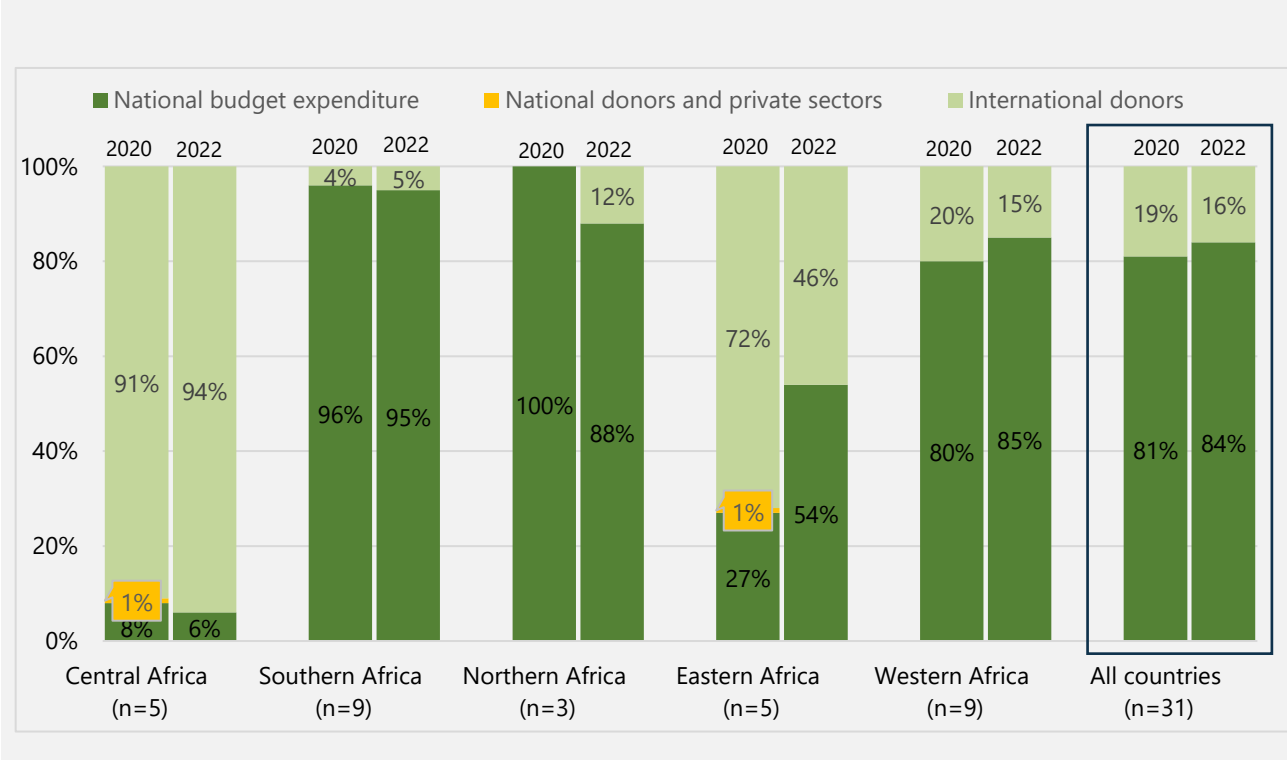
A regional analysis presented in Figure 1.9 reveals large disparities across the continent. For example, in 2020, an outsized proportion of funding for school meal programmes in Central Africa came from international donors (91 percent in 2020 versus 94 percent in 2022). In Northern Africa, national budget expenditure decreased by 12 percent, with the gap supported by international donors. Conversely, in Eastern Africa, the share of domestic funding has increased by 20 percent since 2020, highlighting the significant efforts made by governments to increase their commitment to school meals. While this is paradoxical given that the region also experienced a decrease in the number of children fed, the data necessary to investigate

further is presently unavailable. However, to name two possible factors, the phenomenon could be attributed to the sunk cost for meals that went to take-home rations during school closures or higher food costs. In Western Africa, governments continue to make significant strides in taking over programme funding, as the proportion of domestic budgets for school feeding increased from 81 percent in 2020 to 85 percent in 2022. Finally, in Southern Africa, data show that the majority of school meal expenditure is supported by domestic funding.

Although numbers remain low in proportion to total expenditure, a noteworthy observation is the emergence of national donors and the private sector as a source of funding for school feeding: new sources of funding represent 1 percent of the financial resources allocated to school meals in Central Africa and 2 percent in Eastern Africa.

These funding results indicate that most of the scaled-up school meal programmes that occurred between 2020 and 2022, as well as the sustained levels of coverage, were mostly supported by government efforts.

Figure 1.9 Breakdown of aggregate expenditure by source of funding in 2020 and 2022, by region



1.4 COST PER CHILD

The data sample for this indicator is comprised of 36 countries in Africa, including 20 low-income countries, 13 lower middle-income countries and 3 upper middle-income countries.

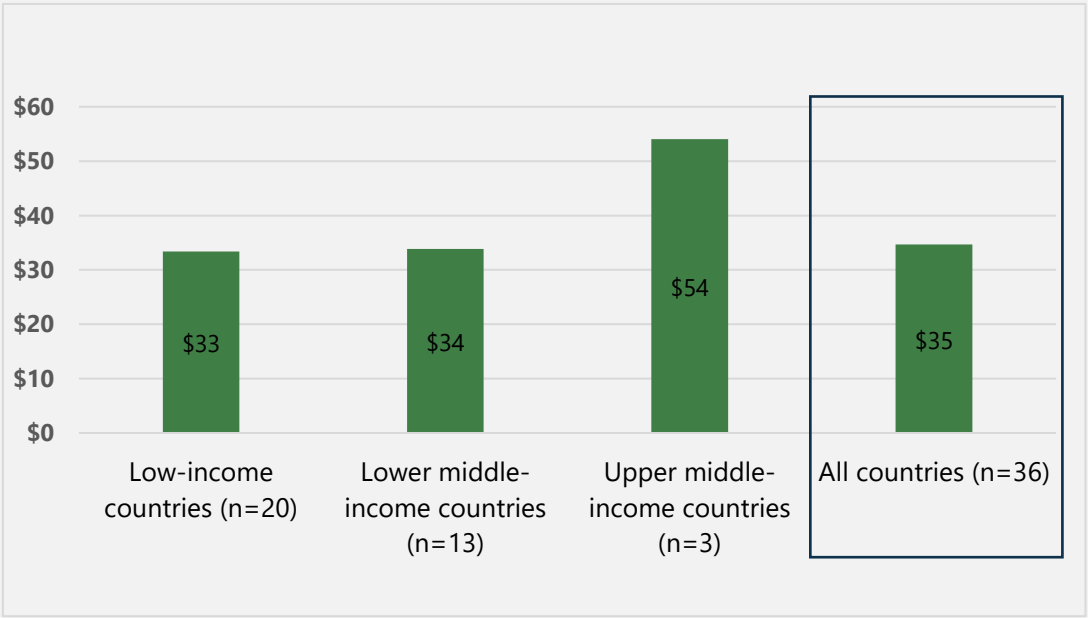
The annual cost of school feeding per child is calculated based on total expenditure for school meals, divided by the number of children receiving the meals. Therefore, it encompasses commodity, supply chain and administrative costs. As school calendar variations between

countries lead to a different number of feeding days in each country, this metric is standardized to normalize feeding day variations. This methodological approach was developed by WFP for a 2013 global cost benchmark (WFP, 2013), and has become the standard approach to calculate the cost per child of school meals.

Due to a high variance between countries, the median cost per child is the most representative statistical instrument to serve as a benchmark. Figure 1.10 illustrates the median cost per child of school meals by income level.

The data show a significant variation between upper middle-income countries compared to both low and lower middle-income countries (a median cost per child of US$ 54 in upper middle-income countries versus US$ 33 and US$ 34 across low and lower middle-income countries, respectively). Across all income categories, the cost per child is US$ 35. Given the sample size of these income levels, the figures provide a representative range of the cost of school meals in Africa.

Figure 1.10 Median cost per child of school feeding

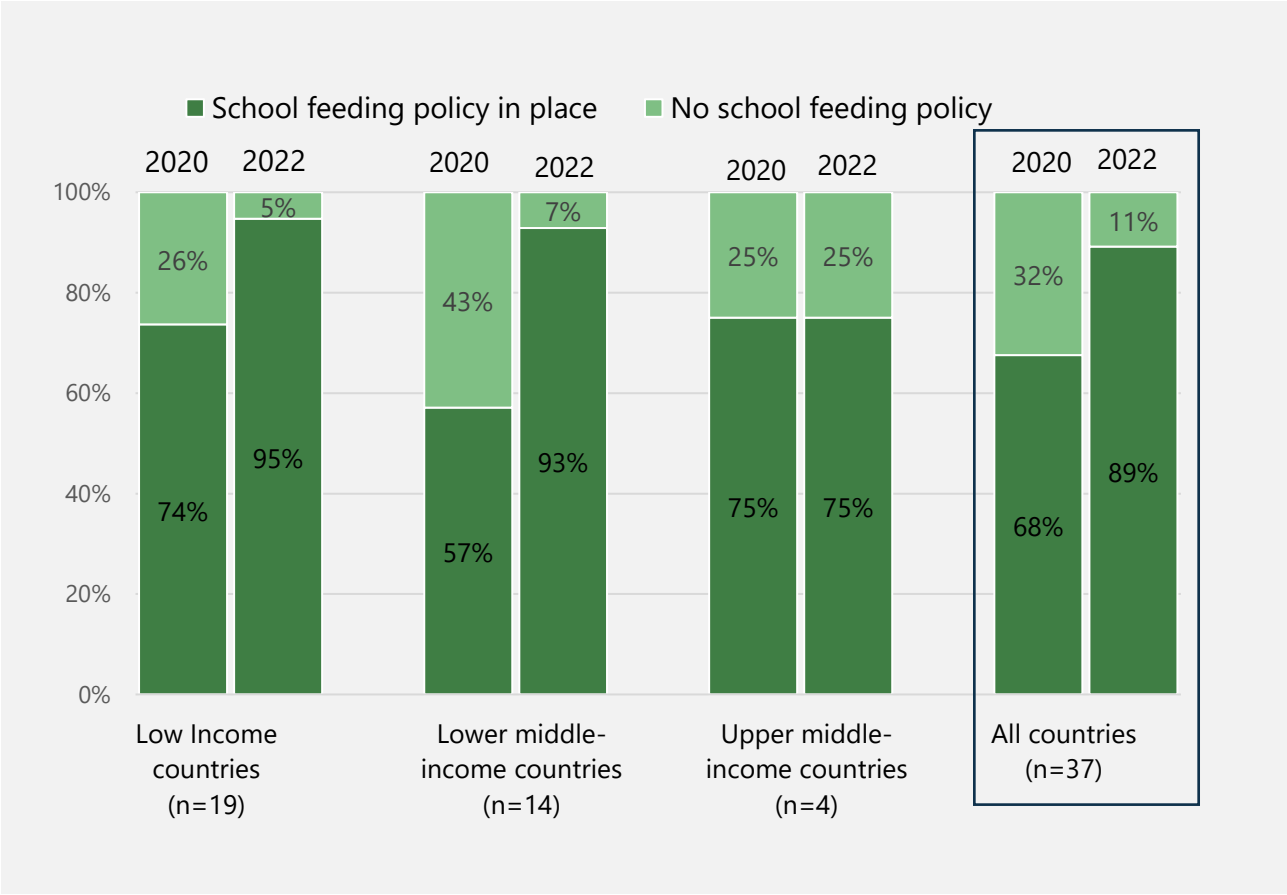


1.5 POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND PROGRAMME DESIGN: COMPLEMENTARY INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOL HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Between 2020 and 2022 many countries strengthened and broadened the policy and legal frameworks governing their school meal programmes. Across all income categories, we observe an increase in policy framework from 68 percent in 2020 to 89 percent in 2022 (except in the upper middle-income category, which remained unchanged from 2020). African countries reported having an established policy or legal framework for their school meal programmes, although a significant number of these countries were in the process of developing such frameworks.

As seen in Figure 1.11, the share of low-income countries that have an established policy framework for school meals increased from 74 percent in 2020 to 95 percent in 2022; while in lower middle-income countries the increase is from 57 percent in 2020 to 93 percent in 2022. The proportion of low and lower middle-income countries that have a school meals policy is now even higher than for high-income countries.

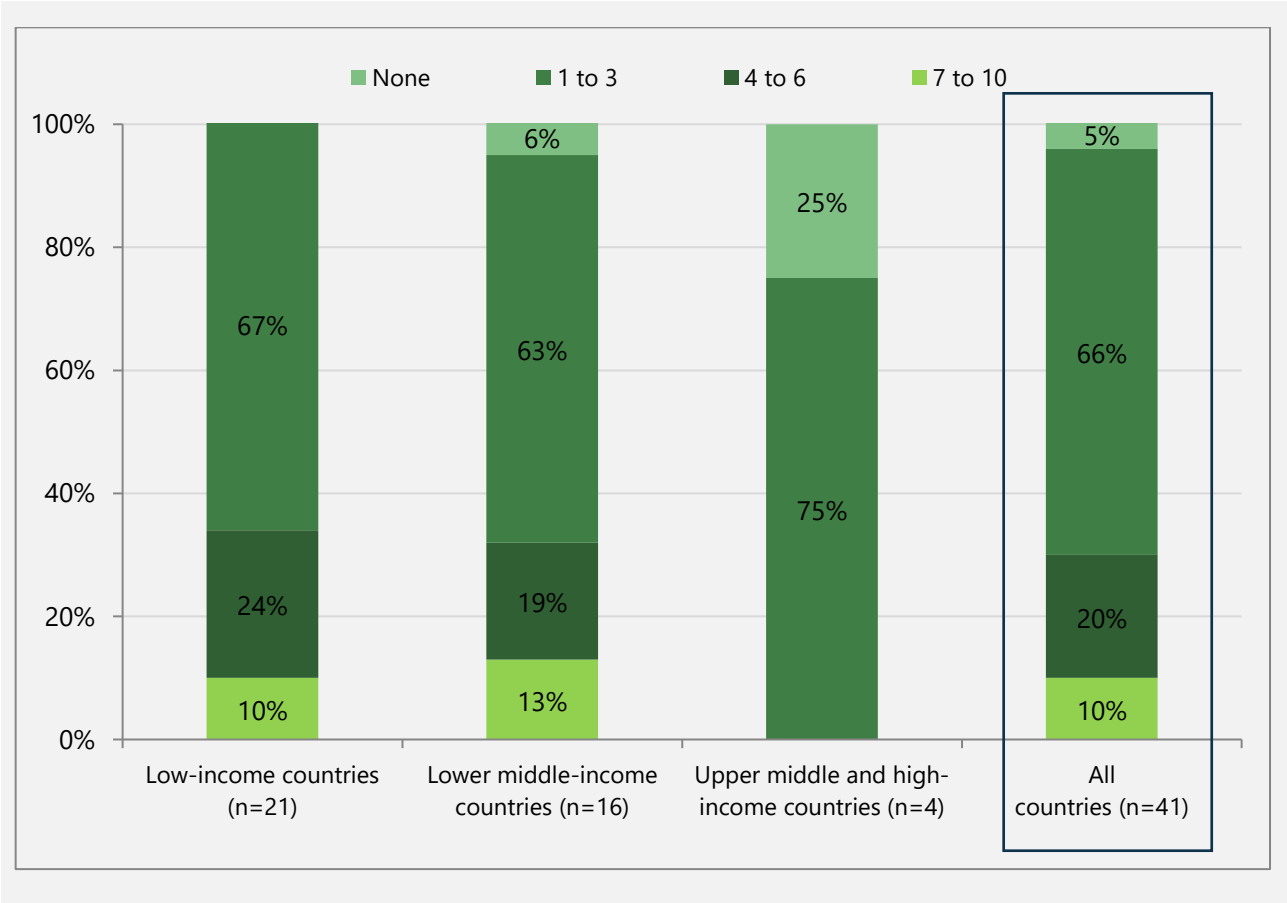
Figure 1.11 Status of school feeding policy frameworks in 2020 and 2022 by income level



School meal policies in Africa aim to implement an integrated package of school-based health and nutrition interventions, that together seek to meet the needs of the learner in the local context. The school meal is one of the components of that package, while other interventions may include complementary activities such as: handwashing with soap, height and weight measurements, deworming treatment, HIV/Sexually Transmitted Infections education, eye testing and eyeglasses, hearing test and treatment, dental cleaning and testing, menstrual hygiene management, drinking water and sanitation, and water purification.

New data collected on ten complementary activities show that of the 41 countries sampled in 2022, only 5 percent indicated no activity towards the integrated delivery of school meals as defined by at least one complementary health and nutrition intervention (Figure 1.12). The data also indicate that 66 percent of governments combine school meals with a package of more than four additional health and nutrition interventions, while 10 percent deliver a school health package of between seven and ten interventions. These observations suggest that virtually all African countries which deliver school meal programmes complement feeding with a package of supportive health and nutrition interventions.

Figure 1.12 Number of complementary activities implemented in conjunction with school feeding, by income level

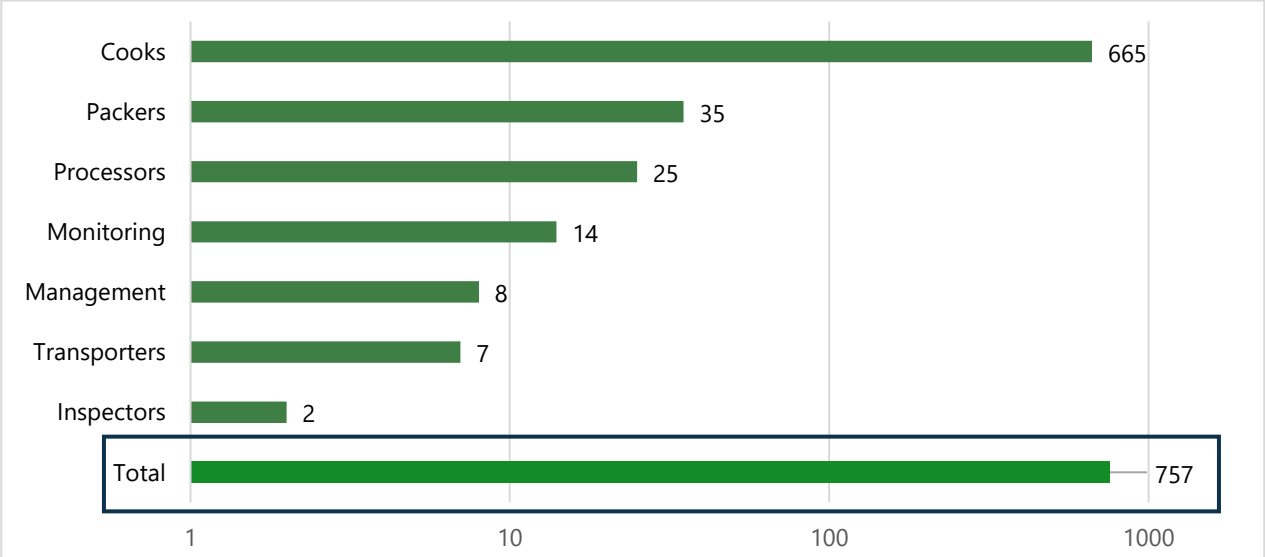


AUC/Eric J. Wagobera

1.6 HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING AND EMPLOYMENT

The provision of school meals led to the creation on average of 757 jobs for every 100,000 children fed (Figure 1.13). The majority of these jobs are cooks but there are opportunities in other sectors as well. This data set covers direct jobs created by implementation of school meal programmes in 33 countries; it does not include indirect employment or business opportunities generated by the provision of school meals, such as when local farmers benefit from programmes implemented under a home-grown school feeding model. Therefore, the results presented here are a conservative estimate.

Figure 1.13 Jobs created for every 100,000 children receiving school meals



1.7 WAY FORWARD

- 65.9 million children received school meals in Africa in 2022, a slight increase from 65.4 million in 2020, and an indication that most school systems have recovered and are providing school meals at or above pre-pandemic levels. Presently, 31 percent of children enrolled in primary schools receive school meals, slightly down from 33 percent in 2020. This decrease might be due to the parallel growth in the school-age population over the period.
- Large coverage disparities remain between regions and income categories. School meal programmes cover 55 percent of children in upper middle-income countries but only 15 percent of children in low-income countries. School meal programmes cover 47 percent of children in Northern Africa and 50 percent in Southern Africa, but only 5 percent in Central Africa. International donor funding in low-income countries has waned between 2020 and 2022; however, governments have continued to make progress, increasing their domestic commitments from 30 percent to 45 percent between 2020 and 2022, signalling self-reliance but also neglect by international donors to support programmes where the need is greatest.
- These results have been achieved through the large financial and policy efforts made by African governments. Domestic budgets continue to represent the main source of funding for school meal programmes. The share of domestic funding as compared to international donor funding has increased from 82 percent to 85 percent across the continent. Conversely, in low-income countries, 55 percent of school meals expenditure is still supported by international donors.
- In 2022, 89 percent of countries had adopted a school meals policy, compared to 68 percent in 2020. Low-income and lower middle-income countries have outpaced upper middle-income countries in the development of school meal policy frameworks.
- The cost of school meals remains affordable for governments, at approximately US$ 35 per child per year. This is a decrease of 17 percentage points from the value in 2020.
- It is estimated that 95 percent of all governments in Africa provide school meals in conjunction with at least one complementary school-based health and nutrition intervention, while 10 percent of countries provide a fully integrated package of 7 to 10 complementary interventions in conjunction with school feeding.

Chapter 2

School Meals Coalition: commitments and opportunities in the African continent

Chapter 2

School Meals Coalition: commitments and opportunities in the African continent

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a decade of global progress in education and school meals to a sudden halt. In April 2020, during the height of the crisis, almost all countries closed their schools, leaving 370 million schoolchildren worldwide without access to school meals. Prior to the pandemic, 65.4 million children in Africa received a daily school meal – at least 50 million of those children lost their access to school meals at the peak of the pandemic in 2020.

Mobilized in response to this massive crisis, Finland and France led a group of governments to launch the School Meals Coalition during the United Nations Food Systems Summit in 2021; and the political momentum has only grown since then. At the time of publication of this report, more than 76 countries, of which 33 are African, and more than 83 partners (including UN agencies, think tanks and academic partners) had already joined the Coalition.

The Coalition is an innovative, government-led network of action which recognizes that school meals are a key social safety net for vulnerable children and households. The Coalition reaffirms the value of the education system and well-functioning schools in the delivery of school health and nutrition interventions (WFP, 2020b).

The African Union and AUDA-NEPAD were among the main initiators of the School Meals Coalition. In March 2021, the Communique of the Africa Day of School Feeding Celebration, called on all governments and partners to join the emerging School Meals Coalition and to advocate for the placement of home-grown school feeding in global discussions. As a task force member, the African Union Commission has advocated for its member states to join the Coalition and has positioned the issue in several official Declarations and Communiques, including the Africa Day of School Feeding Communiques 2021[6] and 2022[7] and the African Declaration on Transforming Education 2022.

Thanks to the Coalition, since 2021 there has been a substantial change in the level of political will around school meals. Specifically, African countries have been at the forefront of change, with good examples emerging from Benin, Rwanda, Senegal and others, which substantially increased their budget allocations to school feeding to reach more children and make education more widely accessible.

[6] https://au.int/es/node/40067

[7] https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/reports/41538-rp-2022_Communique_ADSF_14.03.2022_final.pdf

This chapter explains what the Coalition is about; what it represents for African countries; how it functions; and the various roles of its members in advancing progress. It is likely that by the time this publication is released, the Coalition will have continued to evolve as it adapts to the challenges its member countries are confronting. Updates can be found on the Coalition's website[8] and monthly newsletter, where real-time information is shared with partners.

2.2 THE SCHOOL MEALS COALITION: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the School Meals Coalition is to ensure that, by 2030, every child receives a healthy, nutritious daily meal in school.

The Coalition established the following three objectives to achieve this goal:

— *Restore what we had (by 2023):* Support all countries, regardless of income level, re-establish effective school meal programmes and repair what was lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.

— *Reach those we missed (by 2030):* Reach the most vulnerable children, in low and lower middle-income countries, who were not reached even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

— *Improve our approach (by 2030):* Improve the quality and efficiency of school meal programmes worldwide. Ensure that nutrition-sensitive approaches are linked to nutrition education and other health interventions.

AUC/Eric J. Wagobera

[8] https://schoolmealscoalition.org

2.3 WHAT THE COALITION IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

The School Meals Coalition is a group of governments and partners agreeing to work together, to improve the quality, sustainability and scale of national school meal programmes and complementary interventions. It is an adaptive and flexible network of networks that pools resources, such as best practices, experience, information and technical support. It addresses implementation bottlenecks; strengthens evidence for decision making; provides opportunities for improved coordination; and generates the political will and buy-in needed for advancement through advocacy.

The Coalition is a voluntary, collaborative partnership that is based on clear and action-oriented commitments, which will evolve into a multi-actor network to support countries as they meet their school feeding commitments.

Despite its catalytic role, the Coalition is not and will not become a funding mechanism. It will not disburse or manage funding for countries or partners. Yet, significant amounts of financing will be needed to improve and scale up programmes in various countries. Member states are responsible for leading on this, and domestic financing arrangements will be discussed, defined and handled at the country level, led by national institutions.

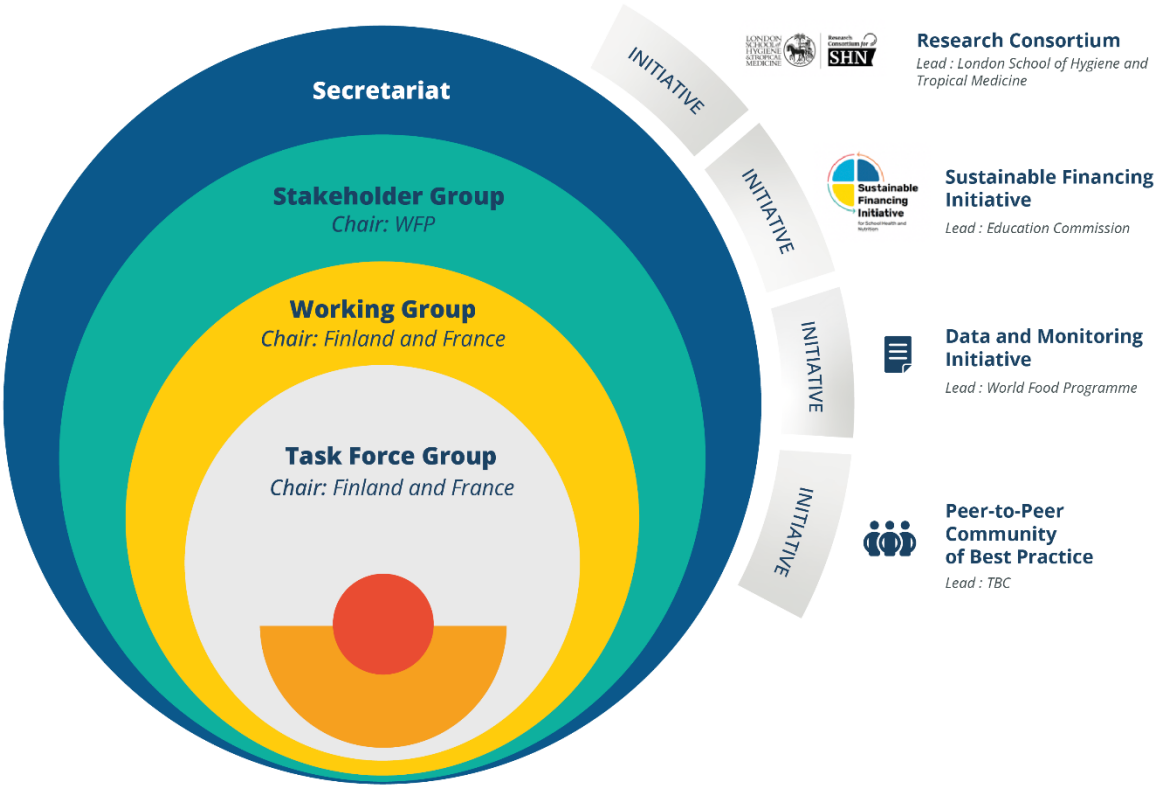
Members of the Coalition have defined the following principles, which help to further explain what the group is and how it works:

1. *Government-led, partner-supported*: The Coalition was formed by governments for governments, to advance a key policy priority. However, progress will also require action by stakeholders including international organizations, academia, civil society and the private sector.
2. *Country-level focus*: The Coalition is rooted in country-level actions. At the national level, the coalition will require strong leadership by governments (translated into a clear vision and a coherent and well-articulated strategy) and strong commitments.
3. *Child-focused multisectoral actions and partnerships*: It takes several sectors working together to help children fulfil their potential. Key among these sectors are education, health/nutrition, social protection and food systems.
4. *Evidence-based actions*. The Coalition's actions are based on quality research and evidence.

2.4 HOW THE SCHOOL MEALS COALITION WORKS: STRUCTURE

Following discussions and inputs after its launch, the Coalition favours a minimalistic and flexible approach towards its structure. It has three main groups: Task Force Group, Working Group and Stakeholder Group. It also has a secretariat and four partner-led initiatives.

Figure 2.1 Structure of the School Meals Coalition



Source: School Meals Coalition

- The Task Force Group is the Coalition's decision making body. Currently co-led by Finland and France, the task force is made up of focal points from the leading members: African Union, Finland, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Japan, Kenya, Iceland, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden and United States of America. The task force determines the overall strategic direction of the Coalition, sets yearly priorities, provides guidance and leadership to the work of the secretariat and the initiatives, and leads on political advocacy and positioning.
- The Working Group encompasses all 76 governments, including 33 African countries that have joined the Coalition by signing a Declaration of Commitment. Co-chaired by Finland and France, this group is a broad forum for information sharing; dissemination of best practices and country experience; establishment and mobilization of further partnerships and alliances between countries and with other partners; and sharing of expertise and institutional support.
- The Stakeholder Group is chaired by WFP and encompasses all organizations that have joined the Coalition by signing the Coalition's Declaration of Support. Like the working group, this is a broad forum for information sharing, mainly at the technical level.

At the global level, the organization and management of the Coalition is supported by WFP through augmented capacity in its School-Based Programmes Division in Rome, which serves as the Coalition's secretariat. In this role, WFP leverages its significant presence through

country, regional and liaison offices, and works with partners, including the African Union, to support country efforts.

2.5 HOW THE SCHOOL MEALS COALITION COMES TO LIFE

2.5.1 The initiatives and work at global level

The Coalition's initiatives are designed to tackle the most significant challenges to implementation and scale-up of programmes at country level. To this end, the Coalition is comprised of thematic initiatives including: (i) Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition; (ii) Data and Monitoring Initiative, (iii) Sustainable Financing Initiative; and (iv) Peer-To-Peer Community of Best Practice Initiative. Each initiative is led by a Coalition partner and has its own structure designed in response to the work and challenges it is addressing. The initiatives are how the Coalition is being operationalized at the global level and have emerged as large networks of partners interested in supporting specific thematic areas.

- The Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition Initiative is led by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and was launched in May 2021 as the first initiative of the School Meals Coalition. It partners with several institutions in Africa and globally to fill the research and evidence gap by generating evidence on the effectiveness of school health and nutrition programmes and to provide guidance on effective policymaking in this area, guided by a ten-year research strategy on school health and nutrition.
  The Consortium functions through a global network of communities of practice, which are a voluntary network of researchers and practitioners undertaking research related to school health and nutrition who operate as independent entities whose research agendas are autonomously managed. Working through a country-led approach, communities of practice are documenting good examples from national school meal programmes as well as quantifying their multisectoral return on investment. The first wave of research is currently under way in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger and Sierra Leone. In addition, the Research Consortium collaborates with AUDA-NEPAD, together with technical partners in National Institutes of Health, United States Department of Agriculture and Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to achieve consensus on nutrition indicators for school-age children.

  The Research Consortium is designed to respond to requests from Coalition countries, recognizing what emerges as key research topics and refining its research strategy in response. It is also specifically designed to support the efforts of the five UN agencies concerned with the well-being of children – FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO– which have endorsed this effort. *For further information on the Research Consortium, please contact shnconsortium@lshtm.ac.uk*

- The Data and Monitoring Initiative is led by WFP and was launched in May 2021. It was established with the goal of improving and institutionalizing the availability of quality data on national school meal programmes worldwide for evidence-based decision making and

tracking of progress over time. It serves as the key monitoring and reporting initiative for the three objectives of the School Meals Coalition. Governments need essential, up-to-date and reliable data to understand and optimize programmes and particularly to monitor and track progress over time. The Data and Monitoring Initiative has three objectives: establish an agreed core set of indicators; establish an agreed set of reporting processes; and create a database on school meals and school health and nutrition programmes.

The Data and Monitoring Initiative is guided by a steering committee which provides strategic direction, oversight and ensures quality assurance. The steering committee comprises intergovernmental/government institutions (including the African Union and AUDA-NEPAD), foundations, academia and civil society, and UN agencies. The steering committee is convened and chaired by WFP, which also hosts the steering committee secretariat. *For further information on the Data & Monitoring Initiative, feel free to contact Edward.lloydevans@wfp.org*

- The Sustainable Financing Initiative is led by the Education Commission and was launched in June 2021. Its goal is to work with governments and donors to increase and better coordinate financing (domestic and international) for school meal programmes with a particular focus on low-income and lower middle-income countries.

  The Sustainable Financing Initiative has four global objectives:

  - Undertake a landscape analysis of global financing for school health and nutrition programmes, exploring currently used long-term financing options in low-income and lower middle-income countries.
  - Generate additional knowledge and data, especially around funding mechanisms.
  - Identify opportunities for donors to coordinate more effectively around existing funding and to co-invest in programmes, using the cross-sectoral dimension of school health and nutrition programmes.
  - Share evidence and data collected on financing challenges and options.

  At the time of writing, a steering committee was being organized, which will provide strategic guidance to each of the objectives and deliverables, and contribute to global advocacy; political and technical support for school feeding financing strategies; and provide a peer review of research papers. *For further information on the Sustainable Financing Initiative, please contact SFI-SMC@educationcommission.org*

- The Peer-to-Peer Community of Best Practice Initiative is a member state initiative yet to be launched: it is being established to share lessons learned from national and local contexts and to inform and disseminate evidence-based policy, programme standards and guidance to strengthen school meal programmes. Learning from different approaches, the emerging network will bring together partners to support governments in sharing best practices, evidence and lessons learned, which will improve the linkages between education, agriculture, health and nutrition, and support integrated programmes and policies.

As a first step towards establishing this initiative, FAO and WFP, supported by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture have put in place an online school food global knowledge hub.[9] The hub is part of a wider project that seeks to develop a methodology for supporting countries to set and implement nutrition standards for their school meal programmes and policies.

2.5.2 Country engagement and connections to the Coalition initiatives

The Coalition's main goal is to accelerate progress on school feeding at the national level. Member countries are therefore encouraged to work on bold national targets and commitments, to expand and strengthen their programmes or support others to do the same. At the time of publication of this report, a total of 18 countries had formally submitted commitments to the Coalition, of which six are African countries. This section highlights some of these success stories, see Case Studies 2.1 and 2.2.

Case Study 2.1 Benin

In 2021, Benin joined the global School Meals Coalition with strong engagement from the President of the Republic, Patrice Talon, who has made school meals a flagship initiative for the country.

Benin has made tremendous efforts and commitments to school meals in recent years. In 2016, the country's school meal programme reached barely 20 percent of students, with a national budget of just under US$ 1.5 million per year. The government set the goal to increase to universal coverage and ensure a hot meal in school by end of 2023. By 2018, progress encouraged Benin to increase their goal to reaching one in two children.

In 2021, on joining the School Meals Coalition, Benin announced its plan to move towards universal school meals coverage. This ambitious goal is to be realized through a budget increase from US$ 79 million to US$ 240 million over the next five years.

The government is also assessing the quality and sustainability of its school meal programme, working with partners to provide better school feeding and to introduce a national school meals law, which would help anchor the programme as a key government safety net.

[9] https://www.fao.org/platforms/school-food/en

Case Study 2.2 Rwanda

The Government of Rwanda has shown impressive leadership in expanding its school meal programme and is working towards strengthening its quality. In 2019, at the National Leadership Retreat, President Paul Kagame and his Prime Minister called for a complete revamp of the national school feeding programme and an ambitious, comprehensive national scale-up. School meals had become a national priority.

It was only natural therefore that Rwanda was one of the first countries to join the School Meals Coalition and submit a national commitment. In 2021, as part of its commitments to the Coalition, Rwanda's Minister of Education announced that the government would achieve universal coverage of school feeding for basic education, consequently increasing its budget from US$ 8 million in 2020 to US$ 33 million in 2021. In 2022, Rwanda announced impressive progress, increasing national school feeding coverage from 660,000 to 3.8 million students, alongside another budget increase, from US$ 33 million to US$ 74 million.

Rwanda is also working to strengthen programme links to local supply chains in close collaboration with stakeholders in the agriculture sector, to expand the benefits of the programme to the wider community.

The government is also working closely with the Sustainable Financing Initiative and Research Consortium to document its impressive achievements and to learn from other governments about how to sustain, and expand on, its success. While the scale-up of the school meal programme has been impressive, the government recognizes that it still needs to build capacity and establish structures to ensure that these gains are maintained and can be further expanded.

2.5.3 How partners are engaging and supporting Coalition countries and initiatives

The Coalition encompasses a network of partners and experts working on different areas of school meal programmes and wider health and nutrition services in schools. At the time of writing this report, 83 stakeholders from academia, think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foundations, UN agencies and civil society have committed to working together to support governments to achieve their goals. Partners come together through the initiatives at the global level, but also support governments at national and local levels with their plans. The following are examples of support to governments:

Dubai Cares

In 2021, Dubai Cares became the first major partner and promoter of the School Meals Coalition by providing a strategic grant to WFP for the establishment of several of the Coalition's major initiatives, specifically focusing on advancing the school feeding agenda in Africa. This enabling grant by Dubai Cares focused on supporting the African Union on several goals and establishing

the Coalition's robust evidence-based approach – namely the creation of the Research Consortium.

Dubai Cares is combining these two efforts by supporting the generation of strategic research and evidence for school meals and school health and nutrition in Africa, including the first school health and nutrition database as a continental public good. Through these efforts, Dubai Cares aims to inform investment and programming on the continent.

Dubai Cares also supported the African Union's advocacy and capacity strengthening work, including the yearly celebration of the Africa Day of School Feeding and the technical validation of the AUDA-NEPAD Home-Grown School Feeding Guidelines in some African Union Member States such as Botswana, Cote I' Ivoire and Ghana.

Dubai Cares has been a strong partner for the African Union and School Meals Coalition, defining the global education space, for instance by hosting the RewirEd Summit in late 2021 and by creating the Framework for Global Education Transformation.[10] Within the Coalition, along with its significant inputs to different Research Consortium projects, Dubai Cares was influential in the soft launch of the Sustainable Financing Initiative and has helped inform future plans.

Islamic Development Bank

The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) has been committed to investment in education systems since 2018, with the approval of its first Education Sector Policy in December 2018, which aimed to build "Education systems that transform knowledge and learning for human development" as a key component of human capital development.

Over the years, IsDB has adopted an increasingly holistic approach to investment in basic and secondary education in which school health, nutrition and WASH are included as foundational elements.

[10]https://knowledgehub.sdg4education2030.org/system/files/202205/Framework%20for%20Global%20Education%20Transformation%20DubaiCares.pdf

IsDB is currently developing one of the first cross-sectoral approaches to financing school meal programmes by pooling funding from different sectors within the bank. A new financing window "Investing in the Learner's Future – The Human Capital Development Initiative" is currently being set up in partnership with WFP. This innovative approach makes IsDB a crucial partner for the Coalition as it develops and pilots new approaches for innovative financing from multilateral development banks. IsDB participated in the launch of the Coalition's Sustainable Financing Initiative and has been invited to be part of its steering committee.

With several IsDB member countries in Sub-Saharan Africa committed to the School Meals Coalition, IsDB is exploring opportunities to partner with WFP to optimize its financing to support school feeding programmes in response to learning and food crises.

Global Partnership for Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the largest global fund solely dedicated to transforming education in lower-income countries, and represents a unique, multi-stakeholder partnership. GPE supports countries with the greatest need and counts many African countries among its partners. It focuses on reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable children, including girls, children with disabilities and those who live in countries characterized by extreme poverty or conflict. Partner country governments are encouraged to set up multi-stakeholder groups to support education planning, and to include health ministries, and other partners such as UNFPA, WFP, WHO, NGOs and civil society organizations, to ensure a coordinated multisectoral approach that can integrate school health and nutrition programmes into education systems.

Many GPE partner countries prioritize school health and nutrition, and in 2016–2020, GPE allocated US$ 48 million to health and nutrition in schools (GPE, 2021b). During the COVID-19 pandemic and in its aftermath, GPE provided over US$ 8 million in accelerated funding to support nutrition-related programmes in 22 countries (GPE, 2021a). This included food distributions during school closures in Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guyana and Malawi; and development of new school feeding programmes or take-home rations to encourage children to return to school as schools reopened in Benin, Burundi, Congo, Djibouti, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Zimbabwe. GPE has invested in school feeding programmes in over 30 countries, including through recent accelerated funding to support more than 220,000 disadvantaged children in Ethiopia and 130,000 children in Somalia during drought in the countries.

GPE is a partner in the School Meals Coalition and part of Stepping Up School Health and Nutrition,[11] a partnership of UN and multilateral agencies to advance the health and nutrition of school-age children and adolescents. Ensuring schools are safe, healthy and inclusive is a

[11] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/agencies-call-global-push-school-health-and-nutrition

priority in the GPE 2025 strategy:[12] GPE is committed to supporting countries that prioritize school feeding as a means of transforming education systems.

UN agencies

The leaders of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) signed a joint Declaration expressing their strong support to the School Meals Coalition.

These five agencies have committed to working together to support governments determine their priorities and commitments and to assist them in working towards their implementation.

During the Transforming Education Summit, UNESCO, UNICEF and WFP took on a supporting role in the African Union–European Union organized side event "Transforming Education in Africa", which culminated in a Declaration setting out clear commitments for the continent in terms of education. One of the commitments was "To strengthen the implementation of comprehensive school feeding programmes to improve human capital and enable greater access to education, increasing school retention rates, enhancing the health and nutrition of children, and strengthening local and rural economies."

Most of the above-mentioned UN agencies are members of the African Union Commission Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster, chaired by the African Union's Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (AUC-ESTI) and co-chaired by WFP. The cluster serves as a platform to bring together stakeholders to support the African Union Commission to develop continental frameworks for education development; provide technical guidance to Member States; document and share best practices; and mobilize technical and financial resources for implementation – all specifically around home-grown school feeding.

In this context, UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa soft-launched *School Feeding: A Guide for Teachers in Africa* during the Africa Day of School Feeding 2021, designed to advance the African school feeding agenda by equipping teachers with the knowledge to effectively develop and promote school feeding programmes in their schools.

2.6 WAY FORWARD

In celebration of the Coalition's inaugural year, in October 2022 Coalition members and partners organized a virtual School Meals Coalition Week and the Coalition's first Ministerial Meeting in Helsinki, Finland. These two milestone events concluded with a Call to Action[13],

[12] https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-2025-strategic-plan
[13] https://schoolmealscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Call-to-Action-School-Meals.pdf

endorsed by all partners, and a Leaders Declaration,[14] endorsed by the 12 Coalition task force members – including the African Union, Kenya, Rwanda and Senegal.

Together, the task force members set out a robust road map for 2023 and beyond. During the Helsinki meeting in October 2022, France committed to host the next Coalition Ministerial Meeting in Paris in October 2023. For African countries, this will be an opportunity to assess and celebrate country progress and announce national commitments to scale up programmes in Africa, ensuring that by 2030 every child receives a healthy and nutritious daily meal in school.

During a high-level side event at the Global Transforming Education Summit at the 77th United Nations General Assembly in September 2022, the African Union released a Declaration on Transforming Education in Africa. This declaration further aligns the African Union's efforts and the Coalition's goals to strengthen implementation of comprehensive school feeding programmes and to establish and strengthen multisectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships for education at the country, regional and continental level.

AUC/Eric J. Wagobera

From an African perspective, the next significant steps to advance the school feeding agenda on the continent will be:

- The Africa Day of School Feeding is an annual rallying point to reinforce and strengthen political will and promote school feeding on the continent. The event has served as a

[14] https://um.fi/statements/-/asset_publisher/6zHpMjnolHgl/content/kansainvalisen-kouluruokakoalition-johtajien-julkilausuma/35732

convening space bringing together stakeholders across the public, private, civil society and multilateral sectors to raise awareness and knowledge of school feeding and to galvanize political support for the adoption, implementation or sustainment of pro-school feeding policies, programmes and resources. The 2023 event will be an opportunity to take stock of progress at the country, regional and continental level and will serve as a platform to encourage country-specific commitments, which are urgently needed to strengthen school feeding regionally.

- In an effort to contextualize these continental discussions, Rwanda has agreed to host a subregional School Meals Coalition meeting in early 2023, which will serve to consolidate a regional vision for school meals and create an additional support network between countries. This decision has inspired other regions to consider holding subregional meetings in the run-up to the global School Meals Coalition meeting in Paris in October 2023.
- During the Ministerial Meeting in Helsinki, in cooperation with partners, Kenya committed to creating a national School Meals Coalition. The Coalition will involve Kenyan actors and partners working together to scale up the national school feeding programme, so that all children in Kenya receive a daily, healthy meal in school.
- The Coalition's Research Consortium, in collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD and Regional Economic Communities, will conduct value-for-money studies in eight African countries: Cote d'Ivoire, Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique Namibia, Niger and Sierra Leone, which will help generate evidence on the impact of school meal programmes and inform evidence-based policymaking.
- The upcoming years will be marked by global moments, including the Coalition's global meeting in Paris, COP28 and the Summit of the Future. African countries will be able to showcase their leadership in the global arena and position school meals as a solution, which can help to build educated and healthy future generations and ensure a liveable planet.

Chapter 3

Leveraging school feeding programmes to accelerate nutrition improvement, human capital, food systems, social and economic development in Africa

Chapter 3

Leveraging school feeding programmes to accelerate nutrition improvement, human capital, food systems, social and economic development in Africa

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2016, at the 26th session of the African Union Assembly, African Heads of State declared home-grown school feeding a continental strategy to enhance education and strengthen smallholder agriculture and local economies. The *Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework*, developed in collaboration between AUDA-NEPAD and the UN Rome-Based Agencies, IFAD, FAO and WFP provides guidance to governments on implementing this strategy and facilitates the creation of a community of practice to achieve impact through home-grown school feeding (WFP et al., 2018). The Resource Framework aims to provide schoolchildren with safe, diverse and nutritious foods, meeting at least a third of their daily recommended nutrient intake. The Resource Framework holds the potential to contribute to the attainment of the SDGs related to food security, nutrition, education, health and agriculture (WFP et al., 2018).

This chapter emphasizes that, despite a considerable amount of work on home-grown school feeding in Africa and globally, actual evidence of its impacts is limited. This evidence gap remains an obstacle for decision making, regulation and the effective design and implementation of home-grown school feeding programmes. This chapter presents information on the African Union's theme of the year 2022, "*Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent: Strengthening Agro-Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for the Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development*". This theme echoes the high-level political commitment across Africa to advance nutrition through home-grown school feeding. It also provides insights into fundamental factors and issues that affect the relationship between school feeding and local food systems and gives an overview of the impact of home-grown school feeding programmes on local agriculture, nutrition, health, well-being and learning outcomes.

The information presented in this chapter stems from public, accessible and official sources, including the African Union, AUDA, WFP, FAO, WFP's Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM), World Bank and other development partners.

3.2 AFRICAN UNION THEME OF THE YEAR 2022 AND ACHIEVEMENTS: STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT[15]

The first aspiration of Agenda 2063 aims for economic prosperity based on inclusive growth and sustainable development; Agenda goal 3 recognizes the importance of a healthy and well-nourished population. Against this backdrop, the African Union recognizes the importance of human capital development in building an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent. Investing in people leads to improved well-being, reduced poverty and better health. The African Union declared 2022 as the Year of Nutrition, with the theme "Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent: Strengthening Agro-Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for the Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development". This theme, which was introduced during the 35th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly in February 2022, seeks to recognize progress in the area of nutrition, and to maintain strong political momentum in addressing malnutrition in the continent. The increasing toll of malnutrition in terms of death and illness, as well as its socioeconomic consequences, make 2022 an opportune time to reinforce continental, regional and national commitments to eliminate malnutrition in all its forms. The theme builds on regional frameworks such as the African Regional Nutrition Strategy, which calls on African

[15] https://au.int/en/theme/2022/year-nutrition

countries to adopt multisectoral nutrition action plans, budgets and expenditure-tracking mechanisms for effective nutrition.

By endorsing the theme of the year, Heads of States and governments emphasized the significance of nutrition, particularly child nutrition, as a critical component of human capital development and the social and economic transformation of Africa. They encouraged all Member States to continue prioritizing nutrition by implementing the priorities outlined in the plan of action for the year.

The increased focus and investment in nutrition at continental and national levels has led to a decrease in Africa's share of the world's undernourished population, from 35.5 percent in 1990 to 22 percent in 2019, according to The Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) Continental Report.[16] Despite these improvements, efforts to improve food security and nutrition on the continent need to be intensified for African Union Member States to reach the goal set by the Malabo Declaration of reducing stunting to 10 percent and underweight to 5 percent by 2025. The Food Security Information Network *Global Report on Food Crises* (FSIN, 2021) indicated that malnutrition remains a challenge in Africa, with the continent having some of the highest cases of malnutrition globally, accounting for over 90 percent of all children with stunting; over 90 percent of children with wasting; and over 70 percent of overweight children worldwide.

The African Union's theme for 2022 acknowledges the need for a multisectoral approach to tackle malnutrition, as its underlying causes are multifaceted, and the continent faces numerous environmental challenges such as climate change, recurrent droughts and floods, pest and disease outbreaks, conflicts, natural disasters, insufficient food production, trade restrictions, and insufficient participation of women and youth in agriculture.

In order to fulfil the objectives of the 2022 theme on nutrition, the African Union is committed to strengthening data management and information systems, as well as generating and disseminating knowledge to inform decision making. This will be achieved through increased advocacy efforts aimed at raising commitment and investment in nutrition. The African Union will also work towards strengthening institutional capacity and organizing forums and workshops to promote harmonized and coherent action, and to facilitate transparent partnerships and discussions on mutual accountability with stakeholders. By intensifying efforts and securing commitments from Member States, the African Union aims to ensure that the nutrition and food security goals outlined in the Malabo Declaration are achieved by 2025.[17]

The theme for 2022 was led by the African Union Commission's Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, in close collaboration with the Department of

[16] https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41660-doc-COHA_CONTINENTAL_REPORTEnglish20211.pdf

[17] https://au.int/en/articles/2022-declared-year-nutrition

Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, the Department of Education, Science, Technology and AUDA.

To achieve its goal on the theme of the year, the African Union agreed to:

- Evaluate and take stock of progress in implementing the African Union's commitments on nutrition at continental, regional and national levels.
- Facilitate a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue among all relevant stakeholders and policymakers, including parliamentarians, civil society organizations (such as women's groups, youth groups, farmer organizations, professional and academic institutions and associations), the private sector and international organizations, to establish a multisectoral platform. This platform will aim to identify practical solutions and pathways for accelerating the achievement of results.
- Facilitate knowledge and experience sharing among African Union Member States and through the South-South Cooperation Framework to foster collective accountability and reinforce ownership of Africa's food and nutrition agenda (as outlined in the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme Framework).
- Facilitate dialogue with Africa's strategic partners to secure a demonstrated commitment on nutrition and ensure that programmes are aligned with a cohesive and mutually accountable action plan.

Theme of the year-activities to date

A number of initiatives have been implemented prior to and after the launch of the 2022 annual theme, guided by a road map agreed upon and supported by African Union Member States and the African Union Commission. The following are some of the key highlights of these activities, at both the continental and national level:

- In September 2022, the 13th African Task Force on Food and Nutrition Development launched the African Union Year of Nutrition and Food Security, sponsored by the Government of Botswana and the Minister of Health in partnership with the African Union Cluster and AUDA-NEPAD. Following the launch, field trips were organized to assess mealtimes for primary and secondary school students and gather information on best practices in school food procurement and management.
- The Federal Government of Nigeria held a three-day National Data Conference to advance the country's nutrition data value chain. Plenary sessions focused on cross-sectoral data issues and the AUDA-NEPAD CEO delivered a call to action on the African Union Year of Nutrition and Food Security.

- On 24 August 2022, the Pan African Parliament held a workshop in South Africa. This workshop brought together the African Union Commission, AUDA and FAO to increase awareness and update African parliamentarians. The workshop aimed to raise awareness at the national level, sharing experience and best practices, and progressing towards developing a model law on food and nutrition security.
- The Government of Cote d'Ivoire hosted a two-day technical meeting in December 2022, gathering over 40 African Union Member States, which also shared progress and challenges in the attainment of Agenda 2030 and the Africa Agenda 2063. This event resulted in the Abidjan Declaration to accelerate investment and improve the coordination of multisectoral, multi-level and multi-stakeholder efforts to advance nutrition and food security outcomes in Africa.
- High-level launch events were organized in several member countries to increase commitment to nutrition and food security. The Republic of Botswana, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the United Republic of Tanzania were among the member nations that staged high-level events.

3.3 IMPACT OF HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING ON IMPROVING NOURISHMENT, HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND LEARNING OUTCOMES OF LEARNERS

Recent evidence highlights that governments worldwide are increasingly investing in school-based programmes to improve the health and nutrition of children and adolescents. These programmes now reach 418 million schoolchildren globally, primarily with domestic funds. The same trend can be observed in Africa, were such programmes reach 65 million schoolchildren and are mainly funded domestically, notwithstanding the emerging food crisis and tightened fiscal space resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. The rise of hunger due to factors such as food and energy price increases, climate change and its impact on farming, and the conflict in Ukraine, highlights the need for organized food systems. The near US$ 50 billion global spending on school meal programmes presents a valuable opportunity to secure the future of the world's children. To fully realize this potential, it is crucial to develop a better understanding of the linkages between agricultural production and the quality diets that children and adolescents need to thrive. This requires a new vision for agriculture and school feeding that prioritizes food sovereignty, biodiversity and climate sensitivity. As countries seek to rebuild their school health and nutrition programmes, they are increasingly focusing on more climate-smart, biodiverse and culturally appropriate agricultural systems. The school meal platform

presents an opportunity to foster climate-smart and sustainable food systems that promote better nutrition and diversified diets.

This section explores the available evidence and knowledge gaps regarding the impact of home-grown school feeding on academic achievement, nutritional status, and child health and development.

As highlighted in *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022*,[18] the global community recognizes the critical role of school meal programmes in supporting the health and development of children and adolescents between 5 and 19 years. There has been a paradigm shift towards investing in children throughout the first 8,000 days of life (roughly until age 21). The window from conception to 2 years of age, known as the first 1,000 days, is critical to child health and development. A focus on this period is a well-established policy in many countries, but it is also important to support health and nutrition for the next 7,000 days to sustain the early gains; provide opportunities for catch-up; and to address phases of vulnerability, especially puberty, the growth spurt and brain development in adolescence. School health and nutrition programmes provide important pathways for governments to intervene cost-effectively in the next 7,000-day period.

Investing in human capital, the sum of a population's health, skills, knowledge and experience, is essential for individuals to achieve their full potential and contributes to national growth and economic development.

Over the past decade, school feeding has emerged as the main component of an essential package of school-based interventions, along with other important activities such as deworming or micronutrient supplementation. This is due to the widespread implementation of school feeding: nearly every country provides food to its schoolchildren, impacting 418 million children globally. Furthermore, communities often place a higher priority on school feeding compared to other school-based interventions.

Child health and learning play a key role in the development of human capital. A well-nourished, healthy and educated population is the foundation for growth and economic development (Gatti et al., 2018). Further, 25 of the 30 countries with the lowest Human Capital Index are low-income countries in Africa. For many of these countries, underinvestment in human capital leads to a significant loss of economic potential in the long term. The Human Capital Index for Africa puts the region at 40 percent of its potential (World Bank, 2019). Estimates show that African GDP could be 2.5 times higher if the human capital benchmarks for health and education were reached.

The development of human capital requires not only high-quality education, but also good health and nutrition for children and adolescents to grow and effectively participate and learn

[18] To be published in March 2023.

in school. Improving the health and nutrition of schoolchildren can have a transformative impact on the rest of their lives. Children who receive adequate nutrition perform better academically, which in turns leads to higher income and performance when they become adults. This transformation is perpetuated to the next generation through improved health and nutrition, breaking the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and fostering a long-term cycle of economic growth and progress.

Home-grown school feeding aims to broaden the benefits of school meals by generating positive outcomes for agriculture and community development, especially in incorporating more local foods and strengthening food sovereignty in the delivery of school feeding programmes.

WFP/Arete/Fredrik Lerneryd

Approximately three billion people have low-quality diets lacking necessary calories, vitamins, and minerals, or containing excessive amounts of energy, saturated fats, salt and sugar (Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, 2016). In many countries, the majority of the population simply cannot afford a nutritious diet: in certain areas of Ghana, Madagascar and Mozambique more than 70 percent of households are unable to access nutritious diets (Development Initiatives, 2018). In low and middle-income countries, over half of young women and adolescent girls cannot meet their micronutrient needs (Global Panel on Agriculture and

Food Systems for Nutrition, 2016). Meanwhile, overweight and obesity rates are increasing globally, and most rapidly in low and middle-income countries. From 2000 to 2016, the proportion of overweight children aged 5 to 19 globally rose from 1 in 10 to almost 1 in 5 (WHO, 2020). Research suggests that undernutrition, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases are closely connected with early-life nutrition, diet diversity, food environments and socioeconomic factors (Hawkes et al., 2020).

School health and nutrition packages that include well-designed school feeding programmes can play an important role in addressing the double burden of malnutrition through nutrition-sensitive programming, linkages with agriculture, nutrition education and the provision of healthy diets. Schools offer an exceptionally cost-effective platform to improve child nutrition. This whole-of-school approach, incorporating school health and nutrition, should involve all components of the education system: school policies, the physical and social environment, formal and informal curricula, parents and school communities, and school health services. School feeding programmes are an essential component of the school health and nutrition interventions package, which also include micronutrient supplementation; screening, advice and counselling for malnutrition; vaccination; sexual and reproductive health services; mental health support; and menstrual health provisions, among others (UNESCO et al., 2020). Several research studies have demonstrated the potential cost effectiveness of such interventions (Aurino et al., 2018; WHO, 2020).

School feeding programmes should extend beyond the provision of a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate, diversified, balanced and healthy diet. It is also crucial to ensure that the food is served in a healthy environment, and that safe drinking water is provided. Staff should support students in practicing adequate hand hygiene (WHO, 2018). Additionally, school feeding programmes should be integrated with health education focusing on the promotion of healthy and nutritious eating habits, reducing sugar and salt intake (WHO, 2021); promoting physical activity; and providing screening, counselling and support for students with issues such as anaemia, underweight or overweight.

In order for future generations to reach their full potential, school health and nutrition programmes must be a priority (Bundy et al., 2018). The education system is particularly well positioned to promote health among children and adolescents in disadvantaged communities that lack adequate health systems. Schools are more common than health facilities in all income settings, especially in rural and poor areas (Bundy, 2017), making them an ideal platform to reach a large number of children and adolescents and play a key role in development efforts by improving child and adolescent health and nutrition as well as providing education. Schools present a unique opportunity for the sustainable and scalable integration of health and nutrition (Bundy, 2017).

3.4 IMPACT OF HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

At the global level, the transformation of food systems has emerged as a sustainable approach to achieve the SDG targets on hunger. In Africa, governments are building sustainable and resilient food systems to feed the more than 140 million acutely food-insecure people in the continent.[19] Evidence indicates that home-grown school feeding has the potential to strengthen the resilience of local food systems through its linkages with the local economy, particularly for smallholder farmers.

This section highlights the impact of home-grown school feeding on smallholder farmers and the role it can play in strengthening local food systems. It will also explore theoretical pathways and processes through which these programmes could contribute to the transformation of food systems more broadly.

3.4.1 Home-grown school feeding and smallholder farmers

While there is significant evidence on the impact of home-grown school feeding on education, health and nutrition (Bundy et al., 2009; Drake et al., 2016), the available evidence on agricultural outcomes is more limited. However, there is a growing body of research on the modality's impact on local agricultural development (Bundy et al., 2017; Sumberg & Sabates-Wheeler, 2011).

Since the adoption of home-grown school feeding in 2003 (African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency-NEPAD, 2022), governments have made significant progress in operationalizing these programmes. Currently, more than 20 countries are implementing national school feeding programmes[20] with Botswana, Ghana and Nigeria among the most advanced countries (AUDA-NEPAD, 2020). The growing interest is linked to the potential of these programmes to strengthen local agricultural productivity; increase livelihoods; and reduce food insecurity, as the demand for school food is supplied by the local communities and smallholder farmers who make up more than 50 percent of the agricultural workforce in the continent.[21]

The widespread adoption of school meal programmes presents an opportunity for African governments to invest in agricultural value chains as schools offer a ready market for

[19] https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/worsening-hunger-crisis-could-threaten-africas-stability

[20] https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20210301/homegrown-school-feeding-game-changer-africas-school-children

[21] https://www.ifad.org/thefieldreport/

smallholder farmers, including women and youth farmers. Currently, 65.9 million schoolchildren receive school meals every day across Africa (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.1), representing an untapped market for local producers. Evidence suggests that home-grown school feeding can generate income multipliers for smallholder farmers and the local economy. Additionally, these programmes help stabilize livelihoods, leading to asset creation and investments, and reduction in the use of negative coping strategies (Masset & Gelli, 2013). However, the level and distribution of the benefits to smallholder farmers highlighted in Figure 3.1 depends on procurement strategies, policies and procedures, as well as the targeting of smallholder farmers and the volume of demand for school foods (Sumberg & Sabates-Wheeler, 2011). The development of policies and procurement procedures can have a significant impact on the broader economy, indirectly benefitting those seeking employment, providers of non-food goods and services such as charcoal, fuelwood, basic hygiene items, education or training activities, and other food chain actors. For example, on average, for every 100,000 schoolchildren fed, 757 jobs were created (Chapter1, Figure 1.8).

WFP/Uganda/Hugh Rutherford

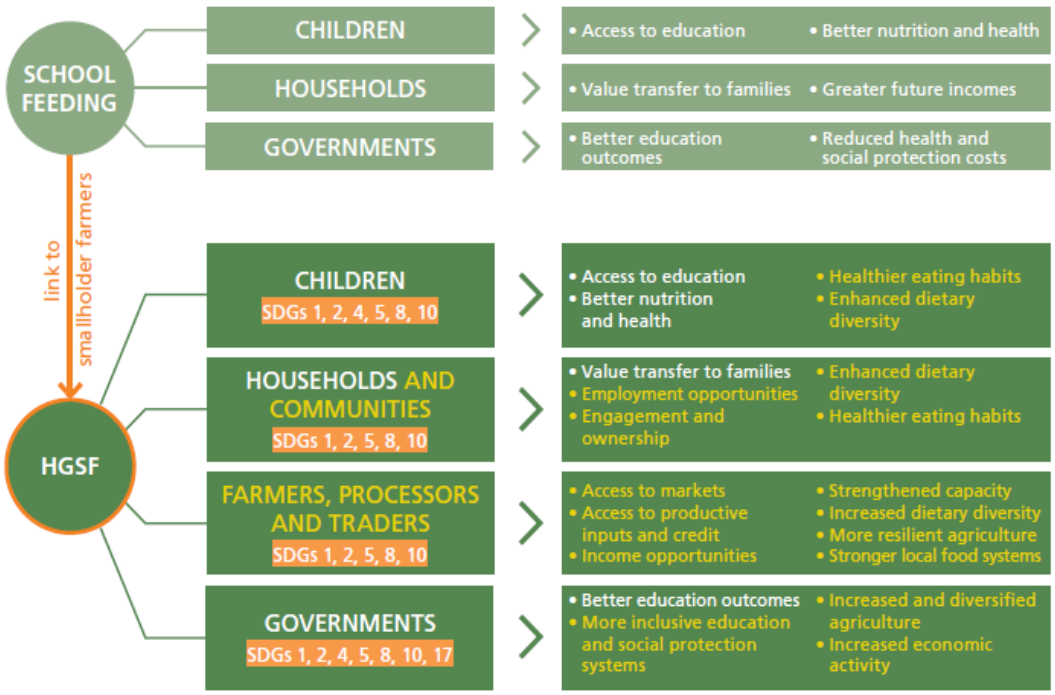
The design and scope of home-grown school feeding continues to differ in each country depending on how the specific programme contexts influence the links between local production and schools. In countries such as Zambia (Case Study 3.1) where school gardens are

incorporated into the programme, they are used as learning platforms for children and communities to better understand the risks and impact of climate change and adaptation strategies. They are also used for skills and knowledge transfer to learners on diet diversity, agriculture and environmental issues (Hunter et al., 2020). Home-grown school feeding programmes could also help tackle climate change due to their short and sustainable supply chains as food is procured locally and help to promote the consumption of fresh foods.

Despite the clear benefits of home-grown school feeding, smallholder farmers in Africa still face numerous challenges throughout the value chain. They lack knowledge about production practices; suffer from insufficient storage facilities; encounter unfair procurement procedures; and have limited bargaining power, particularly for perishable produce.

While it is often acknowledged that home-grown school feeding is a mutually beneficial model across the school food value chain (Case study 3.2), providing family farmers with increased opportunities to participate and improving access to markets and income-generating opportunities, empirical evidence on the economic benefits to smallholders and local farmer organizations remains scarce.

Figure 3.1 Beneficiaries and potential benefits of school feeding and home-grown school feeding



Source: FAO and WFP (2018)

To fully realize the benefits of home-grown school feeding, smallholder farmers must be able to supply food in the required quantity and quality. Two factors may facilitate a stable supply of food at the community level: first, the involvement of community-based organizations in the

management of the programme can help to identify farmers who can provide food in a timely and adequate manner; second, following a model adopted by WFP, procurement can be organized through contracts with farmers' associations/cooperatives rather than with individual farmers, thereby increasing the likelihood of providing food in the needed quantities and with a stable supply (Masset & Gelli, 2013).

Case Study 3.1 Increasing access to nutritious food for school learners through the innovative farming technique of hydroponics used by smallholder farmers in Zambia[22] [23]

About the innovation

Hydroponics is a subset of horticulture farming called hydroculture, characterized by growing plants in water without soil at regulated temperature and humidity. The water is enriched with nutrients, and the plant's roots are supported with some stationary medium to remain in position. The innovative component is meeting the plant's physiologic requirement without using soil and natural sunlight. This technique is attracting growing interest because of the shortage of land and water for use in conventional agriculture. In a conventional system, seeds begin germination when favourable moisture, air, temperature and light conditions are met. Most of the energy from the nutrients stored in the seed is utilized in developing the roots, while a limited amount is used for growth of the shoot. In hydroponics, favourable conditions are provided so that the nutrients stored in the seed are utilized for the development of the shoot, making the technique more efficient. The advantage of the method from conventional agriculture is that it controls climatic conditions and plant nutrition, increasing production and predictability of harvests of high-quality products that don't depend on crop or rain seasons and can be scaled.

In Zambia, a deep-water culture system with brick-and-mortar tanks in a greenhouse was implemented. Floating beds were covered in plastic sheets, and plants were anchored in net pots within Styrofoam plates.

Context

Zambia is a large, resource-rich country with a population of just under 19 million (2021). However, poverty remains a significant problem, with 47.9 percent of the population

[22] https://wfpinnovation.medium.com/south-south-cooperation-two-countries-four-teams-and-a-shared-journey-towards-zero-hunger-94f7c184ee3e

[23] https://www.wfp.org/stories/african-school-feeding-day-hydroponics-school-meals-zambia-nutrition

being multidimensionally poor, while an additional 23.9 percent is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty.[24]

Zambia's food prices and availability depend heavily on seasonality leading to periods of food insecurity. During these dry spells, high food prices lead to increased costs in running school feeding programmes resulting in reduced food quantities or reduction in the quality of the food consumed by learners.

The Zambia national home-grown school feeding programme aims to encourage school attendance, enhance access to education and contribute to the nutritional status of children attending school, benefitting about 1.9 million children in the country.

Zambian experience

The Ministry of Education and WFP partnered and implemented hydroponic gardens in Zambian schools to improve the nutritional value of the school meals through increased diet diversity. The programme involved the schoolchildren who benefitted from learning the hydroponics techniques practiced in the school greenhouses with the objective that they share their new knowledge with their communities. These programmes resulted in water saved compared to amounts used in conventional agriculture systems; minimum land use as hydroponics requires less than 1/15th of the space needed by conventional systems and reduced crop growth time for different crops grown. The hydroponics gardens in schools project aims to: (1) improve the production of nutritious foods in schools through innovative and sustainable farming methods and therefore contribute to improving child nutrition; (2) improve access to fresh food for learners and contribute to food and nutrition education; (3) transfer knowledge and skills on hydroponic technologies; and (4) diversify sources of income for schools by selling the surplus products harvested from the gardens.

The hydroponics garden project was scaled to about 71 schools in 16 disaster-prone districts and benefitted more than 45,000 learners (2022). Different vegetables were produced from the school gardens and were utilized in the school feeding programmes to enhance the meals. The surplus was sold to neighbouring communities to generate income to support the operational costs of the hydroponics gardens and to buy supplementary elements such as salt and vegetable oil for the school feeding activities. This was particularly important in the dry seasons when food prices were high, thereby earning the schools much-needed income. For example, in one of the primary schools in Gwembe, a town in the Southern Province of Zambia with about 1,288 learners, the community supported the school in constructing one greenhouse. A management

[24] https://hdr.undp.org/content/2022-global-multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi#/indicies/MPI

committee to run the operation was formed and composed of teachers, community members and pupils. The school went on to produce as much as 787 kgs of vegetables, using 474 kgs for meals, and the remaining 313 kgs (approximately) was sold to the local community, generating US$ 231. This money was used to support school feeding activities in the school. The engagement of the local community contributes to the sustainability of the initiative through knowledge transfer to community members, who then implement small-scale greenhouses in their households. Their involvement also helps to mobilize the initial set-up costs of the innovation to inform planning and manage expectations. The success of this initiative has been shared with other African countries as a tested method of enhancing the nutritional benefits of school feeding programmes, especially in areas with water scarcity and dry spells.

Case Study 3.2 Customizing home-grown school feeding to local challenges and opportunities while retaining its essential building blocks: Lessons from Nigeria

Supervision monitoring of school feeding programme in Nigeria

Nigeria's national home-grown school feeding programme supervision monitoring involves either visiting schools or conducting virtual focus group discussions or interviews with school feeding programme value chain actors. Supervision monitoring is carried out by relevant ministries and often supplemented by partners and stakeholders. Recently, the monitoring plans have been approved by local government education and health officers and carried out by the Foundation for the Promotion of Childhood Care and Development in Nigeria. The programme actors interviewed in monitoring are headteachers, primary school teachers (grades 1-3), food vendors, health officers, primary school pupils (grades 1-3), local government aggregators, State Board Management Committee members and parents.

Objectives

In consultation with local government education and health officers, the monitoring team conducts an oversight visit to assess the following objectives:

- Food quality and quantity and evaluate the menu and its adequacy
- Appraise food vendor management, health and food safety
- Impact of the school feeding programme on attendance and nutrition status

Findings

Headteachers were involved in monitoring the reach of the school feeding programme by recording pupils' participation in the programme. The headteachers were not involved in selecting the vendors and needed more input in determining and assessing the quality of the food provided. Local governments designed and delivered the food menu and identified the vendors after vetting. These food vendors collect some foodstuff from local government and buy products the local government cannot provide. The food menus appeared well-balanced and adequate for pupils, including beans and plantains; white rice and vegetable stew; Jollof rice and meat; yam pottage and fish; bread and fish stew. Fish and meat were served two times a week, and eggs were served once a week. Clean drinking water was provided with the food. These food items changed depending on seasonality and the price of substitute commodities throughout the year. Local governments also provided bowls, but parents had to supplement these due to more pupils than anticipated participating in the programme. The school feeding programme was regularly inspected by health officers who also trained the food vendors on food health and safety.

Observations

- The schools were willing to monitor the nutrition status of children participating in the school feeding programme
- The school feeding programme led to regular and on-time attendance by pupils
- Food quality and quantity varied with food price changes
- The school feeding programme had an adequate and well-balanced menu
- The demand for the school feeding programme was higher than anticipated
- Food health and safety were included in the programme
- Some parents were suspicious about the food served as part of the programme
- The school feeding programme excluded pupils in inclusive primary school education, which exists on the same compound as regular primary schools
- State Board Management Committee/Parents were not involved in the management of the school feeding programme.

Lessons learned

- To effectively monitor the impact of school feeding programmes on nutrition, schools should be trained and provided with growth-monitoring equipment
- Oversight of school feeding programmes should include head teachers, teachers, State Board Management Committee and parents
- School feeding programmes should include an awareness component, targeting parents with the benefits of the programme to the pupils, their education and health

- The programme should include school gardens, agriculture and livestock to ease the impact of market food prices on food quantity and quality
- Involve children in the design of menus to prevent excluding children with allergies to certain foodstuffs.

3.4.2 Home-grown school feeding as a catalyst for local food systems

The previous section emphasized the various approaches through which home-grown school feeding can benefit smallholder farmers. This section will focus on how these benefits can expand beyond smallholder farmers to building better local food systems (see Figure 3.2 for potential pathways to benefit local food systems). Research suggests that this approach can have positive downstream impacts on dietary diversity and economic and social outcomes for participating producers (Borelli et al., 2021).

Farmers are more inclined to diversify their production when they have assurance that their crops will be purchased at a fair price by schools (Gina et al., 2022). The local procurement aspect of home-grown school feeding programmes enables agrobiodiversity and serves as an opportunity to revive or promote the use of neglected and underutilized species. For example, in Kenya, as part of the Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition project, a farmer business school approach was adopted to empower local farmers, while also experimenting with a direct food procurement model[25] to provide African indigenous leafy vegetables such as amaranth, slender leaf, spider plant, cowpea leaf and African nightshade, for school meals. This resulted in positive outcomes on community livelihoods, ecosystems resilience and student health (Borelli et al., 2021).

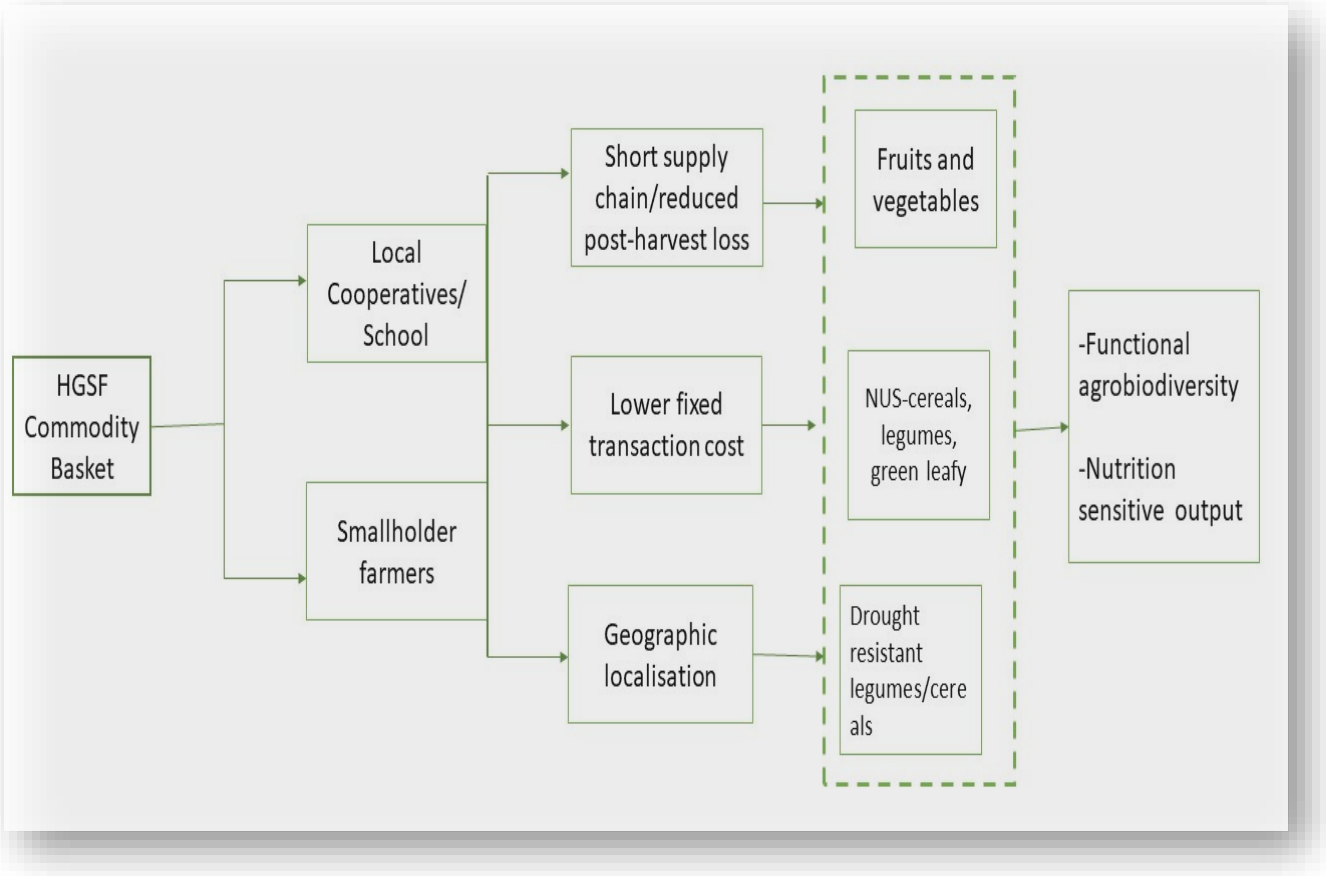
Additionally, food waste and high transaction costs present obstacles to strengthening food systems. Post-harvest losses remain a significant challenge for farmers in the continent, with annual losses in the range of 30 percent for cereals, 50 percent for roots and tubers, and up to 70 percent for fruits and vegetables (East African Community, 2022). Agricultural storage facilities remain limited, and commercial processing is scarce. Home-grown school feeding has the potential to reduce post-harvest losses and waste, owing to short supply chains (Gelli & Aurino, 2021). For example, in Kenya, farmers who participated in the Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition project experienced reduced transport costs and reported lower losses as farmers groups were able to grow vegetables on school land or nearby the schools. This also provided

[25] The concept of direct food procurement model links local farmer groups to school/canteens that provide meals to students and staff. Farmer groups travelled to local schools and presented their produce to the administration and catering staff. Most of the food items procured under this model were perishables.

the schools with a fresh, reliable and consistent supply of high-quality produce, while farmers reduced their costs (Borelli et al., 2021).

There is a growing call for home-grown school feeding menus to incorporate foods that are both ecologically and culturally acceptable to local communities, especially as the agricultural sector in Africa remains segmented for non-cereal foods. This emphasizes the importance of improving agrobiodiversity, which is closely tied to local socioecological and political contexts. A pilot project case study in Busia County, Kenya illustrates the crucial role that a favourable policy environment plays in the success of home-grown school feeding programmes (Borelli et al., 2021).

Figure 3.2 Pathways linking home-grown school feeding and agrobiodiversity



Source: Adapted from Singh (2021)

One approach to increasing the diversity of local foods in home-grown school meals, while strengthening food sovereignty, is to design and implement programmes that foster more effective participation by rural and urban women, as well as indigenous producers (Singh, 2021; Singh & Conway, 2021). Women play a significant role in the conservation and use of agrobiodiversity and have a strong influence over local traditional foods. Indigenous

communities also play a key role in preserving the majority of the world's biodiversity, including that used for food (FAO, 2021).

3.4.3 Potential bottlenecks to home-grown school feeding's impact on local agriculture

- Home-grown school feeding programmes are often in areas where there is a food deficit and inadequate production to satisfy the programme. The programmes target schools in the most food-insecure regions, characterized by low levels of agricultural productivity. In these common productivity contexts, the home-grown school feeding programmes cannot rely only on farmers' initiative without investing in complementary agriculture capacity interventions. This is because farmers in these contexts often cannot increase production to meet the demand from home-grown school feeding.
- Where farmers are willing to increase production to access these new markets, smallholder farmers lack the capacity required to increase production. This is mainly due to the lack of access to affordable credit and timely quality inputs and services, e.g. fertilizer, seeds, rainfall data, storage facilities, etc. For example, the lack of storage facilities leads to significant post-harvest losses that impact food supply, production and profitability. Official and farmers' estimates of post-harvest losses varied but ranged from 10–30 percent for pulses and grains in Kenya to 50 percent for fresh fruits and vegetables in Ghana. In addition, at each stage of the value chain, food was lost to spoilage or infestation. In food-insecure areas, such losses impact the food supply to an even greater extent.
- Limited crop diversification threatens home-grown school feeding. Smallholder farmers in many Sub-Saharan African countries are shifting from traditional crops to monoculture. For example, Kenyan farmers shifted to maize production; and, in Ghana, many farmers were moving from millet and sorghum to rice production. This shift to planting just one crop can exacerbate problems with soil fertility, especially in the long term, and can increase the risk of food insecurity in drought-prone areas.
- Extension services are not able to meet the needs of smallholder farmers. Agriculture ministries have implemented many agricultural production initiatives in many African countries. However, governments lack the staffing or resources to reach most smallholder farmers with the accurate and timely information needed. In some cases, extension systems focus on commercial farmers at the cost of working with smallholder farmers. In some countries, the ratio of extension staff to farmers is unfavourable for the smallholder.

WFP/Mohammad Gamal

3.5 WAY FORWARD

To achieve successful implementation of home-grown school feeding programmes in Africa, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Raising awareness among smallholder farmers and communities about the potential of the school food market and strengthening relationships between schools or relevant institutions and communities.

- Increasing the capacities of farmer organizations through the provision of knowledge, improvement of storage capacities, credit, post-harvest management, access to farm inputs and training on climate-smart farming methods.

- Streamlining procurement procedures to better suit smallholder farmers and farmer organizations, including simplifying registration and documentation requirements.

- Access to finance remains an impediment to increase production for smallholder farmers in the continent. Member States should therefore support smallholders' financial inclusion and access to financial services such as credit and insurance. This will enable smallholders to invest in expanding and protecting their enterprises and increase their contribution to the school food basket in quantity and diversity. Governments should also create an enabling environment for the private sector and institutions to invest in home-grown school feeding.

- Member States need to develop, implement or scale up integrated national home-grown school feeding programmes that promote children's health (including WASH), nutrition needs and child protection interventions targeting not only the first 1,000 days but also the first 7,000 days of life for schoolchildren to develop into healthy adults.

- Education is a key pillar of human development and human capital indexes, and this report recommends full implementation of the education commitments, including Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; and Aspiration 6 of the African Union Agenda 2063 which envisions "Africa's youth guaranteed full access to education, training, skills, and technology," as further outlined in CESA 2016–2025. Therefore, strengthening implementation of comprehensive school feeding programmes under CESA 16–25 to improve human capital and enable greater access to education; increase school retention rates; and enhance the health and nutrition of children is paramount.

- African Union Member States are strongly encouraged to investigate their school meals and school health and nutrition investment strategies, including their support of the School Meals Coalition's Data and Monitoring Initiative in agreeing on a core set of indicators on the nutrition status of school-age children and adolescents and more broadly on school meals and school health. With these indicators and enhanced data processes, systems and capacities, we can then improve data quality in this area to better track progress and inform decision making to promote the development of human capital and more sustainable and inclusive long-term economic growth, in and through school.

Chapter 4

School feeding in times of crisis: the impact of and response to COVID-19 and food–fuel crises on school health and nutrition in Africa

Chapter 4

School feeding in times of crisis: the impact of and response to COVID-19 and food–fuel crises on school health and nutrition in Africa

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The multidimensional connection of education, nutrition, health and a country's development necessitates a more integrated and systematic approach to school health and nutrition, as well as coordinated action to implement effective, multicomponent policies and programmes at scale (UNESCO et al., 2020). Evidence from implementation of school feeding programmes points to significant positive impacts such as better health and learning; improved lifetime earning potential; and enhanced economic productivity. School feeding interventions have been found to play an instrumental role in increasing schoolchildren's access to education and better learning outcomes, reducing malnutrition and combating micronutrient deficiency through increased consumption of diverse, nutritious, healthy and sustainable diets (UNESCO et al., 2022).

However, since 2020, the world witnessed unprecedented challenges affecting the proper functioning of school feeding programmes and their progress due to overlapping and mutually reinforcing crises arising from conflicts, climate change, COVID-19, a global economic downturn and the weakening global economy fuelled by growing geopolitical tensions. The cumulative effects of these and other growing uncertainties have exacerbated the cost-of-living crisis in many countries.

The African continent was already facing enormous challenges in terms of learning outcomes and skills development prior to 2020. However, this was worsened by COVID-19. Pandemic-related school closures and other shocks such as climate change, conflicts and instability have led to learning losses which may have serious negative effects on long-term development prospects by reducing future earnings, lowering productivity, increasing inequality and elevating the risk of social unrest (World Bank, 2022). As the impact of COVID-19 lingered, partly due to new variants and the resurgence of the virus in many countries, there were delays and irregular patterns in school reopening in Africa. These realities undermine governments' capabilities to ensure that effective social programmes and policies are in place and fully functional to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of shocks on the most vulnerable populations, especially women and children. School feeding programmes are key social safety net interventions to counter these impacts on children's food security and nutrition and to

support the continent's investment in human capital and long-term development aspirations (WFP, 2020d).

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the consequences of numerous crises on school feeding in Africa, focusing on recent and current issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, domestic conflicts, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the overall surge in living costs across the continent. The chapter presents case studies from three selected countries in Africa (Côte D'Ivoire, The Gambia and Malawi) to highlight not only the effects of these multiple crises on school health and nutrition but also governments and partners' responses to mitigate the impact of the crises on school feeding programmes. The chapter also discusses lessons learned regarding potential mitigating methods and the next steps to make African school feeding programmes more sustainable and resilient.

4.2 EFFECT OF COVID-19 AND THE FOOD–FUEL CRISES ON CHILDREN

The world is facing multiple crises caused by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change induced extreme weather conditions and conflicts. Shocks such as the consequences of Russia-Ukraine conflict have also compounded the already dire situation and led to the overall rise in the cost of living, risking the reversal of some of the prior decades' hard-won development gains. A combination of these and other challenges are making it harder for many African countries to access and afford adequate food, fertilizer, fuel and finances, for which they heavily rely on external sources. WFP estimates that the global food crisis has pushed an additional 23 million people under 18 into acute food insecurity since the start of the year, taking the total of children now affected to 153 million. This represents nearly half of the 345 million people facing acute hunger, according to WFP data from 82 countries.[26] As a result, governments' capacities to intervene, ensure continuity and scale up of social programmes, such as school feeding, which can be a critical tool to keep children in schools, and to support improved nutrition and educational indicators, are weakened. The following sections elucidate the impact of recent crises on school health and nutrition in Africa, especially school feeding programmes.

4.2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic, which produced various calamities, was designated a worldwide health emergency in 2020. Africa experienced a substantial increase in COVID-19 cases in 2021, causing governments to step up efforts to combat the virus, including school closures, COVID-

[26] https://www.wfp.org/news/generation-risk-nearly-half-global-food-crisis-hungry-are-children-say-wfp-african-union

19 related lockdowns and movement restrictions which triggered the loss of livelihoods and supply chain disruptions, while affecting food availability, affordability and access. The consequences of the pandemic, coupled with the effects of climate change induced shocks, exacerbated food insecurity in Africa. The continent faces socioeconomic challenges compounded by inter-linked and mutually reinforcing crises. The World Bank estimates that global school closures could result in the loss of at least US$ 10 trillion in lifetime earnings for this generation (World Bank, 2020).

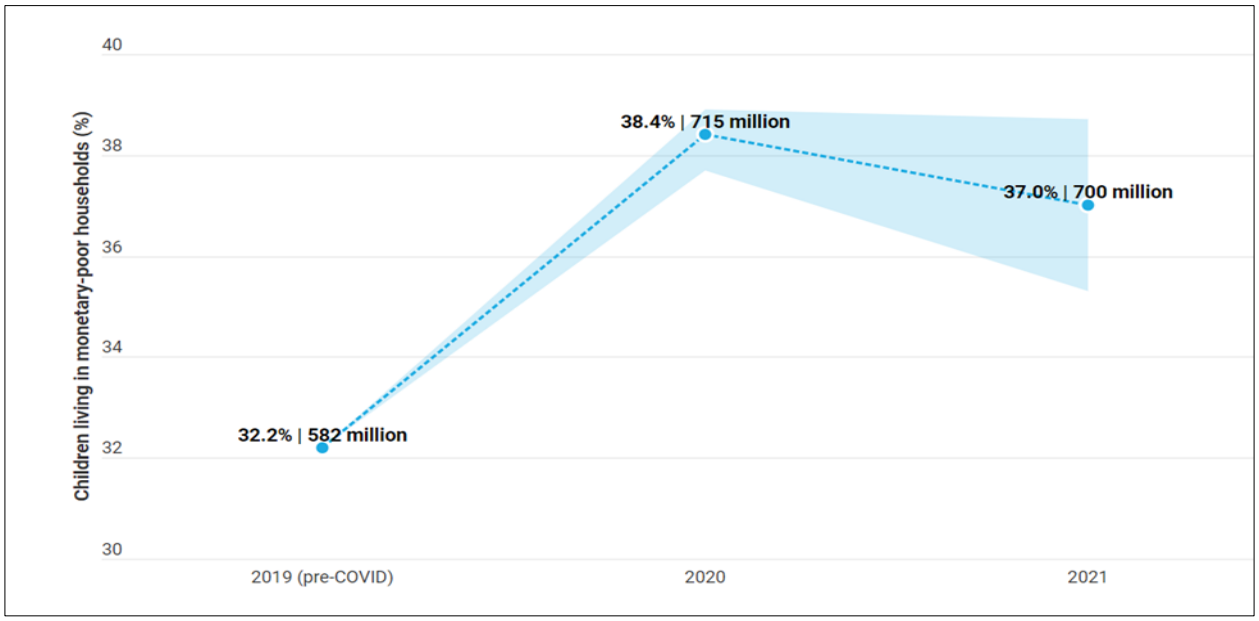
COVID-19 related lockdown measures, delays in global supply chains and the surge in food prices, severely disrupted school feeding services worldwide and are undoing gains attributable to school feeding, such as decreased dropout rates, reduced child labour, increased education and nutritional outcomes, among others. The post-COVID-19 period has seen increasing household food insecurity (Mohamed et al., 2021; Nwosu et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022); and coupled with other ongoing crises, the pandemic has limited access to the affordable and balanced meals which schools provide, further exacerbating growing food insecurity and malnutrition in Africa.

AUC/Eric J. Wagobera

In 2020, UNICEF projected that the global socioeconomic crisis caused by the pandemic could push 142 million more children into monetary poor households in developing countries. Therefore, in the absence of any mitigation policies, the total number of children living in

monetary poor households in developing countries could reach just over 725 million (Figure 4.1). Nearly two-thirds of these children live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. As families lose their sources of income due to COVID-19 related supply chain disruptions, movement restrictions and other related challenges, the global economy has been weakened, worsening household monetary poverty. For the poorest families, including those who do not have access to social protection, the situation is dire. An additional 60 million children could be living in monetary poor households by the end of 2021 (UNICEF and Save the Children, 2020).

Figure 4.1 Prevalence and number of children living in monetary-poor households, 2019–2021



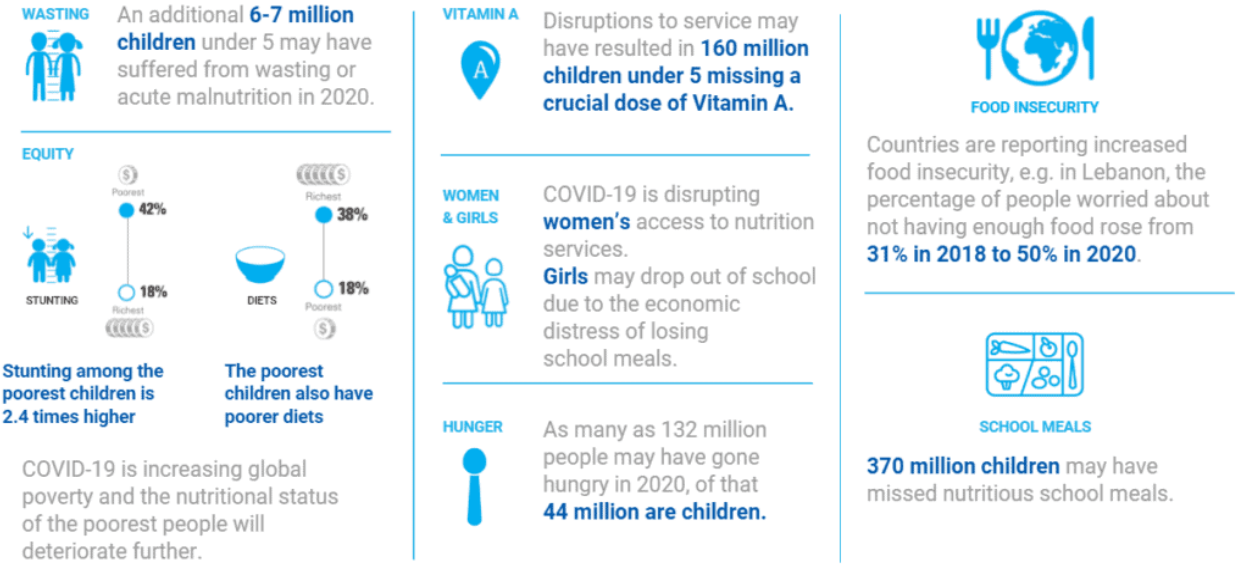
Source: UNICEF and Save the Children (2020)

Today, more vulnerable children are becoming malnourished due to the deteriorating quality of their diets because of the multiple shocks created by the pandemic and its containment measures. Efforts to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 are disrupting food systems, upending health and nutrition services, devastating livelihoods and threatening food security. The impacts of the pandemic on nutrition are manifold as illustrated in Figure 4.2.

In addition to directly causing the deaths of about 175,105 people in Africa,[27] COVID-19 has also disrupted critical health services and undermined years of progress combating other deadly diseases, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), tuberculosis and malaria as urban and rural health care facilities were overloaded and basic services for other diseases were reduced. Moreover, COVID-19 has made people less likely to seek health care because they were afraid of becoming infected with the virus. Fear and uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 also increased stigma and discrimination (The Global Fund, 2020).

[27] https://covid19.who.int/

Figure 4.2 COVID-19 related disruptions and the food insecurity and malnutrition landscape



Source: UNICEF and Save the Children (2020)

The direct health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa have been relatively low in terms of the recorded number of cases and deaths compared to other regions.[28] However, the pandemic has led to large indirect socioeconomic costs such as income losses and disruptions to daily life. While the direct health effects were obvious and more visible, the indirect effects manifested in the form of socioeconomic challenges and other ripple effects resulting from disruptions to local and global production and supply chains were more pronounced.

The disruption to global food production and supply has led to a significant reduction in access to and affordability of food with serious ramifications for food security and nutrition in food-importing African countries. The diversion of large amounts of funds towards health care and emergencies constrained the financing of food security and nutrition interventions, including school feeding programmes. Children are among the groups most vulnerable to the indirect effects of the pandemic on education, nutrition, health and social protection services.

At the beginning of 2020, national school feeding programmes were delivering school meals to more children than at any time in human history, making school feeding the most extensive social safety net and the largest multidisciplinary and inter-sectoral programme in the world (WFP, 2020d). More than 65 million children received school meals across Africa in 2019, a massive increase from 38.4 million in 2013 (African Union, 2021). COVID-19 brought an end to this decade of global growth in school feeding programmes and has sharpened global efforts

[28] https://covid19.who.int/

to restore access to these vital safety nets as a priority. At the height of the pandemic in April 2020, 199 countries had closed their schools and 370 million children were suddenly deprived of what for many was their main and only meal of the day. This loss highlighted the importance of school feeding as a social safety net which protected the well-being of the most vulnerable children and supported their future. The loss also highlighted the need to expand the concept of education to address the health and well-being of children, and to build back equitable, quality school-based health and nutrition services in every school for every schoolchild (WFP, 2020d).

WFP/Martin Karimi

COVID-19 has brought an unprecedented challenge to governments and communities, which in the absence of established broader social protection systems require new approaches, innovative solutions, learning and exchanging experiences among countries to leverage successful lessons. The pandemic forced governments across the continent to close schools and delay reopening as a containment measure to curb the spread of the virus. The massive emergency spending to tackle COVID-19 and declining foreign financing (WFP, 2020d) have also reduced public finances in Africa, leaving countries highly constrained to cover the cost of school feeding and other social protection programmes.

School closures halted school feeding activities which negatively affected child health and nutrition. In the wake of COVID-19, school feeding programmes have become a priority investment for governments as they help countries to build back better: creating human capital, supporting national growth and promoting economic development. Effective programmes help countries to support their children not only during the first 1,000 days of life, but also the next 7,000 days leading to adulthood. These 7,000 days are key to sustain early gains; provide opportunities for catch-up; and address critical phases of vulnerability throughout childhood and adolescence. School feeding programmes support the learner as well as the learning, helping build a healthy and educated population, while simultaneously laying the foundations for national growth and development (WFP, 2020d).

4.2.2 Climate change

Besides the prolonged health and socioeconomic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a large part of the continent has also had to contend with difficulties due to climate change induced drought and other extreme weather events, which have become more persistent, frequent and intense. Worsening droughts and desertification have led to adverse consequences especially in the Horn of Africa[29] and the Sahel,[30] leading to significant loss of livelihood options, including land degradation, failed crop production and death of livestock. Southern Africa has also recently faced the impacts of climate change related disasters with implications for food security and stability.[31]

The drought and consecutive failed harvests in East Africa have created a dangerous situation for lives and livelihoods by repeatedly causing crop failure and death of livestock. In 2021 and 2022, large swathes of Somalia, Djibouti, southern and eastern Ethiopia, and northern and eastern Kenya faced the longest drought in their recent history. The drought in the Horn of Africa is the worst the region has faced in 40 years, going into its fifth consecutive season with sporadic rainfall patterns. Another climate change related effect in the region is the damage caused by recurrent flooding in Sudan and South Sudan. Such conditions have contributed to food and health crises. Food security also deteriorated in parts of Southern Africa due to the early onset of the lean season. Extreme weather events have become more frequent and intense with repeated deadly flooding, storms and cyclones in countries such as Mozambique, South Africa, Malawi and Madagascar, causing catastrophic consequences to livelihoods and infrastructure. Countries in the Sahel region are among the most affected by climate change with weather conditions drier and hotter than normal, leading to increased desertification and chronic shortages of food and water; while The Gambia and Chad have recently experienced massive floods similar to Southern Africa.

[29] https://www.unicef.org/stories/climate-drought-horn-of-africa

[30] https://www.icrc.org/en/document/sahel-food-crisis-fueled-conflict-set-worsen-during-lean-period

[31] https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2022/climate-related-security-risks-sadc-region

Droughts and other climate shocks have caused significant challenges for food security and nutrition in the continent. The situation continues to raise the threat of famine, large-scale displacements and migration. Drought and other unfavourable weather conditions have contributed to the food crises over the past two years through deteriorating food production and livelihood options emanating from failed crop harvests and death of livestock. These conditions have made it challenging to provide adequate, quality and timely food for school feeding in countries affected by climate change, made harder still by the displacements of people and school closures.

4.2.3 Conflicts and political instability

Conflict is another major challenge in Africa, which threatens lives and livelihoods, especially for the most vulnerable groups. Rising incidences of domestic conflicts and unconstitutional changes of power have also been witnessed especially in West Africa, fuelling instability and political polarization which affects food security and the nutrition status of the population. Conflicts and instability including civil wars, insurgencies, coup d'état and election-related crises have all impacted Africa. The continent has seen seven successful coup d'état and three attempts since 2020. Between 2020 and 2022, military coups have reappeared in the continent's politics resulting in transfers of power. Mali (in 2020 and 2021) was followed by Guinea, Chad and Sudan, while in 2021 an attempted coup in Niger failed. A successful coup took place in 2022 in Burkina Faso (twice in eight months) while similar attempts in Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia have failed. There were also intensified and new conflicts and insurgencies in many parts of Africa, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Libya, Sudan, Nigeria, Burundi and Mozambique. With a shift in focus to conflict management, resources were diverted from economic and social programmes such as school feeding programmes.

Armed conflicts have also led to a learning deficit and school closures in some countries in Africa. The UN Africa Regional Education in Emergencies Working Group indicated that a surge in armed conflicts especially in West and Central Africa (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger and Nigeria) resulted in the closure of over 12,400 schools (UNHCR, 2021). Schools are forced to close because of attacks from armed groups, lack of teachers, and/or refusal by parents to send their children to school. Domestic conflicts and instability have therefore taken a heavy toll on the health and nutrition status of schoolchildren in Africa. However, these conflicts not only affect school health and nutrition, but also keep children out of school resulting in them being recruited as child soldiers rather than attending school (WFP, 2020d).

4.2.4 The war in Ukraine and the cumulative cost-of-living crisis

The conflict in Ukraine has exacerbated Africa's precarious food insecurity and malnutrition situation, increased fuel and food commodity prices and influencing logistical expenses, particularly for transportation. This has resulted in the greatest cost-of-living crisis in a generation, compromising lives, livelihoods and the aspiration for a better world by 2030. As a result of lower food import quantities and higher import and fuel prices, the war has had an impact on food security and nutrition across Africa, leading to a reduction in the quantity and nutritional quality of food for school feeding. Additionally, access to foreign financing has declined due to sanctions and economic embargoes imposed on Russia. The head of the African Union warned leaders of the European Union in May 2022 that Western sanctions on Russian banks, which followed the invasion of Ukraine, have made it difficult or impossible for African countries to buy grain from Russia. The slowing of economic activity, including trade, has resulted in a loss of domestic income immobilizing capacity by way of taxes and customs duties, leading to lower revenues, reduced food access and higher food costs in Africa. Consumer price inflation rates have been relatively elevated in many African countries since 2021 (before the recent period wherein price inflation has become a global problem). Globally, half of the top ten countries with the highest inflation rate in 2021 were from Africa. Twenty-two African countries had a double-digit consumer price inflation rate as of mid-2022. Only ten African countries had an inflation rate of less than five percent. This suggests that Africa is bearing a disproportionately higher burden in terms of the rising cost of living. The impact on school feeding and, therefore, on children's health and nutrition, is significant as it reduces real household income, while the continent lacks adequate capacity to absorb these shocks or shield itself during such challenging times.

Reduced agricultural output and food imports, along with rising transportation costs, have resulted in decreased food access and increased food prices in Africa. Food price hikes are often worse in areas affected by drought and other climatic shocks, and a mix of additional variables such as macroeconomic concerns and rising global expenses add to the strain. Climate change-related shocks and internal conflicts now hamper food production on the continent, even as demand rises.

As a result of international budget constraints brought on by the war and the cumulative cost-of-living crisis, funding levels for development and humanitarian initiatives such as school meals and other social safety net programmes are being impacted. While most African countries' schools had already reopened by the end of 2021, the war in Ukraine disrupted global supply networks and increased logistical expenses, having a considerable impact on food access and affordability. Food insecurity and rising food prices harm school health and nutrition programmes. When faced with such obstacles, families often prefer to send their children to income-generating enterprises rather than to school, with a compounding effect of further learning losses for schoolchildren and adolescents, and inadequate health and nutrition for learners. A decline in actual household income and the lost safety net of school meals and take-home rations provided to families, may result in additional impacts such as early marriages,

early pregnancies and other adverse impacts on the human capital of African nations. In times of food, fuel and financial crisis, as was the case in 2008/2009, governments need to increase their investment in social protection mechanisms such as school feeding because of the multisectoral benefits across agriculture, education, health and social protection sectors. The School Meals Coalition is one mechanism that leading governments are seizing on, as they work to arrest these challenges facing future generations.

4.3 COUNTRIES' RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Three case studies have been drawn from The Gambia, Malawi and Cote d'Ivoire to highlight how countries responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to school feeding programmes. Using the case studies, this sub-section reviews school feeding policies and programmes in response to the pandemic; the effects of COVID-19 on children and their families' income and livelihoods; mitigation measures to cope with the effects of the pandemic; adapting to the new normal; and lessons learned.

FAO/Kaba Kankou[32]

[32] Integrated actions for innovative food systems across rural urban community project in Kenya.

Case Study 4.1 The Gambia's response to the COVID-19 crisis[33]

Following the first positive case in the country in March 2020, The Gambia took several containment measures including lockdown, school closures and the closure of local weekly markets (Lumos) and businesses, and movement restrictions that caused a decline in income of households and loss of jobs for many. Agricultural production and access to services and markets were also disrupted. Rice and vegetable farmer organizations faced difficulties in buying and selling their produce because of the closure of Lumos. School feeding and local production by smallholder farmers was severely disrupted. Similarly, the lockdown affected the movement of goods and services further exacerbating the situation.

After robust growth of 7.2 and 6.1 percent in 2018 and 2019, respectively, the economy has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and was expected to stagnate in 2020, narrowing the fiscal space for the government to finance school feeding and other humanitarian programmes. The Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis conducted by WFP indicated that food insecurity increased from 8 percent in 2016 to 13.4 percent in 2021. The population at risk increased from 29 percent in 2016 to 60 percent in 2021. More than half of the population were at the borderline of food insecurity with the risk of falling into the insecure category as a result of shocks (The Gambia Bureau of Statistics et al., 2021).

School feeding policies and programmes in response to the COVID-19 crisis

Since 2012, in collaboration with WFP and local stakeholders, The Gambia has developed a national policy and programme for school feeding and established a nationally owned home-grown school feeding programme. In 2017, The Gambia, with support from WFP, approved a national school feeding policy and piloted a cash-transfer initiative through two models: decentralized local procurement and caterer models, respectively. In context, the former is the established method for efficiency and effectiveness.

The pandemic affected more than 674,300 students across the country as students had fewer contact hours during the 2019/2020 academic year. This prompted the Ministry of Education to find innovative ways such as the use of media to deliver lessons to students while at home. The University of The Gambia utilized the Google online classroom to deliver lectures; and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education provided vital lessons to primary and secondary school students on core subjects using radio and television. However, the lack of access to the necessary media and online facilities, particularly in rural areas; absence of student-teacher interaction in digital-learning; and the difficulty of catering for children with special needs remained key challenges.

During the pandemic, a multisectoral and multi-stakeholder local procurement advisory committee that had been established in 2014 was reactivated to provide advice and support to local procurement and supply processes. The capacity of small-scale producers was strengthened by facilitating the registration of farmer organizations; the provision of training in the school procurement process; packaging; and better storage management practices, including awareness on the importance of storage, fumigation and quality analysis and inspection.

COVID-19 effects on the children/families' income and livelihoods[34]

As of 30 December 2022, there have been 12,586 infections and 372 deaths related to COVID-19 in the country.[35] The impact of the pandemic on schools and learning has been considerable. The gross enrolment rate declined to 0.3 percent by 2021 from 4–5 percent during 2010–2019 (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2021).

It took several measures to contain COVID-19, including a six-month full lockdown resulting in the closure of all local weekly markets, travel restrictions, limits on public gatherings and school closure from March to December 2020. These measures disrupted the school calendar; the movement of goods and services; and affected the agricultural sector and smallholder farmers, including cooperatives, which were not able to sell their products or establish linkages with the school feeding programme, causing significant losses in agricultural production.

Mitigation measures to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

To limit the spread of the virus during the initial phase, The Gambia implemented containment measures by closing public facilities (including schools) and international borders. Despite vaccine rollout and an end to lockdown, COVID-19 remains a threat to implementation of smallholder agricultural market support and the school feeding programme in the medium term. To cope with the impact of COVID-19, by 17 March 2020, The Gambia reactivated many of its disease prevention structures, including mandatory mask wearing, limits to gatherings, COVID-19 screening at Banjul International Airport and a 14-day self-quarantine for international travellers before closing air, sea and land borders, closing schools and banning public gatherings to limit infections.

[33] https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000125387/download/

[34]Tobiloba Oyejide Alex Omotosho, Oluwatomilayo Felicity Omotosho, Paul Bass, & Yahya Njie. (2020). COVID-19 challenges: The Gambia situation and probable solutions. https://wjarr.com/sites/default/files/WJARR-2020-0329.pdf

[35] https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/ci

The government worked with partners to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. WFP supported a cash-for-work activity for rice harvesting to prevent post-harvest losses and processing support to women fishmongers. WFP also supported distribution of vegetable seeds and garden tools to schoolchildren and communities to boost production and consumption of nutritious vegetables. With school closures, children lost access to their daily onsite meal; to address this, WFP and the government implemented take-home rations which helped to alleviate household food insecurity and continued to provide the nutritional value that comes with school meals. Vaccination also served as a mitigation measure which helped to end lockdowns and reopen schools. The school feeding programme was identified as a critical social safety net as children continued to stay at home. WFP expanded the supplementary feeding programme targeting children aged 6–59 months to two other regions; and identified quick impact interventions such as production, harvest and post-harvest management support to women horticultural farmers and rice farmers, including women fish mongers, to help alleviate the gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adapting to the new normal

A central-level, inter-ministerial task force has been established to serve as the Advisory Committee to guide the resumption and implementation of school feeding in The Gambia. Together, the WFP Country Office and the government undertook a study tour and exchange visit in Côte d'Ivoire to draw lessons regarding home-grown school feeding and value chain improvement during COVID-19. This helped increase learning of good practices that ensured continuity of market access by smallholder farmers to home-grown school feeding programmes during and beyond the COVID-19 impact period. WFP continued to provide support in restoring implementation of the home-grown school feeding programme by re-launching the cash-transfer programme and local procurement from smallholder farmers to ensure that the initiative is sustainable and manageable through community ownership and partnership. As a result, (i) 22,000 smallholder farmers were assisted with seeds and agricultural tools; (ii) 990 fish mongers participated in fish value chain activities, while 41,000 beneficiaries were reached through cash-based transfer activities; and (iii) 156,000 students benefitted from school meals (approximately 934 metric tons) including take-home rations.

Case Study 4.2 Côte D'Ivoire's response to the COVID-19 crisis

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire targeted 100 percent school feeding to support its economic and social development. Since 1989, the Ivorian Government, with the

assistance of WFP, has engaged in a vast programme of developing school canteens to achieve educational objectives and the development of human capital. In 1996, the Government established the "Programme Intégré de Pérennisation des Cantines Scolaires" (PIP/CS), and the Ministry of Education and WFP have been cooperating to implement and scale up the model, working together to fight against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

As in many other African countries, implementation of the school feeding programme in Côte d'Ivoire was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as the first cases of the virus were diagnosed, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire took measures ranging from mandatory mask wearing to school closures; the prohibition of gatherings of more than fifty people; and closure of its borders. These measures affected the most vulnerable, especially smallholder farmers and those that depend on informal daily jobs, small trades and agricultural producers due to the disruption to the supply chain and difficulties to market access. Similarly, the closure of borders affected the movement of goods and services between states in the subregion, which further exacerbated the situation.

School feeding policies and programmes in response to the COVID-19 crisis

Côte d'Ivoire has a national school feeding programme in place, which is implemented by the Ministry of Education. The programme covers 4,719 schools with hot meals twice a week. Since 2016, the McGovern Dole project, a support from the United States of America, through the Ivorian model of the "Programme Intégré de Pérennisation des Cantines Scolaires" (PIP/CS), provides funds to WFP to assist Côte d'Ivoire to increase its coverage by 613 schools with a model that provides daily hot meals to 125,000 children for 120 days during the school year and take-home rations to 10,000 girls to encourage girls' retention in school. This programme aims at lifting the standards of the school feeding nationally and is implemented in seven regions identified as priorities due to food insecurity and various obstacles to regular and effective schooling of children. In collaboration with the government and partners, WFP assisted 29,758 people who were displaced by the 2020 presidential election, 2020 flood victims, people living with HIV, and those affected by COVID-19. Prioritization of vulnerable categories ensured support to children aged 6-59 months, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and people with disabilities in alignment with the national programmes crisis response pillar (WFP, 2021).

The national school feeding programme is implemented through several components: i) distributing hot meals to students; ii) take-home rations for the girls of CM1 and

CM2;[36] iii) distributing deworming tablets alongside micronutrients; iv) reading improvement; v) strengthening the capacities of canteen managers and workers; vi) provision of kitchen utensils and equipment; vii) strengthening the capacities of smallholder farmers organizations and mainly women's groups, to take charge of school canteens. In this context and in support of the home-grown school feeding programme, WFP has been assisting communities and smallholder farmers' organizations by providing inputs, equipment, hydro-agricultural infrastructure, tools, oxen for ploughing and tricycles for post-harvest transportation. Communities are also supported to ensure adequate school feeding facilities, including hygienic kitchens, dining halls and improved stoves. However, the implementation of this programme was disrupted by the outbreak of the coronavirus.

COVID-19 effects on the children/ families' income and livelihood

When COVID-19 was first declared in March 2020, Côte d'Ivoire took several restrictive measures and actions including the closure of schools, and of large areas such as markets, nightclubs, restaurants, and the lockdown of the greater Abidjan. The restrictions disrupted the school calendar, affected the movement of goods and services, and negatively impacted rural development, in particular the agricultural sector and smallholder farmers, including cooperatives, and rural communities who were not able to sell their products or establish linkages with the school feeding programme, causing significant losses in agricultural production. This situation also had a strong impact on food and nutrition security as the availability and access to quality and quantity of food were challenged. On the other hand, COVID-19 restrictions have considerably reduced purchasing power, especially for households that depend on small jobs, trade and local production, as it led to inflation in prices of staple food.

Mitigation measures to cope with COVID-19 effects

To address the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Côte d'Ivoire, with the support from WFP through the USA- funded McGovern-Dole project, reinforced strategies and coping mechanisms to facilitate the resumption of schools after more than a month of suspension. Among other things, WFP supported the distribution of take-home rations for girls and students in CM1 and CM2 classes, capacity building for small producers' organizations that support the schools feeding programme by providing them with agricultural equipment and tools, and the supply of food to schools through WFP's local purchases. The local purchases helped to mitigate the difficulty in accessing markets and supported the local economy and livelihoods of

[36] CM1 and CM2 refer to primary school levels (cours moyen 1 and 2), which includes students from 8/9 years (CM1) to 10/11 years (CM2).

some rural households. With the "Bureau de Vente de Produit", a local NGO working on market access, WFP managed to facilitate linkages with local market and suppliers and saved post-harvest losses, including distribution of inputs to schools and communities to stimulate the production and consumption of nutritious local products. The take-home ration component has been scaled up with the reorientation of the food planned for the hot meals during the school closure.

Following World Health Organization's request for countries to activate the Centres for Emergency Operations in Public Health, Côte d'Ivoire established a crisis committee to better manage the risk of contraction and spread of COVID-19 virus. The committee developed and implemented an emergency plan. These included: (i) the sensitization and dissemination of preventive measures, (ii) the systematic detection of suspected cases of travellers from countries affected by the pandemic, (iii) the lockdown and, (iv) the management of confirmed cases. Similarly, in view of the worrying situation and the rising number of cases, the National Security Council adopted several measures aimed at containing the spread of the pandemic, including the reinforcement of health security for health workers, research personnel, defence and security forces and the reactivation of departmental committees for the fight against epidemics. During the school closure, WFP and the Association of Volunteers for International Service, an international foundation worked closely to develop educational content to be broadcasted via community radio to ensure children's education continuity and reduce negative impact on school curricula. As a result, children managed to study from home.

Adapting to the new normal

To keep the school running despite COVID-19 and after classes reopened, the Ministry of Education and WFP implemented measures including introducing sanitary kits and hand washing to the mandatory wearing of masks and social distancing for students, teachers and all the persons participating in the school meal preparation and distribution. In collaboration with local health structures and decentralized government services, including the National Agency for Support to Rural Development, local, national, and international NGOs resumed support to smallholder farmers in the vicinity of the schools. WFP and the government's rural development agency[37] jointly supported the sensitization of women farmer groups on preventive measures against COVID-19 so that they could resume work safely and quickly.

[37] National Agency for Rural Development / Agence Nationale d'Appui African Union Développement Rural (ANADER).

Case Study 4.3 Malawi's response to the COVID-19 crisis

Malawi has a robust institutional and policy framework governing agriculture and food and nutrition security, also for the national school feeding programme. Still, the pandemic affected agricultural and education systems as the government closed schools, institutional markets, and banned large gatherings. Smallholder farmers' organizations faced difficulties in buying and selling their products due to the COVID-19 induced closure of some institutional markets in the country. The closure of borders also severely disrupted the movement of goods and services, which further exacerbated the situation. Amidst multifaceted consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP worked closely with the government of Malawi to ensure food and nutrition to the most vulnerable.

School feeding policies and programmes in response to the COVID-19 crisis

Malawi was one of the last countries in Africa to be hit by the pandemic, not registering its first three cases until 2 April 2020. The detection of these cases post-dated the state of disaster declared by the Government on March 20, which closed all schools and universities, banned meetings with more than 100 people, and instituted social distancing measures for religious gatherings. Later in March, social distancing measures for markets and public transport were declared, the opening of the tobacco auctions was delayed, and all commercial flights were suspended from midnight on 1 April. A national COVID-19 preparedness and response plan was launched on April 8, and the country went into a 21-day lockdown.

Schoolchildren faced several challenges as a result of COVID-19, including academic regression, poor health and nutrition, among others. The restrictions disrupted the school calendar, affected the movement of goods, and negatively impacted rural development. Agriculture was affected as smallholder farmers and cooperatives, who were not able to support school canteens and sell their products, incurred losses. In collaboration with the government and technical partners, WFP has been providing capacity strengthening assistance to enable effective leveraging of the social protection system, including the transition of 166 additional schools (previously receiving in-kind food commodities from WFP) to home-grown school feeding supplied by local farmers. Currently, a total of 485 schools have adopted the home-grown model (89 percent of schools supported in Malawi) (WFP, 2020c).

COVID-19 effects on the children/ families' income and livelihood

Malawi in response to COVID-19, took measures such as closing public facilities including schools, workplaces, markets, and international borders to limit the spread of the virus. In terms of statistical data, there have been 88,123 confirmed cases of infection in Malawi of which 2,685 deaths were related to the coronavirus, as of 30 December 2022.[38] This situation created difficulties in food production leading to scarcity in the markets, causing price inflation and further disrupting school canteens' operations.it worsened the purchasing power of smallholder farmers and threatened food and nutrition security.

Malawi was already one of the poorest countries in the world when the pandemic hit the continent, further weakening its economy and education system. 1.1 million Malawians have fallen below the poverty line since the arrival of COVID-19, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute.[39] Most of the depend on informal trade and odd jobs that require travel. Hence, the coronavirus hampered "the normal way of doing business, and nearly 3 million Malawians lost portion of their income.

With the closure of schools, only 28 percent of children were doing schoolwork at home (Matita & Chimombo, 2020). Half of all children were doing more household chores, girls more so than boys. A third of children were involved in more farm work, including both boys and girls. In a report by Agricultural Policy Research in Africa, 69 percent of respondents received assistance from pre-COVID-19 projects, of which 46 percent were supported by the government.

Mitigation measures to cope with COVID-19 effects

Even before the first cases of COVID-19 infection were reported in the country Malawi had set up a national COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan that took several measures to mitigate the spread and impacts of COVID-19. The Government of Malawi, the UN agencies and leading international NGOs launched an Emergency Appeal that coordinated emergency response to COVID-19 and supported the government's preparedness and response efforts through targeting of 6.7 million vulnerable people. Mitigation measures were taken to reduce the spread of the virus including banning gatherings, closure of schools, markets, and major public places, and including restricting movement of goods and people through the closure of international borders.

[38] https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/mw

[39] https://www.ifpri.org/news-release/coronavirus-debts-aggravate-misery-malawi-and-skyrocket-suicides-infobaecom : accessed 20 September 2022.

To keep school functioning during the pandemic, the government made education material available for children home-schooling and e-/remote-learning. However, implementation was a challenge as most children did not have access to the internet, nor could they be observed as they listened to the primary education programme on the radio. In support of the Malawian government's efforts to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and keep schools running, WFP strengthened its school feeding programme with a take-home rations programme in two modalities, namely "Dry Take-Home Rations" and "Cash Transfers". Malawi was the first country in the region to provide take-home rations that combine food and cash transfers, which follows the distribution mechanism of the homegrown school feeding programme model. Cash-based take-home rations ensured the continuation of local purchases from smallholder farmers and stimulation of the local economy. Most of the cash distributed was reported to be spent on food (88 percent) and the remainder on other essential items. This modality helped stimulate local markets and economies while meeting children's food needs.[40]

Adapting to the new normal

A multisectoral working group, under the coordination of the Ministry of Education is implementing complementary actions to facilitate the resumption of education activities and the school feeding programme in Malawi. In this regard, WFP Malawi plays a dual role of implementation and technical assistance with the support of several stakeholders including other UN agencies, international NGOs and the ministries of agriculture, health, gender and the private sector has also supported the success of the home-grown school feeding programme. In line with the resumption of classes, WFP has strengthened the school feeding programme with cash transfer and local purchases from smallholder farmers to ensure that the initiative is sustainable with community ownership and partnership with the private sector.

4.4 WAY FORWARD

This chapter includes a synthesis review of available information and case studies regarding school feeding in the context of multiple overlapping shocks. The following lessons can be drawn to serve as additional guidance for improving the resilience and sustainability of school feeding in Africa.

- Developing a robust home-grown school feeding programme, with strong participation and ownership by the community, farmers and partners can be an effective intervention strategy to reduce vulnerabilities during shocks.

[40] https://www.wfp.org/publications/2021-covid-19-response-malawi-work-did-not-stop-may-2021

- Strengthened local supply chains must be the backbone of sustainable school feeding. This entails strengthening local suppliers and other actors along the chain from procurement of commodities and inputs to transformation and distribution of final products that respond to the standards required (nutrition, quality and safety).
- Capacity building of local actors (small producers) and support in terms of inputs and small agricultural equipment remain key success factors of the home-grown school feeding programme.
- Strong policies with effective institutional governance structures and innovative and sustainable financing strategies are key to improving response in times of crisis.
- Solid government ownership, combined with strong policy and strategy foundations contributes to increased responsiveness, which results in more agile implementation of activities, such as take-home rations and emergency preparedness measures.
- Strengthening institutional capacity and community participation and ownership can contribute to enhanced mitigation capacity. Capacity building on preparedness and developing complementary activities, such as community gardens and farming, can contribute to making the local economy more resilient.
- Comprehensive, multisectoral and innovative approaches are key to ensure timelines, and that effective measures are planned and implemented.
- Drawing lessons from good practices and adopting innovative approaches can help improve adaptation and mitigate vulnerability to shocks.

In general, the past two years have shown the vulnerability of school feeding programmes to shocks and confirmed the need to take measures to improve resilience and sustainability. Therefore, emphasis must be given to developing national school feeding programmes that are based on locally sourced food and integrated with local agricultural systems to mitigate the impacts of shocks on school health and nutrition. There is a need to transform national agricultural and food systems and improve markets in Africa to ensure adequate and timely access to locally produced, healthy and nutritious food that is compatible with the feeding habits of the society. Future generations of Africans can learn indigenous food culture and eating habits through foods such as bread prepared from cassava, sorghum and millet rather than from wheat, by adopting these foods into the school feeding programme. Such localization measures will improve the sustainability of school feeding programmes and enhance the development of local value chains including agriculture, agro-processing and related services.

School feeding programmes should continue to be funded mainly from domestic public and private sources. They should also be fully mainstreamed in national development plans, policies, strategies and budgets to enhance ownership and responsiveness. This will help to better safeguard school feeding both in crisis and post-crisis response. During crisis-induced

school closures that hinder onsite school feeding, take-home rations can be considered as an alternative for ensuring schoolchildren's health and nutrition.

Africa should also address some of the domestic challenges affecting school feeding and other socioeconomic issues and build resilience against external shocks. These measures must start with sustainably addressing domestic and cross-border conflicts on the continent. There must also be strong commitment to boost local productive capacities and value chain development within the continent and to foster inter-regional trade and investment opportunities. Therefore, there needs to be improvement not only in the production of food on the continent but also in the local procurement of food commodities.

It is important to strengthen regional and global collaborative and cooperative frameworks for a united effort in making school feeding programmes more resilient to shocks and more sustainable. For instance, the School Meals Coalition was formed to better respond to the education crises caused by COVID-19 and other shocks, where Finland and France led a group of more than 76 countries, of which 34 are African, with more than 83 partners to launch the Coalition during the United Nations Food Systems Summit in 2021.

AUC/Eric J. Wagobera

Conclusions

Conclusions

This report highlights the achievements and challenges in implementation of school feeding programmes in Africa during 2021–2022, using official data at the country level; evidence from other publications and reports; and selected case studies and best practices collected by the African Union and its partners. In its four chapters, the report provides an overview of the progress made in the development of school feeding programmes in Africa and the impact of the major local and global challenges faced over the past two years, including the COVID-19 pandemic and other multiple and overlapping emergencies. It also shows the strong interrelationships between school feeding, nutrition and agricultural development. The report highlights the creation and integration of the global School Meals Coalition and the African Union's role in the Coalition, revealing a growing global effort and the African Union and Member States' increasing commitments to address the mounting challenges facing school feeding programmes.

This section identifies upcoming opportunities, challenges and recommendations that can be addressed to further advance the school feeding agenda across the continent of Africa while acknowledging the successes; the efforts to overcome the difficulties; and the African Union's continued commitment to the objectives set in the Malabo Declaration, the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

African countries have made great strides in scaling up school feeding programmes over the past two years, despite multiple overlapping challenges both globally and on the continent. However, wide coverage disparities remain between regions and income groups with school feeding coverage remaining the lowest in countries where the need is greatest. School feeding programme coverage in upper middle-income countries is more than three times that of low-income countries. School feeding programmes cover approximately 50 percent in Northern Africa and Southern Africa, while covering only 5 percent in Central Africa.

The achievements of the past few years and the growing resilience of school meal programmes have been possible through the large financial and policy commitments made by African governments. In 2022, 89 percent of African nations had approved a school meals policy, up 21 percentage points from 2020. A very notable development is that low-income and lower middle-income countries have outpaced upper middle-income countries in the adoption of school meal policy frameworks.

While international donor funding remains predominant in low-income African countries, it has decreased to only 55 percent compared to 65 percent in 2020. Meanwhile, governments have

continued to make significant progress in funding their domestic programmes amid tightened fiscal space, increasing their domestic funding by 11 percentage points between 2020 and 2022, from 34 percent in 2020 to 45 percent in 2022. Domestic budgets continue to represent the main source of funding for school feeding programmes. The share of domestic funding as compared to international donor funding has increased from 81 percent to 84 percent across the continent.

Virtually all African countries provide school feeding in conjunction with at least one complementary school-based health and nutrition intervention, while 10 percent of countries provide a fully integrated package of 7 to 10 complementary interventions in conjunction with school feeding.

The African Union played a significant role in the creation of the global School Meals Coalition by encouraging the inclusion of domestic school feeding in the global development agenda as well as convincing African Union Member States to join the Coalition through its numerous official Declarations and Communiques. The Coalition's creation influenced opinion and galvanized political will around school meals. Several African nations have been at the forefront of the change, including Rwanda, Benin and Senegal. These nations have significantly increased their annual school feeding budgets to reach more students and expand access to education.

WFP/Arete/Therese Di Campo

School feeding programmes contribute to the development of human capital; provide opportunities to address inequality and poverty; serve as platforms for community services, and health and nutrition services; and act as a social safety net. In addition, linking smallholder farmers to home-grown school feeding markets has contributed to increasing farm productivity and the incomes of smallholder farmers, creating a win-win for both farmers and children. Where school feeding programmes have included smallholder produce in their purchases, farmers have an opportunity to break intergenerational cycles of hunger and poverty in their families. As school feeding creates additional demand for food commodities, it provides a stable and predictable market for farmers.

COVID-19 related school closures since 2020 and sluggish school reopening have led to disruptions in school feeding programmes and other school-based health and nutrition interventions, leading to the curtailment of healthy and nutritious food provision to children in schools. Even after the reopening of schools following the COVID-19 related school closures, the exacerbating crisis induced by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, domestic conflicts and climate change pose a threat to a decade of progress made by African governments in school meals due to rising costs and reduced access to food.

While these multiple, overlapping challenges affect school feeding in the continent with significant implications for the health and nutrition of schoolchildren in the short-term, these challenges also affect the continent's human capital development and economic transformation in the long-term. However, the unfavourable situation created by this set of multiple crises also creates an opportunity for African countries to better reimagine the vulnerability of their current positions and design better policies and strategies that help build economies that are more sustainable and more resilient to shocks.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

- The past two years have shown the vulnerability of school feeding programmes to shocks and confirmed the need to take measures to improve the resilience and sustainability of home-grown school feeding programmes through the School Meals Coalition and similar multilateral collaborations.

- School feeding programmes benefit from being incorporated into national development objectives; receiving institutional and legal support; and obtaining innovative financing, especially from the domestic private sector. Additionally, there needs to be a strong commitment to enhance regional value chain development, inter-regional commerce and investment prospects inside the continent. Not only does the continent's food production need to be improved, but also local procurement and the creation of regional value chains for agricultural commodities.

- To improve the procurement of locally available and indigenous foods in support of home-grown school feeding programmes, as well as the development of local

economies and communities, including putting youth at the centre of these efforts, it is necessary to revise and streamline domestic policies and legislative frameworks.

- In order to realize the transformative potential of national school feeding programmes, more funding is required through innovative approaches that combine resources from both public and private sources, including allocation of funding into mandatory national budget lines.

- Governments should work together to improve the data landscape across the African continent, including by strengthening institutional capacity. By leveraging the School Meals Coalition's Data and Monitoring Initiative, governments can directly enhance the quality and accessibility of relevant and up-to-date data and information and at the same time strengthen their institutional capacity for providing evidence-based policies; targeted nutrition interventions at scale; and for tracking and reporting on progress over time.

- It is necessary to adopt guidelines on minimum quality standards, such as putting into practice continental guidelines on the design and implementation of home-grown school feeding programmes; the declaration on fortification; and other nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions to ensure nutrient-dense and healthy diets while considering local contexts and needs.

- The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme Framework, the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy, the African Common Positions articulated at the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, and the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit are just a few of the tools that should be used to capitalize on the current momentum to steer the work of investing in learners and not just the infrastructure for learning.

- Africa needs to address some of the domestic issues impacting school meals and other socioeconomic matters, as well as develop resilience to outside shocks. Take-home meals should be considered an option to ensure schoolchildren's health and nutrition during crisis-induced school closures.

WFP/Giulio d'Adamo

WFP/Badre Bahaji

References

African Union. (2018a). *Sustainable School Feeding*. Addis Ababa, African Union Available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36100-doc-sustainable_school_feeding_1.pdf

African Union. (2018b). *Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union*. Available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36100-doc-sustainable_school_feeding_1.pdf

African Union. (2021). African Union Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding (2019-2020). Available at: https://au.int/en/documents/20210301/african-union-biennial-report-home-grown-school-feeding-2019-2020

African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency-NEPAD. (2022). *AUDA-NEPAD Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Home- Grown School FeedingProgrammes in Africa*. M. AUDA-NEPAD, South Africa. Available at: https://www.nepad.org/publication/guidelines-design-and-implementation-of-home-grown-school-feeding-programmes

AUDA-NEPAD. (2020). *Home Grown School Feeding Handbook: Lessons from Botswana, Ghana and Nigeria*. Available at: https://www.nepad.org/publication/home-grown-school-feeding-handbook#:~:text=This%20AUDA%2DNEPAD%20Home%20Grown,led%20by%20their%20national%20government.

Aurino, E., Tranchant, J., Diallo, A., & Gelli, A. (2018). School Feeding or General Food Distribution? Quasi-Experimental Evidence on the Educational Impacts of Emergency Food Assistance during Conflict in Mali. *Innocenti Working Papers*(2018-04). Available at: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/956-school-feeding-or-general-food-distribution-quasi-experimental-evidence-on-the-educational.html

Borelli, T., Hunter, D., Wasike, V., Wasilwa, L., & Manjella, A. (2021). Linking farmers, African leafy vegetables and schools to improve diets and nutrition in Busia county, Kenya. In L. F. J. Swensson, D. Hunter, S. Schneider, & F. Tartanac (Eds.), *Public Food Procuremnt for Sustainable Food Systems and Healthy Diets* (Vol. 2). FAO, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and Editora da UFRGS.

Bundy, D. (2017). *Child and Adolescent Health and Development* (3 ed., Vol. 8). Washington D.C, World Bank. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525240/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK525240.pdf

Bundy, D., Burbano, C., Grosh, M., Gelli, A., Jukes, M., & Drake, L. (2009). *Re-thinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector.* . Washington D.C, World Bank. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000020650/download/

Bundy, D., Schultz, L., Sarr, B., Banham, L., Colenso, P., & Drake, L. (2017). The School as a Platform for Addressing Health in Middle Childhood and Adolescence. In D. A. P. Bundy, N. Silva, S. Horton, D. T. Jamison, & G. C. Patton (Eds.), *Child and Adolescent Health and Development*. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-0423-6_ch20

Bundy, D., Silva, N. d., Horton, S., Jamison, D. T., & Patton, G. C. (2018). *Re-imagining School Feeding: A High-Return Investment in Human Capital and Local Economies* (Donald A. P. Bundy, Nilanthi de Silva, Susan Horton, Dean T. Jamison, & George C. Patton, Eds. Vol. 8). International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000116138/download/

Development Initiatives. (2018). *2018 Global Nutrition Report: Shining a light to spur action on nutrition*. Available at: https://globalnutritionreport.org/reports/globalnutrition-report-2018/

Drake, L., Cousin, E., & Kim, J. Y. (2016). *Global School Feeding Sourcebook: Lessons from 14 Countries*. Imperial College Press. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/24418

East African Community. (2022). *EAC records huge post-harvest losses in cereals and root crops*. https://www.eac.int/press-releases/141-agriculture-food-security/2393-eac-records-huge-post-harvest-losses-in-cereals-and-root-crops

FAO, A. o. B. I. a. C. (2021). *Indigenous Peoples' food systems: Insights on sustainability and resilience in the front line of climate change*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4060/cb5131en

FSIN. (2021). *Global report on food crisis* Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000127343/download/?_ga=2.38603875.1382967918.1678717155-512251003.1668114198

Gatti, R. V., Kraay, A. C., Avitabile, C., Collin, M. E., Dsouza, R., & Dehnen, N. A. P. (2018). *The Human Capital Project (English)*. Available at: https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/363661540826242921/the-human-capital-project

Gelli, A., & Aurino, E. (2021). School Food Procuremnt and making the links between Agriculture, Health and Nutrition. In *Public food procurement for sustainable food systems and healthy diets* (Vol. 1). FAO, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and Editora da UFRGS.

Gina, K., Zeyuan, W., Patrick, M., & Danny, H. (2022). The role of traditional knowledge and food biodiversity to transform modern food systems. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, *130*, 32-41. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2022.09.011

Global Child Nutrition Foundation. (2022). *School Meal Programmes Around the World: Results from the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programmes* Available at: https://gcnf.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/School-Meal-Programs-Around-the-World_-Results-from-the-2021-Global-Survey-of-School-Meal-Programs%C2%A9.pdf

Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition. (2016). *Food systems and diets: Facing the challenges of the 21st century*. Available at: https://glopan.org/sites/default/files/ForesightReport.pdf

GPE. (2021a). *COVID-19 response: Mitigation and recovery thematic grant allocation*. Available at: https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/covid-19-response-mitigation-and-recovery-thematic-grant-allocation

GPE. (2021b). *Results Report 2021*. Available at: https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/docs/results-report-2021/en/2021-10-GPE-Results-Report-2021-v2.pdf

Hawkes, C., Ruel, M. T., Salm, L., Sinclair, B., & Branca, F. (2020). Double-duty actions: seizing programme and policy opportunities to address malnutrition in all its forms. *Lancet*, *395*(10218), 142-155. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)32506-1

Hunter, D., Monville-Oro, E., Burgos, B., Rogel, C. N., Calub, B., Gonsalves, J. F., & Lauridsen, N. O. (2020). *Agrobiodiversity, school gardens and healthy diets: Promoting biodiversity, food and sustainable nutrition*. Issues in Agricultural Biodiversity. London (UK): Routledge. . Available at: https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/107465

Masset, E., & Gelli, A. (2013). Improving community development by linking agriculture, nutrition and education: design of a randomised trial of "home-grown" school feeding in Mali. *Trials*, *14*(1), 55. https://doi.org/10.1186/1745-6215-14-55

Matita, M. a., & Chimombo, M. (2020). *Impact of COVID-19 on Food Systems and Rural Livelihoods in Malawi – Round 1 Report*. Available at: https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/16670

Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. (2021). *Education Statistics* Retrieved from Available at: https://docplayer.net/215003026-Republic-of-the-gambia-ministry-of-basic-secondary-education-directorate-of-planning-policy-analysis-research-budgeting-education-statistics.html

Mohamed, E. M., Alhaj Abdallah, S. M., Ahmadi, A., & Lucero-Prisno, D. E. (2021). Food Security and COVID-19 in Africa: Implications and Recommendations. *Am J Trop Med Hyg*, *104*(5), 1613-1615. https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.20-1590

Nwosu, C. O., Kollamparambil, U., & Oyenubi, A. (2022). Food insecurity and health outcomes during the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa: a longitudinal study. *Health Economics Review*, *12*(1), 32. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13561-022-00375-x

Republic of Rwanda/Ministry of Education. (2018). *2018 Education Statistics. [online]*

Retrieved from https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/2018-education-statistics-report

Singh, S. (2021). Home-grown school feeding: promoting the diversification of local production systems through nutrition-sensitive demand for neglected and underutilized species. In *Public food procurement for sustainable food systems and healthy diets*. FAO.

Singh, S., & Conway, G. R. (2021). Home-Grown School Feeding: Enabling Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems. *Centre for Environmental Policy*.

Sumberg, J., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2011). Linking agricultural development to school feeding in sub-Saharan Africa: Theoretical perspectives. *Food Policy*, *36*(3), 341-349. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2011.03.001

The Gambia Bureau of Statistics, National Nutriton Agency, WFP, FAO, UNICEF, & Action Against Hunger. (2021). *State of food secuerity in the Gambia: comprehensive food security*

and vulnerability analysis. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000137452/download/

The Global Fund. (2020). *The impact of COVID-19 on HIV, TB and malaria services and systems for health: a snapshot from 502 health facilities across Africa and Asia*. Available at: https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/10776/covid-19_2020-disruption-impact_report_en.pdf

Tobiloba Oyejide Alex Omotosho, Oluwatomilayo Felicity Omotosho, Paul Bass, & Yahya Njie. (2020). COVID-19 challenges: The Gambia situation and probable solutions. https://wjarr.com/sites/default/files/WJARR-2020-0329.pdf

UNESCO, FAO, GPE, UNICEF, UNSCN, World Bank Group, & WHO, W. (2020). *Stepping up effective school health and nutrition: A partnership for healthy learners and brighter futures*. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/media/94001/file/Partnership-for-Stepping-up-effective-SHN.pdf.pdf

UNESCO, WFP, & UNCF. (2022). Ready to learn and thrive: school health and nutrition around the world; highlights. In.

UNESCO Institute of Statistics. (2021). *UIS.Stat In UNESCO Institute for Statistics [online]*. http://data.uis.unesco.org/

UNHCR. (2021). *Education under attack in West and Central Africa: a note by the Regional Education in Emergencies Working Group*. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/wca_educationssdadvocacynotesen_20211111.pdf

UNICEF and Save the Children. (2020). *Children in monetary poor households and COVID-19*. Available at: https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-in-monetary-poor-households-and-covid-19/

WFP. (2013). *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2013*. Rome (Italy), World Food Programme Available at: https://www.wfp.org/publications/state-school-feeding-worldwide-2013

WFP. (2020a). *Annual Country Reports 2020*. World Food Programme Retrieved 3rd October 2022 from https://www.wfp.org/annual-country-reports-2020

WFP. (2020b). *The impact of COVID-19 on school feeding around the world*. Available at: https://www.wfp.org/publications/state-school-feeding-worldwide-2020

WFP. (2020c). *Malawi Annual Country Report* Available at: https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report?operation_id=MW01&year=2020#/21226

WFP. (2020d). *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020*. Rome (Italy). World Food Programme. Available at: https://www.wfp.org/publications/state-school-feeding-worldwide-2020

WFP. (2021). *Côte d'Ivoire Annual Country Report 2021*. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000137855/download/?_ga=2.223822491.1064605970.1678200457-1182159860.1678200457

WFP, FAO, IFAD, NEPAD, GCNF, & PCD. (2018). *Home-Grown School Feeding. Resource Framework. Technical Document*. http://www.fao.org/3/ca0957en/CA0957EN.pdf

WHO. (2018). *Guideline: implementing effective actions for improving adolescent nutrition*. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at: https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/260297

WHO. (2020). *Guidelines on mental health promotive and preventive interventions for adolescents: helping adolescents thrive.* . Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240011854

WHO. (2021). Making every school a health-promoting school-Implementation guidance. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025073

World Bank. (2018). *The State of Social Safety Nets* Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29115

World Bank. (2019). *Africa Human Capital Plan*. Available at: http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/562231555089594602/HCP-Africa-Plan.pdf

World Bank. (2020). *The World Bank Annual Report 2020: Supporting Countries in Unprecedented Times*. Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/695a4509-25c7-5a14-b232-7ca1369ec22b

World Bank. (2022). *Learning Losses: what to do about the heavy cost of covid-19 on children, youth, and future productivity*. Available at: https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/related/WBG-LearningLosses-flier-10-09-22-e-version.pdf

Zhang, W., Persoz, L., Hakiza, S., Biru, L., & Girmatsion, L. (2022). Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security in Ethiopia. *Epidemiologia (Basel)*, *3*(2), 161-178. https://doi.org/10.3390/epidemiologia3020013

Glossary

Adolescence	Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from 10 to 19 years old. As a period of life characterized by important physical, psychological and social changes – with specific health and developmental needs – adolescence carries new risks, but also provides unique opportunities. Investment in adolescents today has broad implications not only for their own lives but also for family members and broader communities alike. The adolescents of today will be the parents, the teachers and the policymakers of tomorrow.
Beneficiaries	Those who receive the benefits of a particular social programme. For this publication, it refers to primary and secondary school-age children between 5-18 years who receive food in school feeding programmes.
Cost per child	The per-child cost of school feeding is estimated as the total expenditure associated with school feeding activities divided by the number of beneficiaries. The figure reflects costs related to commodity procurement, transportation, storage and handling, and personnel.
Coverage	The proportion of school-attending children who are beneficiaries of a school feeding programme.
Development partners	An umbrella term for stakeholders that support the development efforts of national, subnational or local authorities, depending on the particular context.
Deworming	A treatment to control intestinal worm infections such as helminths (roundworm, ringworm and hookworm) and schistosomiasis.
Fortification	The practice of deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients, such as Vitamin A, iron, iodine or zinc to foods.
Home-grown school feeding	A school feeding model that is designed to provide children in schools with safe, diverse and nutritious food, sourced locally from smallholders.
Investment	The total budget allocated to school feeding by the government or WFP, or an estimation of that budget. In this publication, these are estimates based on secondary data and not on information from national balance sheets.
National school feeding programme	A programme managed by the government either alone or with the support of WFP or other development partners to provide food on a regular basis to schoolchildren.

Nutrition sensitive programming	Interventions addressing the basic and underlying determinants of malnutrition: food security, caregiving, and access to health services and a safe and hygienic environment. Nutrition-sensitive programmes also address the enabling environment through technical assistance to governments, including advising on policies in complementary sectors.
School feeding	The provision of food to children or their households through school-based programmes. Such programmes can provide meals, snacks or conditional household transfers in the form of cash, vouchers or in-kind, take-home rations.
School health and nutrition	Health and nutrition programming designed for school-age children, as well as outreach activities that expand the effect of programmes within communities and to children not in schools. The services provided through school health and nutrition go beyond feeding, and may include additional interventions such as deworming, vaccination, vision screening, nutrition education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).
School Meals Coalition	An emerging initiative of governments and a wide range of partners to drive actions that can urgently re-establish, improve and scale up food and education systems, support pandemic recovery and drive actions to achieve the SDGs.
Social protection	A set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life-course, with particular emphasis on vulnerable groups.

Acronyms

AUDA	African Union Development Agency
CERFAM	Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition (Côte d'Ivoire)
CESA	Continent Education Strategy for Africa
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
ESTI	African Union Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Department
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GCNF	Global Child Nutrition Forum
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PCD	Partnership for Child Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Annex I
Children receiving school feeding

Country	ISO code	Income level	African Union Region	Children receiving school feeding	Source
Algeria	DZA	Upper middle	Northern	39,632	WFP (2020)
Angola	AGO	Lower middle	Southern	1,516,133	AU (2017)
Benin	BEN	Low	Western	835,453	GCNF (2021)
Botswana	BWA	Upper middle	Southern	569,514	GCNF (2021)
Burkina Faso	BFA	Low	Western	3,689,774	GCNF (2021)
Burundi	BDI	Low	Central	52,0613	GCNF (2021))
Cabo Verde	CPV	Lower middle	Western	85,117	GCNF (2021))
Cameroon	CMR	Lower middle	Central	195,042	GCNF (2021)
Central African Republic	CAF	Low	Central	215,411	GCNF (2021)
Chad	TCD	Low	Central	122,251	GCNF (2021)
Comoros	COM	Lower middle	Eastern	0	GCNF (2022)
Congo	COG	Lower middle	Central	142,450	GCNF (2021)
Côte d'Ivoire	CIV	Lower middle	Western	1,024,401	GCNF (2021)
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	COD	Low	Central	165,000	GCNF (2021)
Djibouti	DJI	Lower middle	Eastern	19,590	WFP (2020)
Egypt	EGY	Lower middle	Northern	11,200,000	GCNF (2021)
Equatorial Guinea	GNQ	Upper middle	Central	no data	
Eritrea	ERI	Low	Eastern	no data	
Ethiopia	ETH	Low	Eastern	1,676,452	GCNF (2021)
Gabon	GAB	Upper middle	Central	no data	
Gambia	GMB	Low	Western	261,231	GCNF (2021)
Ghana	GHA	Lower middle	Western	3,448,065	AU (2017)
Guinea	GIN	Low	Western	218,714	GCNF (2021)
Guinea-Bissau	GNB	Low	Western	224,986	GCNF (2021)
Kenya	KEN	Lower middle	Eastern	1,800,000	GCNF (2021)

Lesotho	LSO	Lower middle	Southern	363,461	GCNF (2021)
Liberia	LBR	Low	Western	278,043	GCNF (2021)
Libya	LBY	Upper middle	Northern	18,000	GCNF (2021)
Madagascar	MDG	Low	Eastern	366,693	GCNF (2021)
Malawi	MWI	Low	Southern	2,803,891	GCNF (2021)
Mali	MLI	Low	Western	581,014	GCNF (2021)
Mauritania	MRT	Lower middle	Northern	172,905	WFP (2022)
Mauritius	MUS	Upper middle	Eastern	75,000	SSSN
Morocco	MAR	Lower middle	Northern	1,267,109	SSSN (2021)
Mozambique	MOZ	Low	Southern	304,819	GCNF (2021)
Namibia	NAM	Upper middle	Southern	398,100	GCNF (2021)
Niger	NER	Low	Western	612,713	GCNF (2021)
Nigeria	NGA	Lower middle	Western	9,887,000	GCNF (2021)
Rwanda	RWA	Low	Eastern	724,059	OS (2018)
Sao Tome and Principe	STP	Lower middle	Central	47,550	GCNF (2021)
Senegal	SEN	Lower middle	Western	587,810	GCNF (2021)
Seychelles	SYC	High	Eastern	*est. 7,829*	*estimation*
Sierra Leone	SLE	Low	Western	485,674	GCNF (2021)
Somalia	SOM	Low	Eastern	170,796	GCNF (2021)
South Africa	ZAF	Upper middle	Southern	9,613,630	GCNF (2021)
South Sudan	SSD	Low	Eastern	338,243	GCNF (2021)
Sudan	SDN	Lower middle	Eastern	1,890,277	GCNF (2021)
eSwatini	SWZ	Lower middle	Southern	379,336	GCNF (2021)
Togo	TGO	Low	Western	133,008	GCNF (2021)
Tunisia	TUN	Lower middle	Northern	350,000	GCNF (2021)
Uganda	UGA	Low	Eastern	1,452,717	GCNF (2021)
United Republic of Tanzania	TZA	Low	Eastern	28,000	AU (2017)
Zambia	ZMB	Lower middle	Southern	2,075,631	GCNF (2021)
Zimbabwe	ZWE	Lower middle	Southern	2,489,909	GCNF (2021)

Annex II
Budgets allocated to school feeding

Country	ISO country code	Existence of a school feeding budget line in the national budget	National budget funding for school feeding	National donors and private sector funding for school feeding	International donors funding for school feeding	Total funding for school feeding	Share of domestic budgets in total funding for school feeding (%)
Algeria	DZA						
Angola	AGO						
Benin	BEN	Yes	22,127,750	0	7,525,580	29,653,330	75
Botswana	BWA	Yes	119,700,000	0	0	119,700,000	100
Burkina Faso	BFA	Yes	30,042,392	0	3,694,208	33,736,600	89
Burundi	BDI	Yes	2,600,000	0	16,000,000	18,600,000	14 4
Cabo Verde	CPV						
Cameroon	CMR	No	0	0	9,507,835	9,507,835	0
Central African Republic	CAF	No					
Chad	TCD	Yes	456,539	0	19,109,517	3,639,261	2
Comoros	COM						
Congo	COG	Yes	40,000	0	5,724,683	5,764,683	1
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	COD	Yes					
Djibouti	DJI						
Equatorial Guinea	GNQ						
Eritrea	ERI						
Ethiopia	ETH	No	45,484,039	0	32,400,095	77,884,134	58
Gabon	GAB						
Gambia	GMB	Yes	2,331,798	0	553,495	2,885,293	81
Ghana	GHA						
Guinea	GIN						
Guinea-Bissau	GNB	No	260,000	0	2,682,533	2,942,533	9
Kenya	KEN	No	17,325,983	0		17,325,983	100
Lesotho	LSO	No	11,137,734	0		18,137,734	61

					7,000,000		
Libya	LBY	No					
Madagascar	MDG	Yes	4,710,375	0	0	4,710,375	100
Malawi	MWI	Yes	111,248	0	13,832,815	13,944,063	1
Mali	MLI	Yes	11,651,674	0	14,655,849	26,307,524	44
Mauritania	MRT	Yes	5,368,740	0	4,500,000	9,868,740	54
Mauritius	MUS						
Morocco	MAR		0	0	0	0	0
Mozambique	MOZ	No	0	0	9,536,074	9,536,074	0
Namibia	NAM	Yes	5,357,773	0		5,357,773	100
Niger	NER	Yes	4,329,234		25,370,744	29,699,977	15
Nigeria	NGA	Yes	361,200,000	0	0	361,200,000	100
Sao Tome and Principe	STP	Yes	41,123	0	0	41,123	100
Seychelles	SYC						
Sierra Leone	SLE	Yes	12,228,358	0	6,240,784	18,469,142	66
Somalia	SOM						
South Africa	ZAF	Yes	519,700,000	0	0	519,700,000	100
South Sudan	SSD	No	0	0	5,897,038	5,897,038	0
Sudan	SDN	Yes	0	0	16,356,593	16,356,593	00
eSwatini	SWZ	Yes	2,426,552	0	1,449,522	3,876,074	63
Togo	TGO	Yes	4,555,475	0	20,200,000	24,761,989	18
Tunisia	TUN	Yes	28,821,000	0	0	28,821,000	100
Uganda	UGA	Yes	272,456		2,000,000	2,272,456	12
United Republic of Tanzania	TZA						
Zambia	ZMB	Yes	2,016,931	0	5,700,000	7,716,931	26
Zimbabwe	ZWE	Yes	2,763,190	0	0	2,763,190	100

2021–2022 Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding

In 2016, the Head of States and Governments of the African Union acknowledged school feeding's contribution to human resources development in Africa in line with the aspirations of Agenda 2063, and the objectives of CESA 16-25. The 26th Assembly adopted the Home-Grown School Feeding decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI).

The first edition of the Biennial Report on School Feeding in 2018 presented data collected from 17 Member States. This 2021–2022 edition continues the commitment to report on the state of home-grown school feeding in Africa, providing a mechanism for accountability to the African Union; highlighting best practices; and identifying priorities and essential actions for school feeding in the continent. This report was drafted through a broad collaborative effort led by the African Union Commission and involving African Union partner agencies through the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster: AUDA-NEPAD, WFP, WFP-CERFAM, FAO, UNICEF and UNESCO.

The report presents compelling evidence on school feeding as an instrumental contributor to the attainment of the cross-sectoral outcomes of education, nutrition, agriculture, local development, local food systems and gender equality, as well as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, it highlights the growing importance of home-grown school feeding, as governments increasingly invest in improving the nutrition of schoolchildren and boosting local economies through procurement from local sources.

The cumulative effects of overlapping crises including the COVID-19 pandemic, the food and fuel crises, and climate change are all adversely impacting a near-decade of sustained growth in school feeding both globally and particularly in Africa. Now more than ever, this report highlights the importance of school feeding as the most extensive social safety net in the world and examines how governments can build back better in restoring access to education through school feeding programmes and the School Meals Coalition. It examines how home-grown school feeding programmes combat malnutrition, improve education outcomes, stimulate local food systems, create stable demand for quality and safe foods from smallholder farmers, while supporting job creation through skills development.

African Union Commission
P.O. Box 3243
Roosevelt Street W21, K19
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia