



# African Union Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding (2019-2020)



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# African Union



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## African Union Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding (2019-2020)

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# Foreword

As Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, I present the 2019-2020 Biennial Report on the operationalization of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) with highest gratitude to Member States, partners, and all concerned. This report is the third edition after the 2016 Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI) on Home-Grown School Feeding in Africa.

The report not only indicates the contribution that HGSF makes to inclusive quality education in Africa but also its contributions to other key sectors of nutrition, health, agriculture and local development. I extend my appreciation to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) for taking a lead in the publication of this report and to other key actors including AU NEPAD, UN FAO, UNICEF, WFP-CERFAM and others for their contributions as an editorial team, sponsoring this study, continued collaboration and their technical support.

The African Union adopted the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) as a regional operationalization framework for SDG 4 to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Moreover, CESA 16-25 is a key policy tool for AU’s Agenda 2063 aimed at fostering the skills, human capital, and education revolution in Africa. As Agenda 2063 calls for an education and skills revolution in Africa, CESA responds with a strategy that demands a paradigm shift in the organization and provision of education and training in Africa.

For advancing this objective and commitment to strengthening school feeding as a critical action, the AU Heads of State and Government instituted the 1st March as the African Day of School Feeding, through the Decision of the Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI), and recommended that the African Union Commission (AUC) a report regularly on the implementation of the decision to the Assembly through the Executive Council.

This report highlights evidence that School Feeding is an instrumental contributor to the attainment of cross sectoral outcomes of education, nutrition, agriculture, local development, and gender equality and the achievement of SDGs, related 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 .

This study clearly leverages on experiences of existing programmes to identify best practices that have worked across the board, and thus serves as a useful resource for the development of school feeding programmes across Africa.

The report suggests strengthening multisectoral approaches and the need to further strengthen the role of the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster.

I therefore call on all Member States and stakeholders to embrace this report and implement its recommendations for the advancement of HGSF programmes in Africa.



**H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor**

Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation  
African Union Commission

# Key messages

## *Chapter 1: School feeding programmes in 2019-2020: scale, coverage and trends*

**Over the past decade, African Union member states have made significant efforts to increase their budget allocations and adopt rigorous policy frameworks for school feeding. These efforts have not only led to the feeding of more children, but also to improving the quality of school health and nutrition interventions across the continent.**

- 65.4 million children received school meals across Africa in 2019, a 71% increase from 38.4 million in 2013.
- Between 2013 and 2020, the number of children receiving school meals grew by 11 percentage points and notably in lower middle-income countries, where it grew by 18 percentage points. In contrast, upper middle-income countries have maintained their high levels of coverage.
- 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 76 percent to 80 percent across the continent. Meanwhile, low-income countries in particular, have doubled their national budget expenditure from 17 percent to 33 percent between 2013 and 2020.
- The cost of school feeding is relatively consistent across a sample of 46 countries in Africa, on average about US\$ 52 per child per year.
- The share of low-income countries that have an established policy framework for school feeding has increased from 23 percent (2013) to 77 percent (2020); while in middle-income countries it increased from 27 percent to 73 percent. Almost all African countries, implement school feeding in conjunction with complementary health and nutrition interventions

## *Chapter 2: Scaling-up Home-Grown School Feeding in Africa*

**Member states have expressed growing interest in scaling up sensitization on the importance of nutrition for development, coupled with stronger political commitment to reduce undernutrition. As a result, Home-grown school feeding (HGSF) programmes have received increasing attention in recent years for their multiple benefits to schoolchildren, with Heads of State declaring that the HGSF strategy improves education, boosts smallholder agriculture and enhances local economies.**

- Around 80% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experience with school feeding at some level. However, several challenges remain in the implementation and transition

to Home grown school feeding, due to the lack of systematic implementation approaches.

- While planning for HGSF Programmes, an effective coordination mechanism is key. HGSF programmes require the involvement of different actors from different sectors to bring their knowledge and expertise in the planning and implementation of the programme.
- An enabling environment from government and a strong engagement of stakeholders are vital for a successful Home-grown school feeding programme. Financial capacity is portrayed by stable and predictable funding to school feeding, which has historically been achieved through a combination of sources, both non-government and government.

### ***Chapter 3: Providing an integrated school health and nutrition package***

**School health and nutrition aims to deliver coordinated and comprehensive strategies, activities and services that are integrated and sustained within the education system. This cross-sectoral relationship between education, nutrition, and health calls for more coordinated action to bring effective, multicomponent policies and programmes to scale across the African continent.**

- Schools can serve as a platform to offer preventative and curative health and nutrition services for schoolchildren, and can also benefit the poor and vulnerable suffering from ill health and poor nutrition status.
- Schools also help to address hygiene and sanitation, support education and help mainstream nutrition while promoting lifelong healthy eating habits.
- School-based interventions are cost-effective as they provide simple, safe, and effective interventions to school-age children and adolescents.
- In recognition of the multiple issues that can affect the health and education of schoolchildren, a proactive approach is required in establishing, implementing and coordinating integrated school health and nutrition packages.

### ***Chapter 4: The impact of and response to the COVID-19 pandemic on school health and nutrition in Africa***

**The COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the largest education crises in recent history, causing devastating effects on the lives of children. During the peak of the pandemic in April 2020, 42 countries in sub-Saharan Africa announced school closures, leaving an estimated 50 million children without access to education or school meals.**

- Closing schools was aimed at reducing transmission of COVID-19, but it has had dire implications for schoolchildren, who now face adverse effects on their learning, safety, health and wellbeing. Many children no longer have access to education and to the other

benefits of the education system as a platform for delivering community services, safety nets and other critical transfers, diminishing the prospects of a better future life.

- Many governments immediately responded to the absence of school-based provision of meals by employing alternative modalities to substitute for the daily meal that children normally receive at school, which included take-home rations and cash-based transfers. Coping and mitigation have been vitally important while schools are closed, but even the best efforts fall far short of the coverage and equity of the school-based approaches that they sought to replace.
- As schools start to reopen, the priority is to provide a safe school environment and ensure the number of children returning to school reach pre-COVID-19 levels. School feeding will be essential for getting children into school and keeping them there. School-based services must then resume to help children regain their health and nutrition after the rigors of lockdown and exclusion.

### ***Chapter 5: Partnerships and governance in school feeding***

**African member states, the African Union and United Nations partners increasingly recognize and prioritize well-designed and robust home-grown school feeding programmes to contribute to sustained growth and human development capital. The multisectoral and integrated nature of school feeding programmes which bring together different sectors, including agriculture, education, health, social protection, and shows multiple benefits and outcomes across thematic areas requires a holistic and multifaceted approach.**

- There is a growing coalition of partners working together to support governments in their efforts to promote integrated packages for school-based health and nutrition service delivery, with school feeding as an essential component.
- A strong integration of actors and complementary interventions are essential to deliver better outcomes. Advancing the African school feeding agenda underscores the importance of transformative changes at all levels and the pivotal role of inclusive, diversified and mutually reinforcing partnerships of all kinds to maximize impact at scale.
- Win-win partnerships at the continental, regional and national levels are fundamental to strengthening synergies and ensuring an effective shift towards sustainable and impact-driven government-led programmes.
- However, partnerships alone cannot succeed without solid governance and institutional arrangements in place. Improved institutional capacities and reinforced multisectoral coordination mechanisms are key to bolstering national ownership, ensuring alignment of sectoral policies and strategies, and mobilizing the resources needed for the implementation of coherent and effective interventions.

# Executive Summary

In 2016, the Head of States and Governments of the African Union acknowledged school feeding's contribution to human resources development in Africa, resulting in the realization of Agenda 2063, CESA 16-25 and the adoption of the Home-Grown School Feeding decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI)).

The Sustainable School Food and Nutrition Initiative (SSFNI) 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 the implementation of the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (2015-2025), and the fulfilment of the Malabo Declaration [Assembly/AU/Dec.490-516 (XXII)] 2014. The Malabo declaration aims to improve nutrition status and in particular, the elimination of child under-nutrition in Africa with a view to reduce stunting to 10 % and underweight to 5% by 2025.

One of the key priorities of the HGSF cluster is to produce a quality Biennial Report for Africa as stipulated in the AU [Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI)No. 17], which requests the Commission to report regularly on the implementation of the decision to the AU Assembly through the Executive Council. In 2018, the first edition of the Biennial report on School Feeding was published and it used the 2018 African Union study on Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union, with data collected from 17 Member States, as the benchmark to develop the report on school feeding. .

This 2019-2020 Biennial Report aims to continue the commitment to report on the state of school feeding in Africa, provide a mechanism for accountability to the African Union, highlight best practices through case studies, and identify priorities and essential actions for school feeding in the continent.

This report builds on a methodology validated by the African Union Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Department in November 2020. Due to the limited time available to prepare this report, and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, it was agreed to use existing data collected by official institutions and validated or signed-off by respective Member States' Ministries or officials, instead of engaging in a new data collection exercise from the African Union Member States, which would have required resources used to address the COVID-19 pandemic. In keeping with the methodology agreed by the AU ESTI Department, these 2019-2020 data are compared in this report to a baseline collected in 2013 for the *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020* publication by the UN World Food Programme, due to data availability, comparability of indicators, and because individual country governments had validated and cleared their individual country data.

## MAIN FINDINGS

### **At least 65.4 million children receive school meals across Africa.**

Recent data shows that between 2013 and 2020, the dates of the two latest surveys, the number of children receiving school feeding in Africa has grown by 71 percent. About one-third of all schoolchildren in Africa are now covered by school feeding programmes in Africa, a massive increase as compared to 2013. However, large disparities remain across the African continent: while school feeding coverage exceeds 50 percent in Northern and Southern Africa, and about 40 percent in Western Africa, yet as low as 5 percent in Central Africa, and just 20 percent in Eastern Africa. However, governments of all income levels have demonstrated a clear willingness to prioritize school feeding: low-income countries have doubled the share of domestic funding in school feeding expenditures, from 17 percent in 2013 to 33 percent in 2020. In lower middle-income countries, domestic budgets now represent 88 percent of funding for school feeding, up from 55 percent in 2013.

### **Many African governments have made Home-Grown School Feeding a priority and adopted institutional frameworks to support its implementation**

Governments have made important strides to translate the AU Assembly Decision 589(XXVI) in their national frameworks: 77 percent of African countries have now adopted a school feeding policy (up from 23 percent in 2013) and several countries such as Togo, Ghana and Mali have passed a Home-Grown School Feeding Law. Governments are building national capacities to implement Home-Grown School Feeding, particularly in the areas of procurement, financing, and coordination.

### **School feeding programmes increasingly are accompanied by a school health and nutrition package**

School health and nutrition are essential to build human capital and support future economic growth. Schools can serve as a platform to deliver an integrated package of health and nutrition services in a cost-effective manner. Virtually all countries in Africa now provide school feeding in conjunction with complementary health and nutrition activities, but only 15 percent provide an integrated package of at least 7 activities. Countries such as Sao Tome and Principe, Ethiopia, Tunisia and Chad have documented good practices through case studies to inform policies across the continent.

### **COVID-19 represents one of the most serious threats to human capital in Africa**

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, governments globally and across Africa ordered school closures which led to adverse effects on children's learning, safety, health and wellbeing. According to a 2020 World Bank report, for most children, academic learning will come to a halt and learning inequalities will increase. A number of countries adopted alternative modalities, such as take-home rations and cash-based transfers to support children and their households in an attempt to mitigate the interruption of school meals. Coping and mitigation have been vitally important while schools are closed, but even the best efforts fall far short of the coverage and equity of the school-based approaches that they sought to replace.

Another important lesson from this crisis is that school closures have helped countries recognize the value of education systems as a means of reaching school-age children with essential services. Moving forward, school feeding services will be essential to the safe and effective re-opening of schools.

### **At the continental, regional and national level, governments are working in partnership to share knowledge and build capacity**

There is a growing coalition of partners, including UNICEF, WFP and FAO, working together to support governments in their efforts to promote integrated packages for school-based health and nutrition programmes. South-South cooperation mechanisms such as WFP's Centres of Excellence and AUDA-NEPAD also play a critical role in this respect.

Governments and their partners need to increase their understanding of funding opportunities for school health and nutrition. The absence of a continental database on funding flows for school feeding, and more broadly for school health and nutrition, is an important gap that needs to be addressed. Dubai Cares and WFP, through their strategic partnership with WFP, have committed to addressing this gap in the coming years.

Regional groups including the African Union Development Agency, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other regional bodies, are essential to support regional coordination and knowledge exchange. Technical and policy advice in the areas of safety nets, protection, food security, nutrition and education will help governments reach their goals and improve the delivery of school health and nutrition interventions to schoolchildren.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Governments have made great strides to scale-up school feeding programmes, but there are wide coverage disparities across the African continent. The African Union and governments can work together to improve coverage and prioritize countries where vulnerable children are not yet supported through school feeding programmes.
2. 22 percent of low-income countries and 27 percent of lower middle-income countries in Africa still do not have a school feeding policy. The African Union and development partners are urged to continue their committed to work with governments to help countries adopt a policy framework to support their efforts.
3. Complementary school health and nutrition interventions are essential to reap the full benefits of education and bridge the human capital gap. Building on existing platforms, governments can further structure their efforts in this area and broaden the package of interventions they provide to learners in schools.
4. Key strategies recommended to accelerate the integration of school health and nutrition packages in Africa include systematic evidence generation and use, policy development, communication and advocacy, systems strengthening, partnerships and community engagement.
5. Following COVID-19 school closures, the focus now is on moving quickly to re-open schools safely. Guidance available to governments highlight three priorities: create a

safe school environment to minimize COVID-19 transmission, put in place school health and nutrition services, and build a stronger and more equitable education system.

6. International fora and development partners can help governments advance school feeding policies and programmes through knowledge exchange, technical assistance and country capacity strengthening.

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# 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 Sustainable Development Goal 4 “Quality Education” and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) to support school feeding programmes as a common continental priority. School feeding contributes to cross sectoral outcomes in education, nutrition, agriculture, local development, and gender equality. It contributes towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 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). It directly and indirectly 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 resources in Africa, and thereby adding value for the realization of Agenda 2063, CESA 16-25 and efforts to reap the demographic dividend. Recognizing the particular value of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF), the decisions provides for:

- 1) The creation of an Africa Day of School Feeding on March 1<sup>st</sup> 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 the World Food Programme and the WFP Centre of Excellence Against Hunger,
- 3) The realization a general study on the relevance and impact of school feeding in the African Union Member States
- 4) The requirement that the Commission “report regularly on the implementation of the Decision 589 XXVI to the Assembly through the Executive Council”

Still further, the 31st Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council also acknowledged school feeding as a strategic programme towards the implementation of the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (2015-2025), and the fulfilment of the Malabo Declaration to improve nutritional status (EX.CL/Dec.965-986(XXXI)).

In view of these continental frameworks, the AU Commission has advocated for school feeding in the last five African Day of School Feeding events. Similarly, the AU Commission has conducted a study on relevance and impact of school feeding in Africa, and published and

launched a book entitled “Study on Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union”. This study has been recognized as a baseline for further reports which includes the multiplier effect of HGSF programmes. Subsequently, the AU 2018 Biennial report took the previous study as the benchmark and produced a report on some important variables that were collected from Member States.

The African Union Commission and key stakeholders has also established a school feeding cluster to implement specific CESA objectives. At the launch, World Food Programme agreed to be the coordinating agency for the cluster. The Cluster aims to bring together actors working on school feeding and aligning their respective initiatives to achieve the CESA 16-25 and SDGs expected results. These cluster members are actively involved in this current report preparation.

## **REPORTING ON THE STATE OF SCHOOL FEEDING IN AFRICA**

The AU Commission has subsequently worked to secure a 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 realization of the goals of other continental policy frameworks for addressing child welfare, ending hunger and ensuring food security. The School Feeding Cluster is an AU platform where stakeholders from different sectors engage and share technical information on the design and implementation of effectual 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 work plans to ensure enhanced efficiency and effectiveness. The Cluster was officially launched in 2017 during the ‘Third Continental Consultation of the AU and the WFP on Home Grown School Feeding’.

One of the key priorities of the HGSF cluster is to produce a quality 2019-2020 Biennial Report for Africa as stipulated in the AU Assembly Decision 589 XXVI, No. 17 which requests the Commission report regularly on the implementation of the decision to the AU Assembly through the Executive Council’.

## THE ORIGINS OF THIS PUBLICATION

This 2019-2020 Biennial Report builds on data and inputs collected by the African Union and its partners gathered in the HGSF Cluster, including WFP, UNICEF and FAO. This report also builds on the school feeding database developed by WFP for its flagship State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020 report, which contains up-to-date and official data on school feeding programmes at the country level.

This report aims to fulfill 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 best 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 five chapters as follows:

- **Chapter 1: School Feeding Programmes in 2019-2020: Scale, Coverage and Trends** provides an update on school feeding indicators in 2019-2020 and presents the scale of school feeding efforts, coverage rates, funding and policy trends, with analytics by region and by income level.
- **Chapter 2: Scaling-up Home-Grown School Feeding in Africa** is an overview of key policy and institutional evolutions that have taken place in the African Union as countries increasingly mainstream Home-Grown School Feeding programmes and translate continental priorities into national agendas
- **Chapter 3: Providing an Integrated School Health and Nutrition Package** reflects on the importance of complementary, school-based health and nutrition interventions to build human capital and accelerate economic growth
- **Chapter 4: The impact and response to the COVID-19 Pandemic** highlights the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and efforts undertaken by governments to mitigate its dramatic impact on education, health, nutrition and poverty
- **Chapter 5: Partnerships and Governance in School Feeding** takes stock of key partnerships, coalitions and networks at the continental, regional and national levels working to help governments deliver school feeding in Africa

## Chapter 1

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# **School feeding programmes in Africa in 2019-2020: scale, coverage and trends**

# Chapter 1

## School feeding programmes in Africa in 2019-2020: scale, coverage and trends

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

**This report also serves to establish an initial reporting on the implementation of the Decision 589 XXVI (Assembly/AU/Dec.589). As such, this chapter provides an update on the number and proportion of children receiving school meals, the scale of government investments, the cost of school feeding, and key policy and programme features.**

**Based on a methodology developed by WFP for the *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2013* report and the upcoming *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020* report, the availability of data allows for reporting and analysis in this report that is intended to provide a snapshot of the current situation and to explore historical trends. This chapter compares the 2020 School feeding results with data from the previous available baseline published in 2013 so as to provide an up-to-date, and estimates of key metrics such as the number and proportion of children receiving school meals; the coverage of national programmes; and the scale of government investment. This report draws on a combination of primary and secondary data sources gathered in 2013 and 2020.**

**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, the World Food Programme, and the World Bank. This constitutes the most comprehensive, available data source for school feeding programmes in Africa at the moment. All data has been validated by the respective governments and/or constitutes official data published by international organizations.**

**Despite the effort made in 2019 to gather and validate this information, there is no regular mechanism to collect quality data on school feeding programmes in Africa at present. Efforts are underway to address this data gap. The African Union and WFP, with support from Dubai Cares Foundation, are developing a database on school health and nutrition to mainstream the reporting of school feeding indicators and the monitoring**

of government efforts in Africa. Getting a complete picture on the school feeding landscape in Africa is, therefore, a work in progress.

In terms of findings, this chapter explores how governments have stepped up their policy and financial commitments to school feeding, and how these commitments have translated into larger and more qualitative school feeding programmes for children.

The analyses indicate that the vast majority of school feeding programmes in Africa are operated by national governments. About 65.4 million children in 51 countries now benefit from school feeding in Africa, a massive increase from 38.4 million in 2013. This increase is especially notable in Western Africa, where the size of school feeding programmes has more than doubled since 2013. The growth of school feeding programmes has often outpaced the demographic growth, resulting in similar or higher coverage rates than in 2013.

These gains in school feeding over the past decade are due to the significant efforts made by African governments. The data indicate that most governments have increased their budget allocations to school feeding – and in some cases multiplied these budgets – to support the scale-up. A similar trend is also observed in policy frameworks, as the data show that most governments have now adopted a school feeding policy or legal framework.

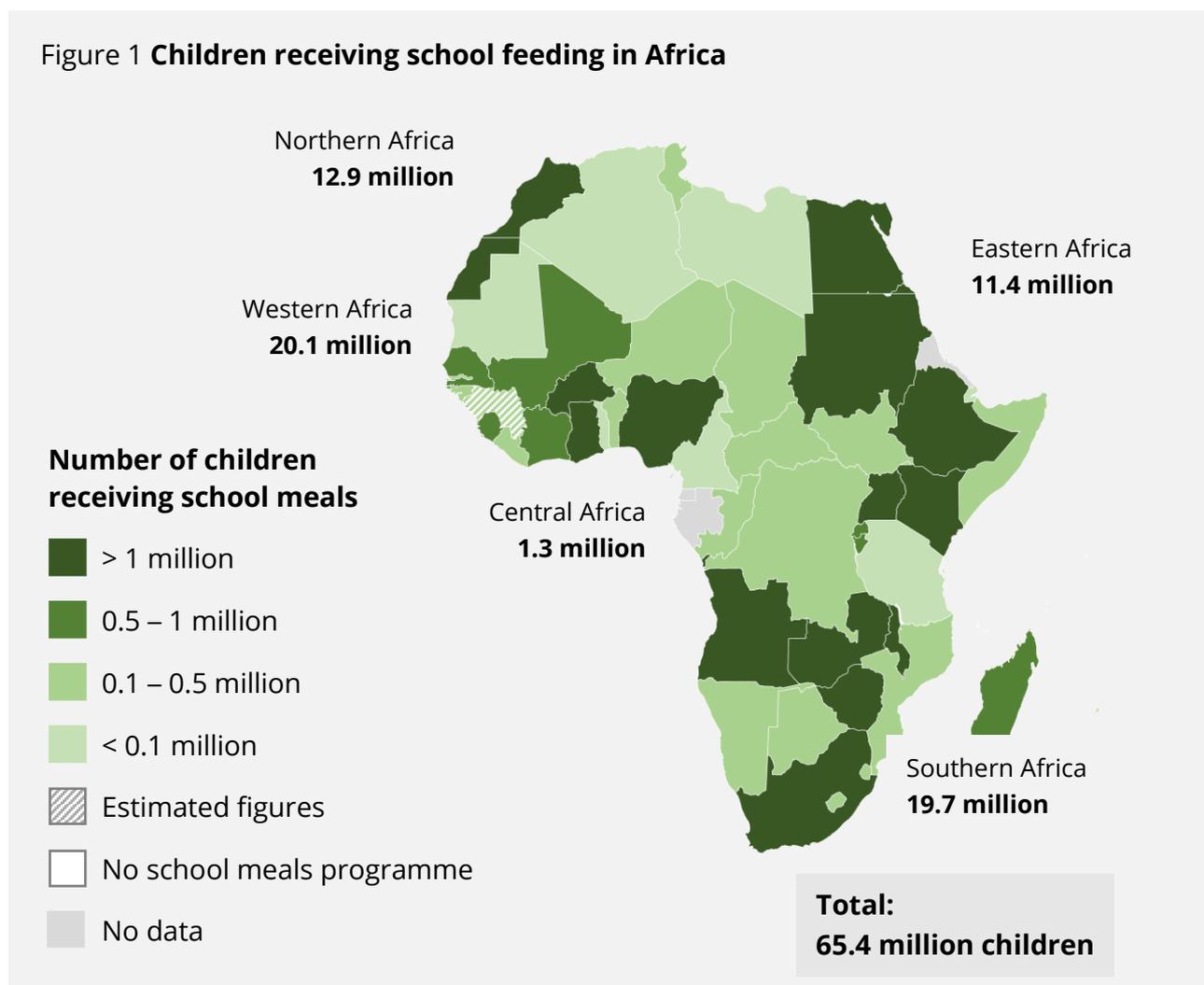


Credits: WFP/John Monibach/Liberia.

These efforts have not only led to feeding more children, but also to improving the quality of school health and nutrition support. Virtually 100% of African countries deliver school feeding as part of an integrated package of health and nutrition interventions tailored to the needs of the learner.

## 1.1 NUMBERS OF CHILDREN RECEIVING SCHOOL FEEDING

It is estimated that 65.4 million children received school meals across Africa in 2019. The majority of these children live in Western Africa (20.1 million), followed by Southern Africa (19.7 million), Northern Africa (12.9 million), Eastern Africa (11.4 million) and Central Africa (1.3 million).

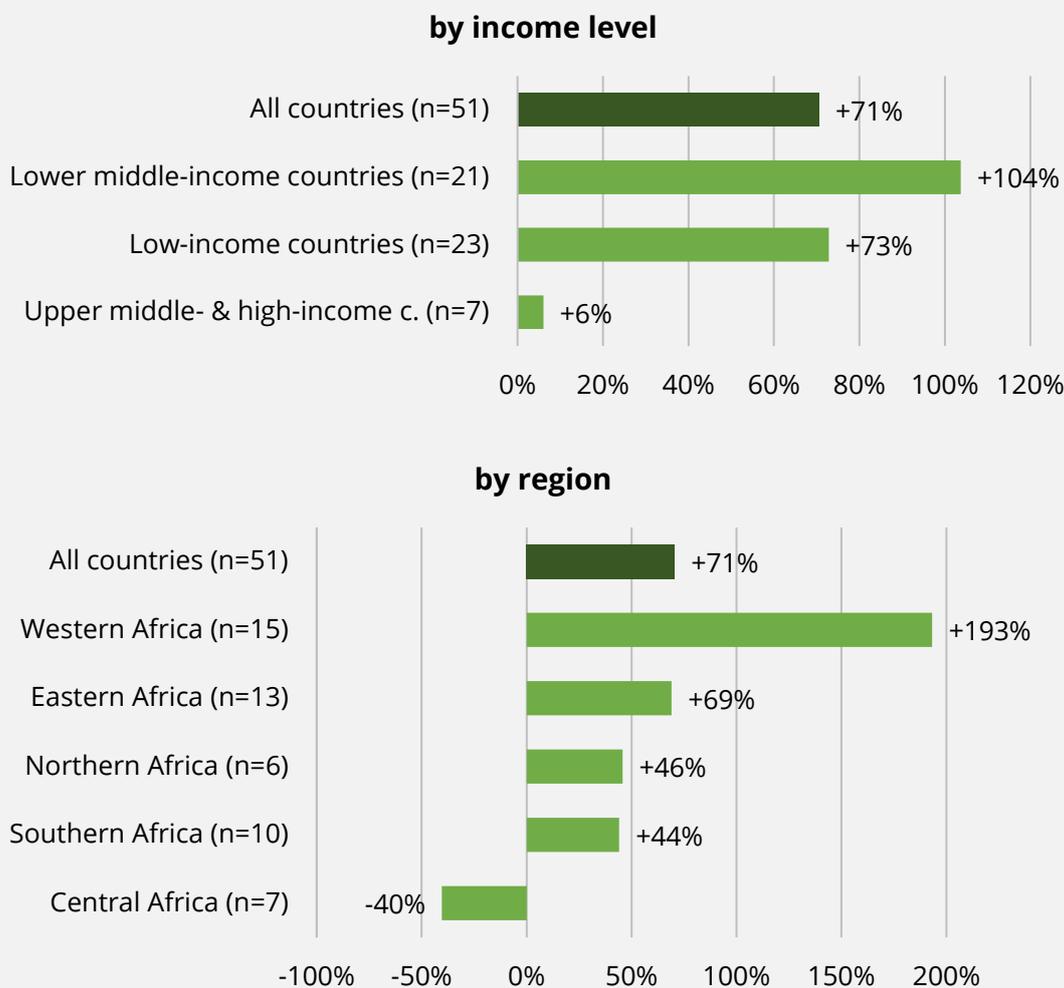


The largest school feeding programmes are in Egypt (11.2 million children), Nigeria (9.8 million), South Africa (9.2 million), and Burkina Faso (3.9 million).

These numbers represent a massive increase from 2013, when no more than 38.4 million children received school meals across Africa. As illustrated in Figure 2, the largest increases were recorded in Western Africa (+193% from 6.8 million in 2013), followed by Eastern Africa (+69% from 6.7 million), Northern Africa (+46% from 8.9 million) and Southern Africa (+44%

from 13.7 million). The only region where school feeding has not increased since 2013 is Central Africa, where the number of children receiving school meals has decreased by 40% from 2.2 million.

**Figure 2 Change in the number of children receiving school feeding between 2013 and 2020**



### Box 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. Due to the limited time available to prepare this report, and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, it was agreed to use existing data collected by official institutions and validated or signed-off by respective Member States' Ministries or officials, instead of engaging in a new data collection exercise from the African Union Member States, which would have required resources used to address the COVID-19 pandemic. In keeping with the methodology agreed by the AU ESTI Department, these 2019-2020 data are compared in this report to a baseline collected in 2013 for the State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020 publication by the UN World Food Programme, due to data availability, comparability of indicators, and because individual country governments had validated and cleared their individual country data.

The findings presented in this chapter are based on publicly accessible, official sources, including the African Union<sup>1</sup>, the Global Child Nutrition Foundation<sup>2</sup>, the World Food Programme<sup>3</sup>, the World Bank<sup>4</sup>, and a government report<sup>5</sup>. Based on a methodology developed by WFP for the *State of School Feeding Worldwide* series, this publication 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 two or more one data sources were available for the same country, only the most recent data source was used in this publication, provided that all the other criteria were met – including relevance and credibility. Under the credibility criteria, particular attention was paid to using only data that were either provided, validated, or cleared by relevant government authorities.

Based on this approach, this chapter presents confirmed and reported data from 49 countries out of 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 feeding in Africa. As such, this dataset can be considered as highly representative of the status of school feeding in Africa.

In three countries (Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea and Gabon), there was no available source that met the four listed criteria. As such, the data table below reads “no data” for these countries.

In two additional countries that are known to have a school feeding programme (Guinea and Seychelles), there was no available source that met all these criteria, but it was possible to calculate an estimation of the number of children receiving school meals using a 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 that particular country. In Guinea, a low-income country, it is estimated that school feeding is 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, it is estimated that school feeding is provided to 85 percent of children enrolled in primary schools using the same approach.

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<sup>1</sup> African Union. 2018. *Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union*. Available at: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36100-doc-sustainable\\_school\\_feeding\\_1.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36100-doc-sustainable_school_feeding_1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Global Child Nutrition Foundation. 2019. *GCNF Global Survey of School Meal Programmes [69 country reports]*. Available at: <https://gcnf.org/survey/>

<sup>3</sup> WFP. 2020b. *Annual Country Reports 2019*. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/>

<sup>4</sup> World Bank. 2018. *The State of Social Safety Nets 2018*. Washington, DC, World Bank. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29115>

<sup>5</sup> Republic of Rwanda/Ministry of Education. 2018. *2018 Education Statistics* [online]. Available at: <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/2018-education-statistics-report>

## 1.2 COVERAGE OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES

Coverage is defined as the proportion of school-attending children who benefit from a school feeding programme. While the data presented in the previous section covers pre-primary, primary and secondary education, the analysis of coverage data is limited here to primary schoolchildren only, due to the current lack of data on the other two age groups.

Coverage in each country was estimated using the number of children reported to receive school feeding in primary schools, divided by the number of children enrolled in primary schools as reported by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2020). Coverage was calculated for each country, as well as by income group and by region – in this case, the coverage rate was weighted by the number of children enrolled in primary school in each country.

As shown in figures 3 and 4, there are 188 million children enrolled in primary schools in Africa in 2020, up from 174 million enrolled in 2013. In 2020, there are 90 million children enrolled in low-income countries, 85 million in lower-middle-income countries, and 13 million in upper middle- and high-income countries. Figure 5 shows the coverage data by country in 2020.

Figure 3 **Children enrolled in primary schools in Africa, by income level**

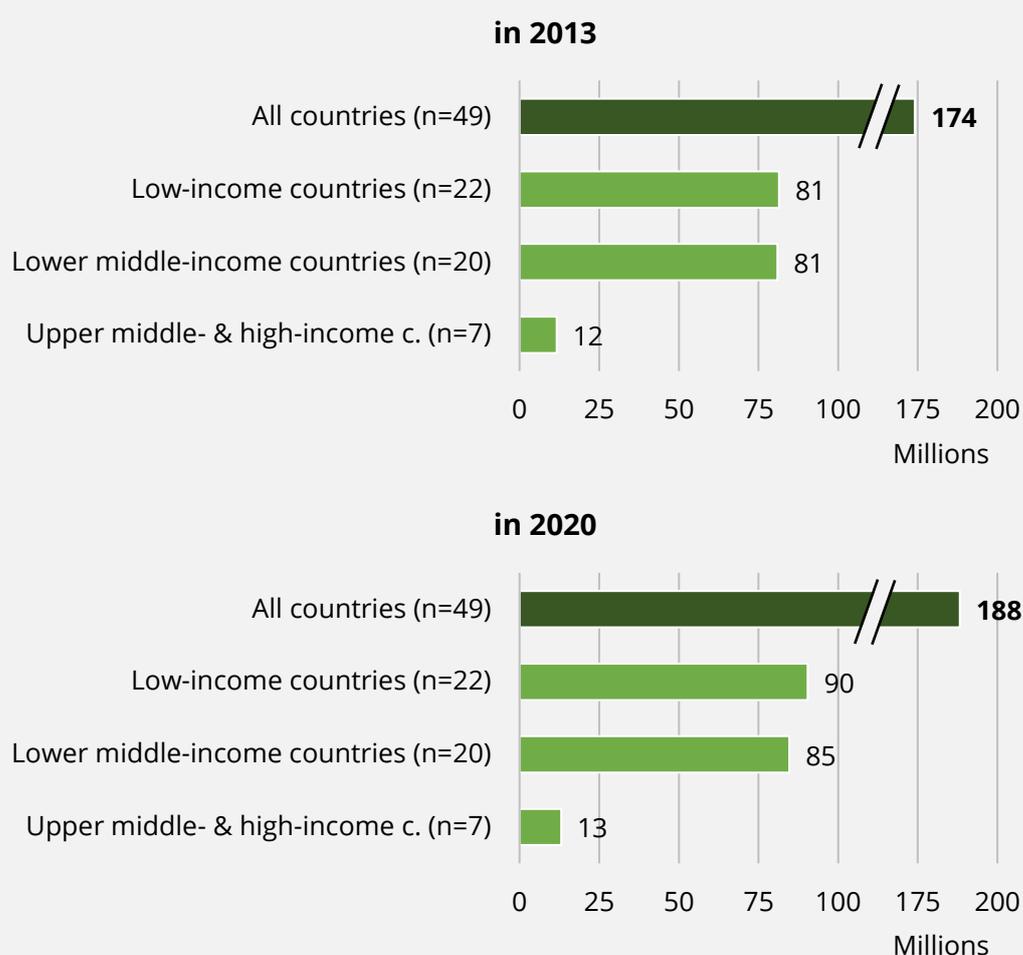


Figure 4 **Children enrolled in primary schools in Africa, by region**

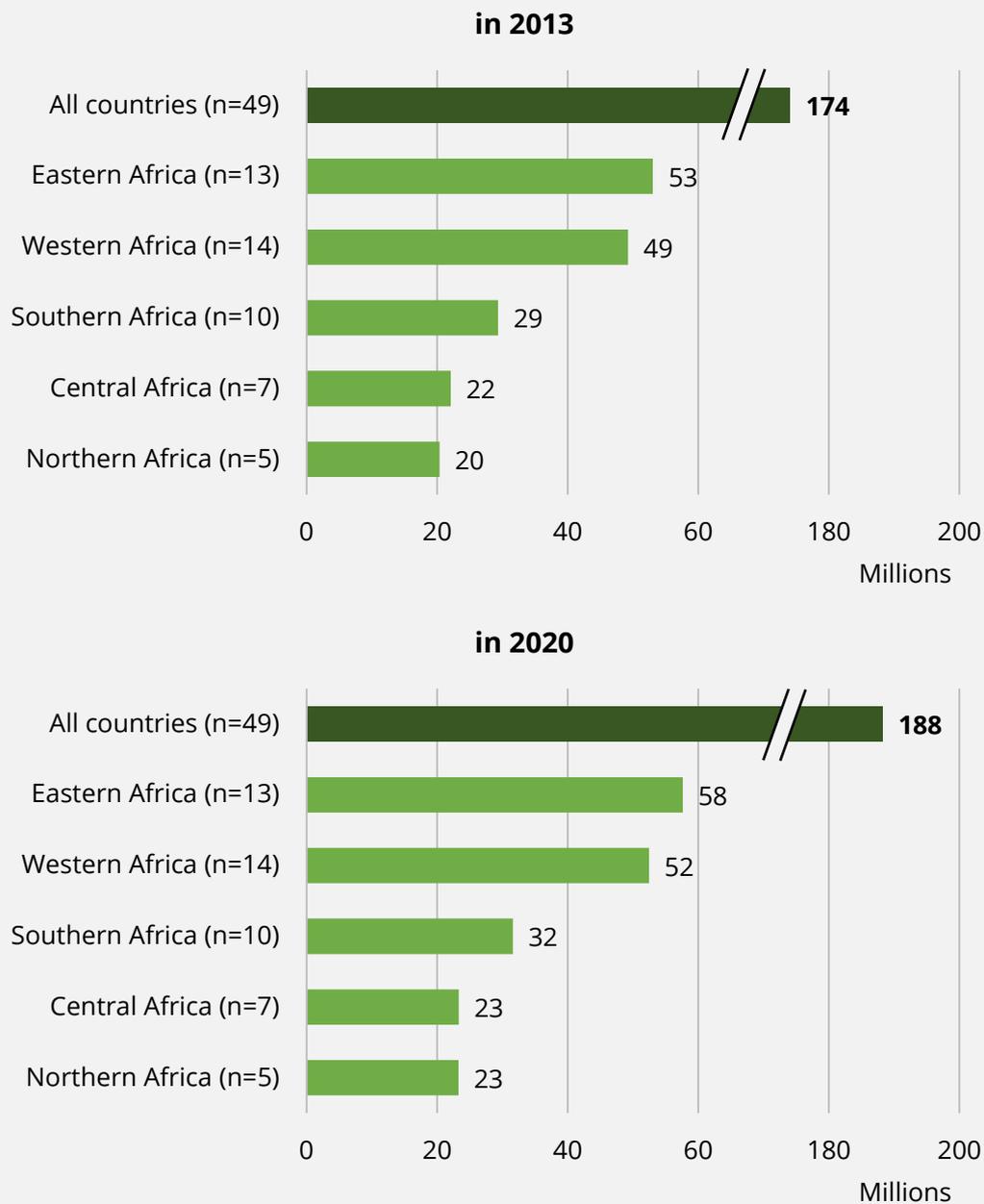
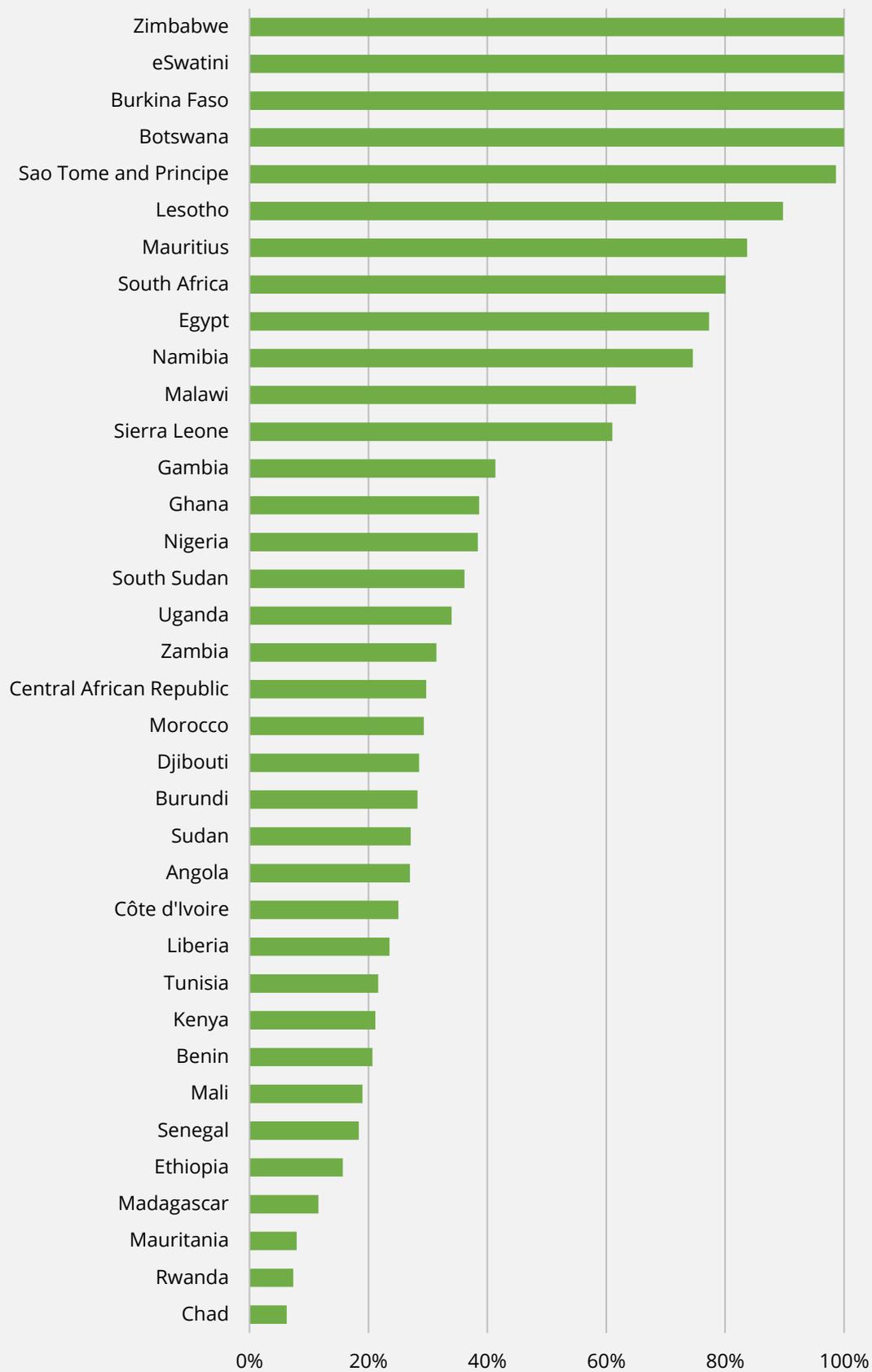


Figure 5 Coverage of school feeding programmes by country



The change in coverage between 2013 and 2020 is shown in figures 6 and 7 for the 42 countries for which data is available in both 2013 and 2020. Overall, there has been an increase in coverage across the continent, from 22 percent in 2013 to 33 percent in 2020.

Figure 6 **Change in coverage between 2013 and 2020 by income level**

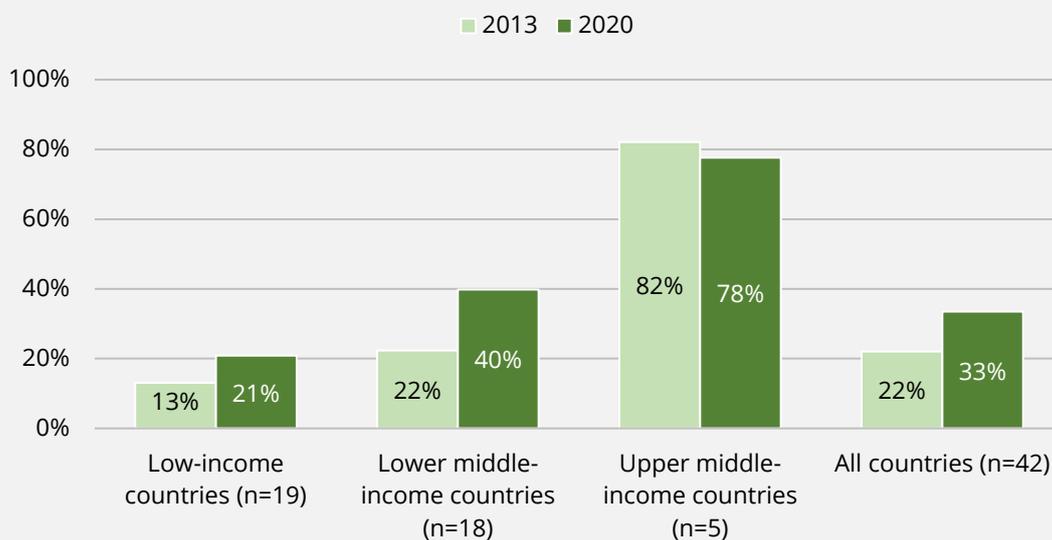


Figure 7 **Change in coverage between 2013 and 2020 by region**



The increase in coverage is particularly marked in low-income and lower middle-income countries, while upper middle-income countries have maintained their high levels of coverage. The regional analysis reveals that coverage has progressed in all regions except Central Africa. This increase is particularly remarkable in Western Africa, where it has almost tripled between 2013 and 2020.

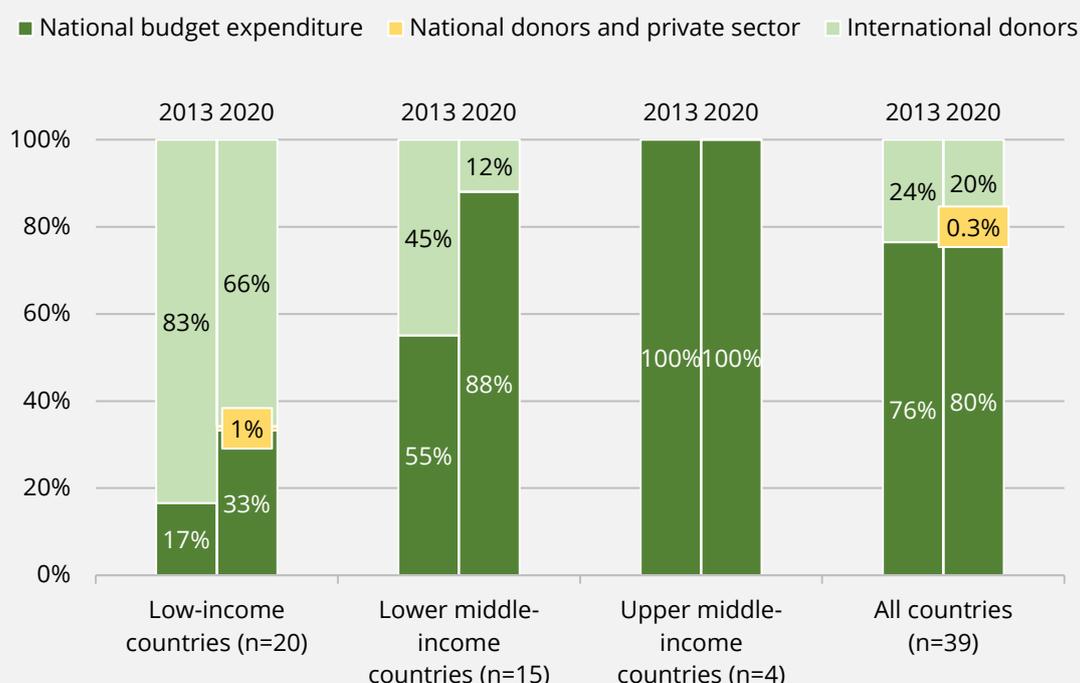
These results, combined with the observation that the number of children fed has increased over the same period, indicate that school feeding programmes have expanded to keep pace with population increase in all income groups.

### 1.3 FUNDING FOR SCHOOL FEEDING

The data on sources of funding for school feeding programmes in 2013 are based on the WFP survey of that year, and the 2020 results are based on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-sponsored, global school feeding survey carried out by GCNF in 2019–2020. These data include three types of funding, in declining order of scale: domestic funding from national budgets; national-level donors and the private sector; and external donor funds channelled through United Nations agencies, including WFP, and non-state actors.

Domestic budgets are the main source of funds for school feeding programmes in most countries. As shown in Figure 8, national budgets were the major sources of funding in both 2013 and 2020 in middle-income countries. In upper middle-income countries, school feeding programmes are exclusively financed by domestic budgets. While international donor funding remains predominant in low-income countries, governments have made significant progress between 2013 and 2020 towards self-reliance, as the proportion of domestic funding has almost doubled during that period.

Figure 8 **Breakdown of aggregate expenditure by source of funding in 2013 and in 2020, by income level**



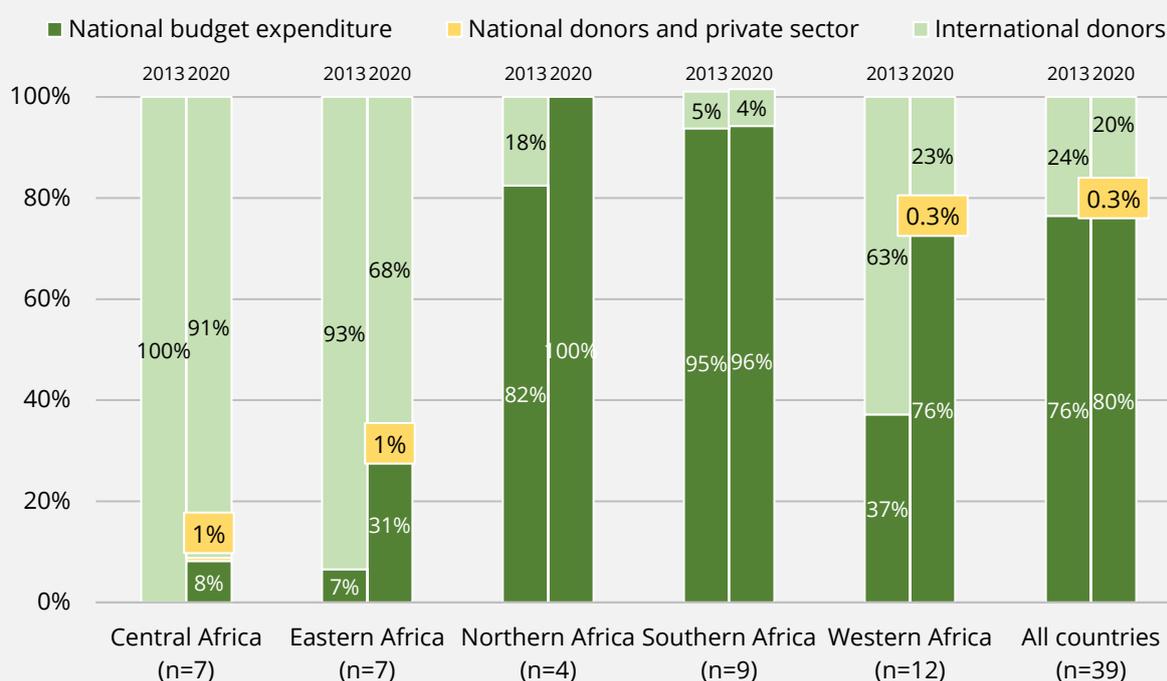
A regional analysis presented in Figure 9 reveals large disparities across the continent. In Central Africa, international donors continue to support the majority of funding for school

feeding even in 2020. This is also the case in Eastern Africa, but the share of domestic funding has more than quadrupled since 2013, highlighting significant efforts made by governments to increase their commitments to school feeding. In Western Africa, governments have made significant strides in taking over programme funding as the proportion of domestic budgets in total expenditures has doubled from 37 percent in 2013 to 76 percent in 2020. Finally, the vast majority of school feeding expenditures are supported by domestic funding in Southern and Northern Africa.

Lastly, while the numbers remain low in proportion to total expenditures, a noteworthy observation is the emergence of national donors and the private sector as a source of funding for school feeding. The new sources of funding, which were absent from reports in 2013, remain small and represent 1 percent of the financial resources allocated to school feeding in Central Africa and Eastern Africa, and 0.3 percent across the continent.

These funding results indicate that most of the scaling-up of school feeding programmes that occurred between 2013 and 2020, as well as the subsequent increase in coverage, were mostly supported by government efforts.

Figure 9 **Breakdown of aggregate expenditure by source of funding in 2013 and in 2020, by region**



## 1.4 COST PER CHILD

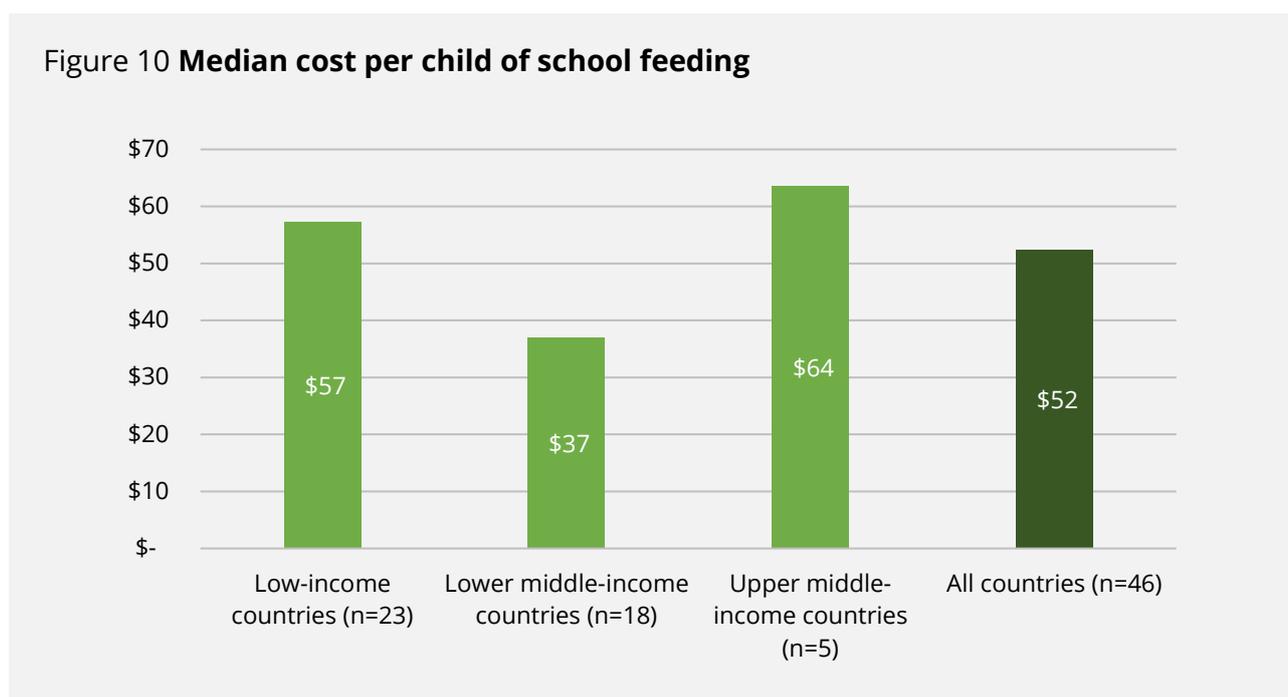
The data sample for this indicator is comprised of 46 countries in Africa, including 23 low-income countries, 18 lower middle-income countries, and 5 upper middle-income countries.

This sample is based on the same data sources reporting beneficiary data analyzed in the previous sections.

The annual cost per child is calculated based on total expenditures for school feeding, divided by the number of children receiving school meals. It therefore encompasses commodity, supply chain, and administrative costs. Due to school calendar variations between countries leading 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 the World Food Programme for a 2013 global cost benchmark (WFP, 2013), and has become the standard approach to calculate the cost per child in school feeding.

Due to a high variance between countries, the median cost per child is the most representative statistical instrument to serve as a benchmark. Figure 10 illustrates the median cost per child of school feeding by income level, as well as across the African continent.

The data show remarkable consistency between income levels, with a cost per child of US\$ 52 across all countries. In low-income countries, the cost of school feeding is slightly higher at US\$ 57, while lower middle-income countries report a lower cost per child of US\$ 37. Given the sample size of these two income levels, these two figures provide a representative range of the cost of school feeding in Africa.

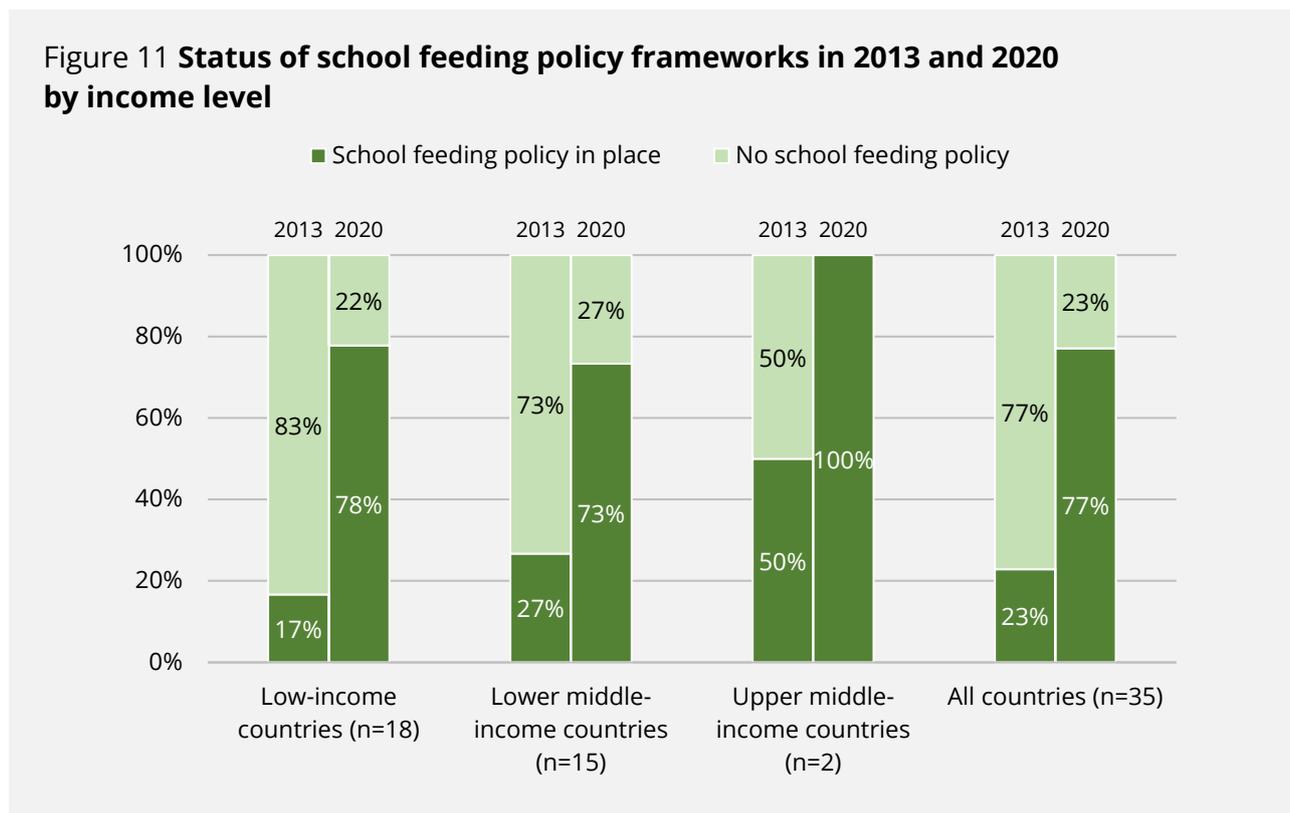


## 1.5 POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND PROGRAMME DESIGN: COMPLEMENTARY INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOL HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Between 2013 and 2020 many countries strengthened and broadened the policy and legal frameworks governing their school feeding programmes. In 2013, less than a quarter of African countries reported having an established policy or legal framework for their school feeding

programmes, although a significant number of these countries reported being in the process of developing such frameworks.

As seen in Figure 11 the share of low-income countries that have an established policy framework for school feeding has increased from 23 percent in 2013 to 77 percent in 2020; while in middle-income countries the increase is from 27 percent in 2013 to 73 percent in 2020. The proportion of low and lower middle-income countries that have a school feeding policy is now comparable to high-income countries.

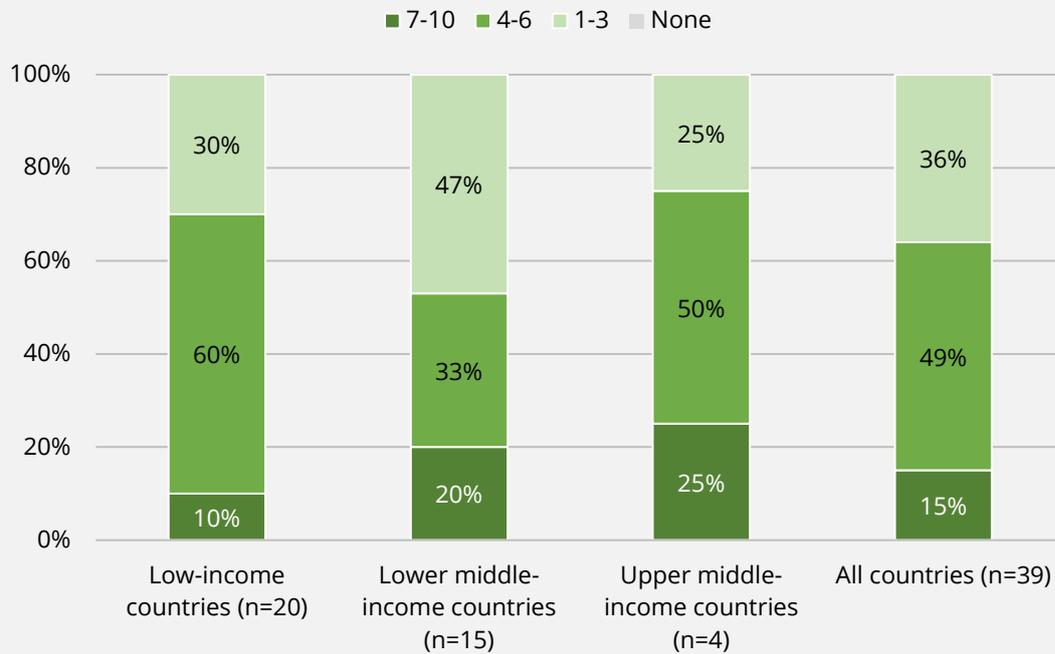


School feeding policies in Africa typically provide for the implementation of an integrated package of school-based health and nutrition interventions, that together seek to meet the needs of the learner in the local context. School feeding is one of the components of that package, while other interventions may include complementary activities such as: handwashing with soap, height and weight measurements, deworming treatment, eye testing and eyeglasses, hearing testing and treatment, dental cleaning and testing, menstrual hygiene, drinking water, and water purification.

As part of the GCNF Global Survey of School Meal Programmes, funded by USDA, new data were collected on these ten complementary activities (Figure 12). These questions were not asked during the 2013 survey, so it is not possible to gauge the medium-term trend unlike previous indicators. However, the 2020 results show that all of the sample of 39 countries delivered at least one complementary health and nutrition intervention alongside their school feeding programme: 64 percent of governments combine school feeding with a package of more than four additional health and nutrition interventions; while 14 percent deliver a school health package of between seven and ten interventions. These observations suggest that

virtually all African countries which deliver school feeding programmes complement these with a package of supportive health and nutrition interventions.

**Figure 12 Number of complementary activities implemented in conjunction with school feeding**



Credits: WFP/Anna Yla Kauttu/Madagascar.

## 1.6 WAY FORWARD

### 1.6.1 Conclusions

- There are **65.4 million children** receiving school feeding in Africa, a massive increase of 71% from 38.4 million in 2013. **33 percent of children enrolled in primary schools** now receive school meals, up from 22 percent in 2013. This increase shows that the scaling-up of school feeding programmes has outpaced demographic growth in Africa.
- **Large coverage disparities remain between regions and income groups.** School feeding programmes cover 78% of children in upper middle-income countries, but only 21% of children in low-income countries. Similarly, school feeding programmes cover more than 55% of children in Northern and Southern Africa, but only 5% in Central Africa.
- These results have been achieved through large financial and policy efforts by African governments. 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 76 percent to **80 percent** across the continent. Nevertheless, **in low-income countries, 66% of school feeding expenditures are still supported by international donors.**
- Similarly, **77% of countries have now adopted a school feeding policy**, compared to 23 percent in 2013. However, **22% of low-income countries and 27% of lower middle-income countries still do not have a school feeding policy.**
- The **cost of school feeding** remains affordable for governments, at about **US\$ 52 per child per year.**
- It is estimated that virtually **all governments** in Africa provide school feeding in conjunction with at least one **complementary school-based health and nutrition intervention. Only 15% of African countries provide a fully integrated package** of 7 to 10 complementary interventions in conjunction with school feeding.

### 1.6.2 Recommendations

- **Additional investments in Home-Grown School Feeding programmes are needed to secure gains and improve coverage across the continent.** Despite the sizeable increase in funding and coverage of school feeding programmes, some regions in Africa continue to face low coverage – especially in crisis-affected and fragile contexts. In other countries, commitments seen in policy are yet to materialize in coverage for these gains to be scaled-up and sustained – even more so in the context of COVID-19, as governments will need to do more to keep children in school and reach those that are not yet in school.
- **Additional domestic investments are needed to reduce the reliance of low-income countries on international assistance.** As a continental strategy for development, Home-Grown School Feeding aims to foster economic growth and human development

by investing in a country's own resources. Low-income countries can reap the benefits of such programmes by increasing domestic budgets in Home-Grown School Feeding programmes, which are known to create jobs and develop human capital, and lead to a healthy and well-nourished workforce.

- **The African Union and development partners should work with governments to help them adopt policy frameworks and foster investments in school feeding.** As more countries adopt policy frameworks and increase their budget lines for school feeding programmes, policy dialogue and knowledge exchange are essential to help other countries progress towards institutionalization of these programmes.
- **Countries should expand the package of complementary health and nutrition interventions provided to children in schools.** Governments increasingly recognize that the health and nutrition need of schoolchildren must be addressed for them to succeed in school. In 36 percent of African countries, the package of complementary interventions remains insufficient.
- **Governments should reinforce the role of school feeding as a social protection instrument to alleviate poverty.** School feeding programmes have proven highly effective at protecting vulnerable households and communities from a wide range of shocks, including economic crises, climate change, and conflict. Governments can leverage school feeding programmes to target economic assistance to the most vulnerable households and reduce poverty.



Credits: WFP/Mohammad Gamal/Egypt.

## Chapter 2

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# Scaling-up Home-Grown School Feeding in Africa

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# Scaling-up Home-Grown School Feeding in Africa

Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) was acknowledged by AUDA-NEPAD (formerly NEPAD) in 2003 as an initiative to promote food security and rural development. HGSF pilots were launched in 11 countries (WFP et al., 2018), under the NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Framework for Africa's Food Security. Progress and uptake of the HGSF concept was slow in the first 5 years after launch of the programme, but has garnered great momentum in recent years. A key response to the 2007/2008 food, fuel and financial crises across the globe and in Africa particularly, included scaling up school feeding programmes. Since then, African Union Member States have embraced the Home-Grown School Feeding model and started implementing it widely. In 2016, at the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the AU Assembly, African Heads of State declared HGSF a strategy to improve education, boost smallholder agriculture and overall local economies.

HGSF programmes have received increasing attention in recent years because of their multiple benefits. Firstly, school meals are recognized as an important safety net for children living in poverty and food insecurity due to their role in alleviating hunger and malnutrition and improving access to education. The World Food Programme estimates that about 73 million children globally do not have access to the nutrition they need to complete their education successfully. An additional 67 million children are out of school (UNESCO, 2011). School feeding helps to increase attendance and enrolment, reduces dropout rates, and ensures that children are attentive and thus learn and perform better. The social protection objective focuses on the health and nutrition of school-age children and is addressed through school feeding policy instruments, while the agriculture objective is primarily focused on small-scale agriculture and the development of markets. School feeding programmes are typically framed as social protection or poverty reduction programmes and have also been used as part of emergency response and relief operations.

Secondly, the HGSF approach is increasingly recognized as a means to support smallholder farmers and the development of local communities (Gelli et al., 2011). This local agriculture component is the distinctive characteristic of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF). It is important to highlight that Home-Grown School Feeding was developed together with AUDA-NEPAD, and the *Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework* (FAO et al., 2018) is a knowledge product that harmonizes existing knowledge and tools and builds on the expertise of partners. The *Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework* fosters partnerships to help governments achieve their goals and lays the ground for a community of practice in HGSF for achieving impact at scale. The HGSF model is designed to provide schoolchildren with safe, diverse and nutritious foods and can be used to achieve at least a third of the recommended

daily nutrient intakes (WFP et al., 2018). It therefore has the potential to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) related to food security, nutrition, education, health and agriculture (FAO, 2018). A recent FAO study published in 2018 on the status of school feeding programmes in Africa found that current programmes implemented by governments in 41 countries still face numerous challenges including low coverage; lack of dietary guidelines; weak policy frameworks, poor sectoral coordination with weak monitoring and evaluation.

The information presented in this chapter is from public and accessible, official sources, including the African Union, African Union Development Agency (AUDA), the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, WFP's Regional Centre of Excellence against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM), the Global Child Nutrition Foundation, the World Bank, and other development partners.

## **2.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HGSF IN AFRICA**

Since January 2016, at the 26<sup>th</sup> African Union Summit (Assembly/AU/Dec.589(XXVI)) where African Heads of State and Government decided that every 1 March would be the Africa Day of School Feeding. AUDA-NEPAD, as a development agency of the AU, supported many African governments to include Home-Grown School Feeding into their national policies, strategies and laws as an important initiative contributing to the eradication of hunger and malnutrition using the CAADP framework.

According to a recent FAO study (FAO, 2018), about 80% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have had experience with school feeding at some level. However, several challenges are encountered at the implementation level, and the transition to Home-Grown School Feeding lacks systematic implementation. Additionally, the policy instruments used to support agricultural development revolve around structured demand, generated through public procurement as a means to open up markets and advance economic development for smallholder farmers (SHF) (Sumberg and Sabates-Wheeler, 2011).

Political will is instrumental to transition from school feeding to Home-Grown School Feeding. In the African Context, countries are at different stages in the adoption or implementation of school feeding or HGSF. An enabling environment, including policies, strategies and legal frameworks, is required to develop and implement effective HGSF programmes and initiatives across Africa. Listed are results of legal, policy and strategies reviewed in all 19 Central and West African countries:

- Home Grown School Feeding Law: Togo, Sao Tome Principe, Guinea Bissau
- Home Grown School Feeding Laws under revision: Ghana and Mali
- Policy on Home Grown School Feeding: Cameroon, Chad, Benin, Guinea Conakry, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Senegal, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mali

In addition to an enabling environment, scaling up school feeding and Home-Grown School feeding initiatives requires the involvement of policymakers and other stakeholder. Recently, the idea of a parliamentarian front against hunger has emerged. The continent has seen a major involvement of parliamentarians in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, through actions to position food and nutrition security and the right to adequate food at the forefront of political and legislative agendas at the regional level. As a result, in 2016, the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security was established. In addition to the Continental Alliance, Regional Parliamentary Alliances for Food Security and Nutrition were established with a view to ensuring stronger legislative frameworks, adequate policy measures and more funding to support the eradication of hunger and malnutrition and by extension facilitating legal and policy frameworks in favour of HGSF programmes on the continent.

In addition to countries developing important legislation and policy frameworks, initiatives to scale-up Home-Grown School Feeding programmes have been supported by key partners. For instance, WFP is planning to increase its coverage to 35 million children in 30 countries by 2030 and support governments to reach the remaining 5 million children in need. The organization will aim to raise USD 1.75 billion annually to support this scale up and will progressively increase the capacity of implementation on the ground (WFP, 2020a).



Credits: WFP/Hugh Rutherford/Uganda.

Public, private and government partnerships are crucial to help scale up HGSF programming. In Egypt, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Ministry of Education and the global food and beverage company Danone have a shared understanding of the need to scale up

sustainable food and agricultural practices, and to provide people with access to more diverse and healthier foods.

A comprehensive Home-Grown School Feeding programme requires a multisectoral policy with clear linkages to the relevant strategic sectors. The development of the policy should involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders. In 2019, AUDA-NEPAD developed guidelines for the design and implementation of HGSF which provides a quick reference guide for countries in Africa wishing to establish or review existing National HGSF programmes.

Example from Ethiopia and Cameroon are highlighted below on steps and progress undertaken.

### Case study 2.1 **Ethiopia: Aligning public procurement rules and practices to support the implementation of home-grown school feeding (HGSF) initiatives in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is among the many countries that adopted the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) approach. This approach is recognized by the draft of the new National School Feeding Strategy that establishes as one of the objectives of the programme the provision of a stable market for local farmers, and considers it as an instrument with the potential to incentivize and increase diversified agricultural production and productivity while creating employment opportunities for women and young people. Nevertheless, similarly to many other countries, Ethiopia still faces various challenges in its implementation. These include challenges related to the alignment with the public procurement regulatory framework.

One of the key characteristics of Ethiopia's HGSF initiatives is that, as they were initially funded by external partners, it was possible to adopt flexible procurement procedures not fully aligned with the standard public procurement ones. Nevertheless, when the government started to finance the programmes, programmes had to follow the national public procurement rules and related procedures which are mandatory for the public purchase of goods in Ethiopia. This was particularly the case of the HGSF emergency programme.

The transition to standard public procurement procedures became an important bottleneck to the implementation of the HGSF initiatives and was reported as one of the main challenges faced by the Ministry of Education in feeding school children in a timely manner (Swensson, 2019). Main challenges included the length, the complexity and high level of bureaucracy of the open bid method, and the impossibility of targeting local and smallholder suppliers. Other challenges included issues related to increase in the prices paid and delays in payment (Swensson, 2019).

The government has taken actions to address the issue with the support of FAO and WFP. These include the establishment of a multi-stakeholder committee formed under the leadership of the Ministry of Education for formulating joint and coherent proposals, including for the amendment of the federal Public Procurement proclamation. In addition, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP)

Regional government has issued a special directive for the procurement of food for school feeding with alternative and adapted procurement procedures and additional instruments to overcome barriers. Although it is limited to the SNNP region, this Directive represents an important milestone towards the alignment of public procurement rules and practices to support the implementation of HGSF initiatives in Ethiopia.

The experience of Ethiopia provides evidence of the challenges that public procurement regulatory frameworks may impose for the implementation of HGSF initiatives and on the importance of addressing it (Swensson and Tartanac, 2020; Swensson, 2018). It also highlights the importance of considering the long-term sustainability of alternative procurement procedures adopted in pilot initiatives supported by external partners. Considering that the shift from external funding sources to national ones is one of the most common critical transition points in the development of HGSF, it is important that issues related to the national public procurement rules and procedures are considered at the outset, having procurement regulatory authority as a strategic partner.

Source: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3614EN/ca3614en.pdf>

### Case study 2.2 **Cameroon: Legislative and policy framework for strengthening the implementation of Home-Grown School Feeding in Cameroon.**

In Cameroon the review of the Government's strategic and policy document *Vision 2035*, and the National Development Strategy revealed that school feeding was not considered as a priority. This lack of commitment at the highest political level represents an area for improvement, as it limits the implementation of school feeding programmes. The articulation of school meals programme in national policies helps to strengthen its sustainability potential and the quality of activities. The Ministry of Basic Education the Government has identified school feeding as a relevant and important priority to boost education mainly in Zones of Priority Education, namely in the Far North, North, Adamaoua, East and South West. School feeding is recognized as an intervention belonging to the education and social protection sectors, but it is not expressly included in the national strategy document or other sectoral strategies, nor in policies and procedures pertaining to these sectors.

In Cameroon, a national school feeding policy document was drafted by the Ministry of Basic Education in 2015. The draft document did not include an analysis of the school feeding activities using the SABER tool. When the draft was shared with WFP, the WFP Country Office recommended the undertaking of a SABER assessment to inform the policy with recommendations in the five areas of SABER - School Feeding. Subsequently, with the support of WFP's Regional Bureau in Dakar, a SABER exercise was conducted in 2016 and a workshop held in December 2016, with the participation

of all the relevant stakeholders. The SABER diagnostic revealed that school feeding is not included in the Country's national policies, thus not lacked the institutional, legislative and policy framework, to support the implementation and guidance for school feeding activities in Cameroon. The SABER exercise recommended the implementation of a three-year pilot of Home-Grown School Feeding programme. The lack of an institutional framework constitutes an impeding factor hindering the School Feeding Programme to play its full role as a relevant lever in the global zero hunger strategy.

Since 2017, the WFP Country Office has been supporting the Ministry of Basic Education for the endorsement of the SABER report. The Government of Cameroon endorsed the SABER report in December 2019, three years after its submission. The Minister recommended the revision of the draft policy document. The WFP Country Office is now collaborating with the Ministry of Basic Education to establish a committee including various government ministries and NGOs to proceed with the revision of the school feeding policy and address all aspects related to the implementation, management to adapt it to the context and ensure the alignment of the policy to international standard of school feeding policies.

The WFP Country Office has also drafted a school feeding strategy including the pilot of Home-Grown School Feeding programme to be implemented in some 20 schools in the Far North Regions. WFP is working with the Government and the Regional Centre of Excellence against Hunger and Malnutrition in Cote d'Ivoire and the Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil in the review and way forward on this strategy..

As preliminary actions taken, the WFP Country Office has conducted workshop with government and school feeding partners operating in the Far North region. It was agreed to pilot the HGSPF ensuring linkages with smallholders' cooperatives in 20 identified government schools.

The design of the programme presents challenges, particularly regarding institutional arrangements required for the effective implementation of the pilot programme. Ensuring the commitment of the Government is essential. A challenge is to determine the appropriate mechanisms and incentives for sectoral services to consider the school feeding programme as essential for achieving some of its priority objectives.

To govern the linkages between the HGSPF and smallholder farmers, a formal agreement was needed to establish a governance and management structure of school feeding programmes, between the cooperatives of agricultural producers in priority women-led cooperatives and the government. . Thanks to the agreement, WFP and the government are committed to supporting the women's organizations through multifaceted assistance including the provision of small agricultural equipment and tools, and inputs as well as capacity building from the UN Rome-based agencies (FAO, WFP and IFAD). These efforts collectively contribute to the improvement of productivity and income of small agricultural producers and many other related activities aimed at promoting education in general.

## 2.2 BUILDING NATIONAL EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND COORDINATION FOR HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING INITIATIVES

A successful Home-Grown School Feeding programme requires policymakers to consider several aspects during the planning and implementation phases (FAO and WFP, 2018). In its most recent study, WFP-CERFAM found that an effective coordination mechanism is key while planning for HGSF programmes. Therefore, at the national level, stakeholders have to undertake more assessments, ensure that gender considerations are included in the planning and establish mechanisms to improve long-term government engagement in the process (CERFAM, 2020).



Credits: WFP/Adel Sarkozi/Liberia.

One of the biggest challenges faced by governments in Africa is the lack of coordination in HGSF among the various stakeholders. An effective HGSF programme require the involvement of different actors from different sectors to bring their knowledge and expertise in the planning and implementation of the Programme. In addition, a functioning technical working group, including members from all relevant institutions of the government, strengthens the coordination at the institutional level. Further, it is essential that HGSF is integrated into all levels of sectoral policies and frameworks to allow for countries to demonstrate the stark interest and added value of HGSF. This will allow for the technical expertise and capacities to be established and enables a clear communication through joint actions, goal planning, and performance measurement through agreed-upon indicators and outputs.

The purpose of effective institutional capacity and coordination is to develop strong institutional frameworks, and management and accountability structures. In particular, the identification of an institution is mandated and accountable for the implementation of the school feeding programme is essential. This requires a dedicated unit within the identified sectoral institution, which is adequately staffed with a range of skills ranging from food and nutrition, agriculture and rural development, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and communication.

### Case study 2.3 **Madagascar: National coordination structure for Home Grown School Feeding in Madagascar**

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is primarily responsible for the coordination of the school feeding programme across the national territory, through its national structures and its decentralized structures at regional, district and commune levels. Its main role is to ensure the proper implementation of the school feeding programme, through planning, administration, management, supervision, communication, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of activities relating to school feeding.

The coordinating unit of the school feeding programme, within the Ministry of National Education, is a national structure called the School Canteen Project Coordination Unit (CCPCS), which is attached at the Department of Fundamental Education (DEF). This structure also provides leadership in the promotion of multisectoral programs by creating links between school feeding and health, nutrition, water, hygiene and sanitation, agriculture, social protection, and other sectors. This requires operational partnerships and strong coordination mechanisms. The school community, is in the form of an association at school level and called FEFPI or Farimbon'Ezaka ho Fahombiazana ny Fanabeazana eny Ifotony. It was established by MENETP by Decree No 2015-707 of April 21, 2015 through the creation of a Local School Canteen Management Committee or CLG, which manages all activities within the school.

To establish a link between school feeding and their respective national sectors, the Steering Committee for Food, Nutrition and School Health or COPILANSS was created. It is a multisectoral structure whose leadership is provided by MENETP and strengthened links with health, nutrition, agriculture, water-sanitation-hygiene and social protection programs. To this end, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, and the Ministry of Population, all support the MENETP in the implementation of the complementary activities to school feeding. They all play a leading role in the promotion of agricultural activities and local purchases around the school, all programmes focused on access to water, sanitation and health in the school environment.

Additionally, the MoNE mobilizes the other ministries and organizations in the development of the Home-Grown School feeding programme, including:

- The National Nutrition Office which is attached to the Prime Minister's Office collaborates in nutritional education activities. As part of the implementation of Home-Grown School Feeding modalities at school level, it supports the

organization and training of the school communities school feeding sensitive to nutrition

- The Ministry in charge of Finance and Budget (MFB): The primary responsibility of this Ministry is to create a budget line and allocate a consistent, regular and stable annual budget for school feeding.

And the Technical and Financial Partners: their mission is to support the Government to ensure the development of the country through financing and technical support. The 2019-2021 Education Sector Plan which includes the school canteen program implementation documents.

The Malagasy Government is very committed to the implementation of the school feeding programme, in particular through the establishment of:

- The school feeding programme joint workplan with WFP
- Database of interventions and actors in the field of school feeding in Madagascar
- The National School Food and Nutrition Plan (PNANS III) is the updated reference document in this area for the period 2020 – 2024, with WFP support.
- The cost-benefit analysis of school feeding carried out with WFP and Mastercard in July 2019 showed that 1 USD invested in school canteens generates 6 USD in return on investment

To achieve its objectives, the Ministry has also strengthened the public-private partnership with various national and international organizations including WFP, which has been its close partner for more than 30 years, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), ADRA Madagascar, Aide et Action, but also with the private sector, associations, and non-governmental organizations and parents of students,

To increase the impacts and benefits of school feeding, the promotion of complementary actions is encouraged. These actions, carried out at the school level but also at the community level, can be grouped together in an Essential Package of integrated and multisectoral actions. The Minimum Package of Essential Actions adopted for Madagascar is composed of actions on health (deworming, supplementation with Iron or Folic Acid Iron), nutrition, Water-Sanitation-Hygiene, agriculture and preservation of the environment to promote food based on local products.

## 2.3 MOBILIZING DOMESTIC FINANCING FOR SUSTAINABLE HGSF PROGRAMMES

An enabling institutional environment and a strong engagement of stakeholders are key for a successful Home-Grown School Feeding programmes. Equally important is financial capacity, through stable and predictable funding to school feeding programmes. Funding for these programmes has historically been provided through a combination of sources, both non-government and government.

As illustrated in chapter 1, domestic funding for school feeding has increased in all regions of the continent, but most notably in Eastern Africa (+24 percentage points) and Western Africa (+39 percentage points), while the average cost of school feeding remained relatively even. This section explores in more detail how national financing for school feeding has increased among governments that are investing in Home-Grown School Feeding programmes.

Figure 1.8 shows that national budgets were the major sources of funding in both 2013 and 2020 in middle-income countries. In upper middle-income countries, school feeding programmes are exclusively financed by national domestic budgets.

The GCNF reports of 2020 show that the Republic of Botswana, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republic of South Africa, the Republic of Tunisia, and Zimbabwe all funded their national school funding programmes through national budgets. The highest level of funding was found in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (US\$ 257.6 million). Most countries rely on mixed funded, involving the government, international donors, and the private sector. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, in addition to national funding, parents are contributing to the school feeding programme, while in the Republic of Niger; local governments contributed USD 111,600 to school funding for the period of October 2017 - June 2018 (180 school days).

Figure 2.1 **Budget allocated (in millions US\$)**

	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	Domestic budget	Total budget								
Burundi	1.93	9	1.92	11	1.66	15	1.6	17	1.6	22
DRC				1.4		2		2		2
Zimbabwe				0.05		0.25		0.6		2
Namibia	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	8.4	8.4	10.0	10
Côte d'Ivoire	9.8	10.4	6.0	11.7	6.2	7.4	6.9	13.8		
RoC	4	6.6	3	7.2	2	7.4	2	6.7	2	7.0
Chad		1.4	0.7	1.5	0	0	0	0.8	0.0	
Uganda										4.4
Zambia	3.6	7.60	3.6	7.60	4	8.30	4.00	8.20	4.00	6.0
Ethiopia		10.7	30	43.7	7	11.0	7	10.2		13.2
Madagascar		6.7		6.8		7.0		9.4		7.6

Figure 2.2 Countries budget allocated (in millions US\$)

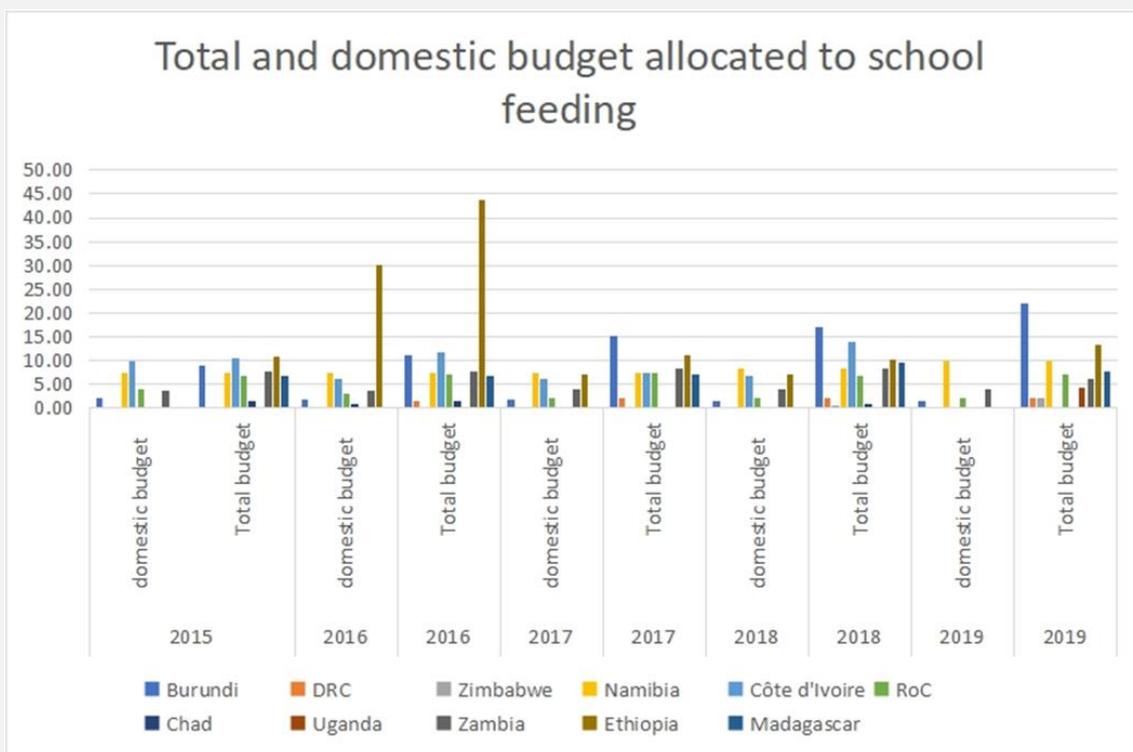
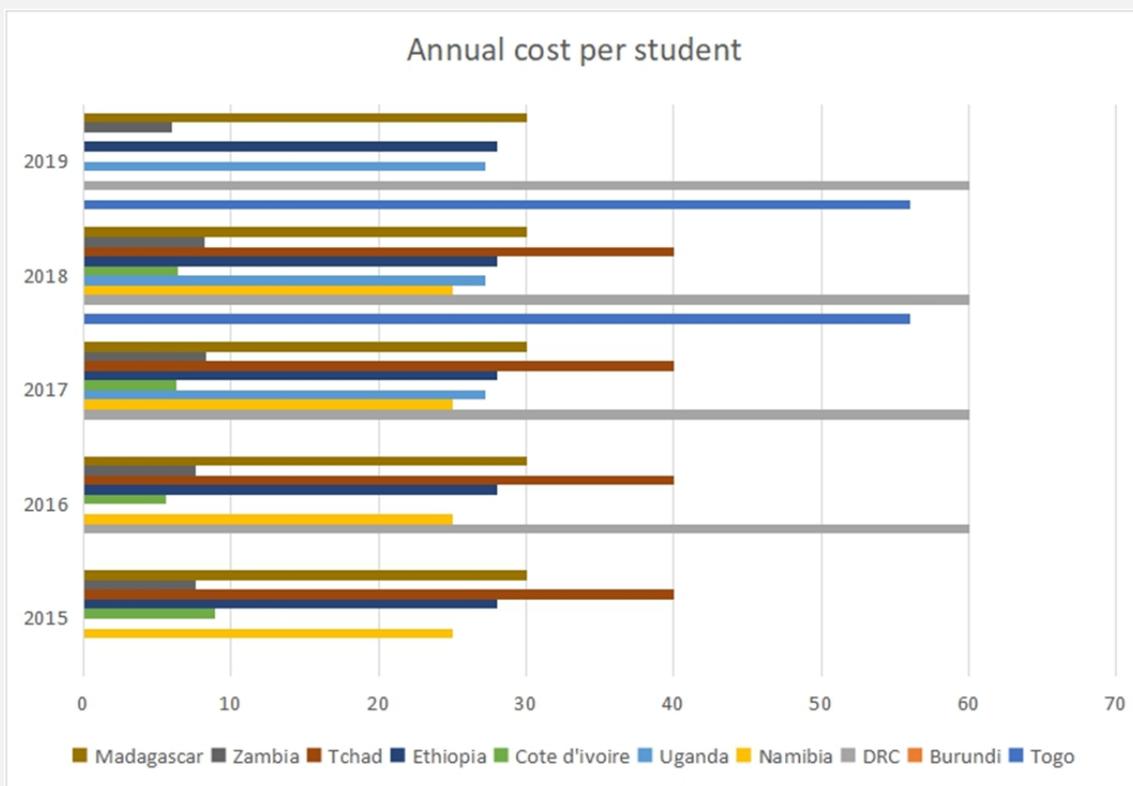


Figure 2.3 Annual cost per student (in US\$)



## Case study 2.4 **Botswana: Universal National School Feeding Programme and Funding by the Government**

Botswana has successfully implemented its National School Feeding Programme since 1998. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is the institution responsible for programme implementation, but school feeding is also one of several vulnerable group feeding and food security programmes coordinated as part of The Revised National Food Strategy under the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

School feeding initially started in 1966 in response to widespread malnutrition among children resulting from a continuous 5-year drought period. The country was also not self-sufficient in food production and like other African countries Botswana started its National School Feeding Programme with the financial and implementation assistance of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), a situation that prevailed until 1993 when the gradual process of WFP's withdrawal of resources and implementation assistance started. By this time, it was evident that the number of school feeding beneficiaries had steadily increased (373 736, beneficiaries in 755 schools across the country in 2020, but in addition, Botswana had graduated to a middle-income country, and the government was no longer eligible for WFP support. The period between 1993 and 1997 is considered as a transition period during which time, WFP's resources and implementation support decreased as the government increasingly took more control over implementation. Since 1998 school feeding has been modified and refined over the years. Among the changes was the government's investment in improved infrastructure, partially decentralizing the procurement process and modifications to the menu.

The Botswana National School Feeding Programme has universal coverage and reaches children (pre -schools and grades 1 to 7) in all government-owned/public primary schools in the country, providing one meal a day to a total of 373,736 primary school children and 25 000 pre-schoolers in 6615 preschools. Through the Remote Area Dweller Programme, three meals are provided daily thus breakfast, mid-day meal and evening or second meal are provided to children in very remote areas or from marginalized communities. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development primarily uses a centralized and decentralised procurement models to buy the dry and non-perishable food supplies in bulk and delivers them to districts. The purchase of perishable food items has been decentralized to the District Councils since 2012, followed by procurement of fruits, vegetables and eggs in 2017. Further decentralisation for procurement of UHT milk and Sunflower oil will commence in 2021. Since 2009, the Councils also purchase fresh/seasonal crops from local farmers, albeit on a small scale.

### **Country School Feeding Programme Factsheet**

<b>Start Date</b>		1998 ( <i>programme initially started in 1966 with WFP support</i> ).
<b>Design and Implementation</b>	<b><i>Rational/Impact</i></b>	<p>Objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent children from feeling hungry during school days.</li> <li>• Provide children with a balanced diet.</li> <li>• Keep children in school for the entire day.</li> <li>• Improve school attendance.</li> </ul>
	<b><i>Implementation-Levels</i></b>	Universal coverage reaches all children in pre-schools and grades 1 to 7 in government-owned/public primary schools. In 2020, 373 736 primary school going children and 25 000 pre-schoolers were reached by the programme through 755 primary schools and 615 pre-schools.
	<b><i>Supply, Storage and Logistics</i></b>	There are 20 district depots in main districts across the country, managed by the Division of Food Relief Services at the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Commodities are distributed by suppliers to the depots storages. Supplies to the schools are made by the Division of Food Relief Services and councils' trucks.

	<b>Modality, Food Basket Details</b>	One early morning and mid-day meals are provided daily to all children and are composed of sorghum porridge served with bean relish , and or canned meat stew (given once a week). Bread and milk, samp mixed with beans and oil, hot beverage, ( rooi boos tea, sugar) soft porridge with milk , salt, and eggs are also served more than once a week while rape/spinach/ cabbage, tomatoes, onions , apples and oranges are served once a week. A third meal is provided to children in Remote Area Dwellers' every afternoon before they go home, and they receive the same meal that was served at mid-day meal.
	<b>Food Preparation</b>	Food is prepared at school by cooks identified from the community but paid by the government through councils. The Ministry has through Ipelegeng programme, engaged extra cooks to specifically prepare breakfast meal.
<b>Policy and Legal Frameworks Documents</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Suggested Guidelines on the Management of Primary School Feeding Programmes in Botswana</i> (Bornay et al., 1993).</li> <li>• <i>The Revised National Food Strategy</i> (Republic of Botswana, 2000).</li> <li>• <i>Revised National Policy for Rural Development</i> (Republic of Botswana, 2002).</li> <li>• <i>Guidelines for Procurement of Agricultural Products for School Feeding</i> (Republic of Botswana, 2009a).</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional Arrangements</b>	<b>Lead Institution</b>	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

	<b>Supporting Institutions</b>	<p>Ministry of Health and Wellness.</p> <p>Ministry of Agriculture Development and Food Security.</p> <p>Ministry of Basic Education.</p>
<b>Finance</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>	The annual budget for primary school feeding in Botswana for 2020/2021 is P 613 898,360.00 (USD56 849 ,709.93)
<b>Community Involvement</b>		Community involved in hand stamping of sorghum grain some districts and in food preparation. Through Parent-Teacher Associations, community/parents provide cleaning materials and feeding utensils.
<b>Innovations/Good Practices</b>		<p>School feeding is linked to job creation. Labour intensive grain processing (hand stamping) selected as an income earning opportunity for women.</p> <p>Local procurement of perishable food such as bread in some communities is carried out; the bread is baked by local women.</p> <p>Supply of fresh fruit and vegetables is a year-round supply</p>
<b>Weaknesses/Risks</b>		<p>Purchase of fresh agricultural products is seasonal.</p> <p>Lack of a comprehensive national school home grown school feeding strategy.</p>

## 2.4 WAY FORWARD

### 2.4.1 Conclusions

#### Education

- Each year, an estimated 200 to 500 million school days are lost in low-income countries due to common health problems of school children, including worm infections, iron-deficiency anemia and hunger.
- School feeding encourages parents to send their children to school and also helps keep them at school, resulting in increased enrolment and reduced absenteeism.
- Hungry children cannot learn well. If a child goes to school hungry, he or she cannot focus on lessons as shown by lower test scores.

#### Nutrition and health

- Poor nutrition and health among school children undermines the efficiency of education systems in that children with diminished cognitive abilities display lower performance, and are more likely to repeat grades and to drop out of school. These children also enroll in school at a later age, and complete fewer years of schooling.
- Some of the important nutrients necessary for and available to school going children are iron, iodine, zinc and vitamin A.
- Not having enough iodine impacts a child's brain development, may lead to mental retardation and irreversible brain damage.
- Insufficient vitamin A weakens the immune system and can lead to increased school absence (PannoZZo, 2016).
- School meals offer an opportunity to provide these nutrients with positive outcomes, thereby creating a healthy learning environment.

#### Agriculture

- HGSF is different from traditional school feeding in that it is designed to provide children in schools with safe, diverse and nutritious food, sourced locally from smallholders farmers (WFP et al, 2018), who benefit from the programme alongside schoolchildren.
- Because the food is locally sourced, children are more likely to get fresh and nutritious food.
- HGSF is a great opportunity for nutrition education for both school children and local communities.
- The food supply in the local markets generally improves as a result of HGSF, ultimately contributing to improving food security.
- The procurement of local food commodities by government institutions helps channel funding through local food systems, thereby promoting local economic development.
- Overall, HGSF generates a stable, structured, and predictable demand for the local farmers products.

#### Social protection

- School feeding is the most extensive social safety net in the world and reduces or prevents hunger and poverty among children and protects the well-being of the most vulnerable children and families.
- As most smallholder farmers are poor and food-insecure, HGSF helps improve their household income and food deficits, therefore reducing their vulnerability.

## 2.4.2 Recommendations

- **Countries need to invest in age-specific health and nutrition throughout the first 8,000 days to develop human capital.** There is a growing realization of the importance of nutrition for development, coupled with a strong political commitment and leadership to invest in strategies that will reduce undernutrition. An increasing body of evidence has shown that the current discrepancy between investments in the first 1,000 days and the next 7,000 days needs to be addressed for children and adolescents to achieve their full potential. In order to maintain a good nutrition in the long term, it is imperative that pre-school and school-age children and adolescent are provided with age-specific health and nutrition interventions. School meals can be an effective intervention to address the nutritional requirements of these age groups. Age-specific packages of health and nutrition interventions can be delivered through the school platform to build human capital and ensure health and well-nourished populations to drive economic growth.
- **Additional investments are needed in Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes to yield high economic returns for food systems.** Home-Grown School Feeding programmes directly and indirectly create jobs in a number of industries, including smallholder agriculture. These programmes also help integrate and develop agricultural markets, leading to growth in the agricultural sector. Programmes such as Home-Grown School Feeding provide an opportunity to direct attention to smallholder farmers. Over the next decade, there is need for substantive political commitment towards the adoption of food and nutrition security priorities as informed by Continental, Regional and National Frameworks, especially in leveraging the implementation of National/Regional Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs/RAIPs) and the CAADP Malabo Declaration.
- **Well-designed Home-Grown School Feeding programmes can also help cope and mitigate the impacts of climate change.** Home-Grown School Feeding programmes improve the self-reliance of local communities and promote climate-sensitive economic models, including shorter supply chain and the consumption of seasonal foods. As such, they help build resilience and preparedness at the community level, and they also help averting the interruption of essential safety nets in the event of a shock.
- **Governments should advance the translation of Home-Grown School Feeding strategies into well designed and developed programmes and effective implementation plans.** The African Union and many countries have recognized Home-Grown School Feeding as a key strategy for economic growth and human development,

but many governments are yet to translate these policy commitments into action through Home-Grown School Feeding programmes at scale.

- **National budgets need to ensure steady financing flows to support Home-Grown School Feeding programmes.** As governments strengthen their school feeding policies and programmes, it is essential that their financial support to these programmes is mainstreamed in the budget lines of National governments so as to guarantee steady and predictable funding in these essential investments.
- **The African Union and Governments need to improve the monitoring and reporting of Home-Grown School Feeding programmes.** Better indicators and a robust data collection mechanism will help governments manage programmes at scale. Reliable data will also help donors and partners invest in the further development of these programmes.
- **A strong political will and commitment is key to ensuring the success of Home-Grown School Feeding programmes.** Home-Grown School Feeding offers a platform for coordinated action across ministries, but a high-level coordination mechanism and clear political willingness is essential to ensure that these programmes can be implemented with the support of all sectors – agriculture, health, education, and finance.



Credits: WFP/Hugh Rutherford/Uganda.

## Chapter 3

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# Providing an integrated school health and nutrition package

## Chapter 3

# Providing an integrated school health and nutrition package

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION: SCHOOL HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN AFRICA

Chapter 3 presents an introduction to integrated school health and nutrition in Africa highlighting its importance and also aims to inform existing processes and approaches to better integrated school health and nutrition packages provided on the African continent. The chapter explores exemplary case studies and concludes with key strategies as recommendations for accelerating integrated school health and nutrition packages in Africa.

As illustrated in chapter 1, all countries in the dataset implement school feeding in conjunction with complementary health and nutrition activities. This is an important finding which highlights the emphasis laid by governments on these essential interventions for children. However, only 14 percent of governments complement school feeding with a package of more than six interventions, highlighting room for improvement, especially in countries that need to invest more in their human capital.

Investing in school health and nutrition has been an unapologetic measure, tailored to shape the future economic growth and human capital of Africans (WFP, 2019a). The African Union member states have understood that it is their responsibility to protect children's rights ensuring that all children on the continent have the highest standards of living linked to quality education and driven by good health and nutrition programmes (UNICEF, 2019c; WFP, 2019). With the same perspective, the African Union conceived national homegrown school feeding programmes to support the implementation of the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, the Agenda 2063 (African Union, 2019; UNICEF, 2019c). and the African Children's Agenda 2040.

School health and nutrition in Africa is primarily a multi-sectoral effort, designed to enhance the best start of improving education outcomes (FAO et al., 2018). and is continuously hindered by many factors on the continent, now including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic offers the continent a unique opportunity to strategize, reimagining an Africa with an integrated approach within its delivery of health and nutrition for children. It is essential for all levels of governments to ensure that vital services such as school feeding programmes, WASH, physical and mental health services, and child protection services are delivered as soon as schools are safely reopened, especially to the most marginalized. School health and Nutrition

is not limited to education outcomes such as increase in enrolment rates and reduced absenteeism among children and young people rather, Various studies has proven SHN to be a tool to optimum cognitive gain, brain development, critical thinking, a tool to alleviate hunger and beyond that, a way to address food insecurity. Effective SHN programmes also concurrently promote developed rural livelihood, foster equity and gender inclusion of all Africans (FAO et al., 2019; WFP, 2019; UNESCO et al., 2020).

Africa has combined its SHN efforts with a view to creating a prosperous continent. Sustainable programmes in education, health, nutrition, social protection and agriculture, among other sectors, can be achieved through home-grown school feeding practices as they benefit many sectors in a country's national programme, and with the target of improving the wellbeing of Africans, particularly children (WFP et al., 2018). As this report highlights, schools offer an entry point and opportunities to engage multiple sectors and stakeholders in order to improve education outcomes by providing regular inclusive health and nutrition packages. The aim is to improve children's diet quality, attendance and enrolment through inclusive health and nutrition packages in HGSF Programmes as they are considered to be the most cost-effective way to improve the lives of schoolchildren and their communities at large (Fernandes & Aurino, 2017).

## **3.2 IDENTIFYING THE PROCESS AND APPROACHES TO INTEGRATED HEALTH AND NUTRITION PACKAGES FOR SCHOOLS IN AFRICA**

### **3.2.1 Definition of Integrated Health and Nutrition package**

In low-and- Middle-Income Countries (LMIC), education outcomes are affected by a number of factors. Studies reveal that health conditions of school-age children in LMIC negatively affect their access to education as well as their overall learning outcomes (Sarr et al., 2017). Many health conditions have been identified among school-age children, such as inadequate food energy consumption, nutritional deficiencies, infection with parasites, soil-transmitted helminths (STHs) and schistosomes and respiratory diseases (Sarr et al., 2017), which in turn lead to grade repetition or school drop-outs. The (regular) provision of nutritious meals through school meal programmes has been shown to improve vulnerable children's diet quality, attendance and enrolment, particularly for girls (Bundy et al., 2017).

With the recognition of school health and nutrition as a key component of education systems in the 1980s, a body of evidence has emerged demonstrating the need for a broad range of inputs from health, education, food, and community support and it also showed the potential of schools as an effective means of SHN delivery (Sarr et al., 2017). In addition, since the inclusion of school health and nutrition in the launch of the call for Education for All (EFA) in 2000, countries worldwide are constantly attempting to include and provide SHN services to ongoing school children (Sarr et al., 2017).

Schools can serve as a platform to offer to school-age children Health and Nutrition services in the prevention and treatment of school going children with health conditions, and can also benefit the poor and vulnerable suffering from ill health and poor nutrition status (Sarr et al., 2017). In the recently published Child and Adolescent Health Volume of the third edition of Disease Control Priorities, the authors strongly recommended the collaboration of the health and education sectors in providing operational, human, and financial resources to deliver a package of interventions using existing infrastructures to address the immediate and growing needs of these school-age children. School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Programmes under School-based interventions are known to be the most ubiquitous forms of health services for school-age children in low- and middle-income countries.

Globally, it is estimated that some 321 million children in low- and middle-income countries are provided with school meals every day via school feeding programmes (WFP, 2020a). According to the *Global Nutrition Policy Review 2016-2017*, the three main interventions in schools were growth monitoring (43%), deworming (36%) and micronutrient supplementation (19%).

The essential packages, which include school feeding, are a particularly good value for money, and that while the first 1,000 days of life are critical for development, much greater investment is also needed in the next 7,000 days of middle childhood and adolescence.

### 3.2.2 Overview of Integrated School Health and Nutrition Programmes in Home Grown School Feeding Programmes

Schools offer basic health services and address hygiene and sanitation, supporting education and helping mainstream nutrition while promoting lifelong healthy eating habits (Fernandes & Aurino, 2017). School feeding programmes are also recognised in addressing the “double burden” of malnutrition, not only in avoiding undernutrition, but also helping limit the obesity epidemic that often accompanies economic growth. These school feeding programmes also help in addressing the “hidden hunger” or “triple burden” of micronutrient deficiency, by adding micronutrient supplements to food, balancing diet menus or providing bio-fortified foods. Investments in School Feeding programmes represent an important strategy for capitalizing on a second window of opportunity that supports the prevention of malnutrition (in all its forms) among children and adolescents (Bundy et al., 2018).

School health and nutrition are designed to deliver coordinated and comprehensive strategies, activities and services that are integrated and sustained within the education system for protecting and promoting the physical, emotional and social development, health and wellbeing of students and the whole school community.

Successful school health and nutrition programmes require the provision of adequate resources and support to both health workers, teachers and school staff, to enable them to implement these policies and practices. An enabling policy and institutional environment are key for sustainability (UNESCO, FAO, GPE, UNICEF, UNSCN, World Bank Group, WFP and WHO, 2020).

In almost every community, teachers can be trained to deliver simple health interventions, resulting in the potential for high returns for relatively low costs by using the existing infrastructures. Experts therefore developed a core set of interventions for children aged between 5–14 years that can be delivered effectively for Low and Middle-Income Countries. In their study, they considered the perspective of four (4) domains of child development in addition to existing essential school health and Nutrition programmes (UNESCO, FAO, GPE, UNICEF, UNSCN, World Bank Group, WFP and WHO, 2020); the possible interventions for the essential Health and Nutrition packages. The physical, nutrition, and psychosocial domains relate primarily to health and the cognition pertain primarily to education (Fernandes & Aurino, 2017).



Credits: UNICEF/Abdul.

Table 3.1 **Platforms for delivering school-based health interventions**

Domain	Platform			
	Population level	Community	School	Primary health center
Physical Health	Education	Refractive error	<b>Deworming; insecticide-treated bed nets; malaria chemoprevention; tetanus toxoid and HPV vaccination; oral health prevention; sex education messages; refractive error</b>	<b>Deworming; insecticide-treated bed nets; tetanus toxoid and HPV vaccination; oral health and dentistry</b>
Nutrition	Nutrition Education messages	<b>Micronutrient Supplementation; multifortified foods</b>	<b>Micronutrient supplementation; multifortified foods; school feeding; nutrition education messages</b>	<b>Micronutrient supplementation</b>
Psychosocial	Mental Health Messages	n/a	Mental health education and counselling	Mental health counselling
Cognition	Conditional Cash Transfers	School promotion	<b>Vision screening</b>	<b>Vision screening</b>

Source: DCP, Edition 3, Volume 8, Chapt 25, P272

Adding to the existing and possible interventions to be considered in Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes, the following are critical interventions that act as a supplementary for achieving an integrated school health and nutrition package (UNESCO, FAO, GPE, UNICEF, UNSCN, World Bank Group, WFP and WHO, 2020 and DCP, Vol.3, Chapter 25).

- **Health Interventions**

- Schools Meals Programmes: Provide meals to help mitigate the energy intake gap for children experiencing low to moderate undernutrition in order to promote health status and school participation
- The regular provision of iron-folate pills or meals fortified with micronutrient powders may reduce the prevalence of anaemia and so improve cognitive ability, thereby improving school attendance and learning.

- **Oral hygiene and vaccines interventions:** Primary schools can be optimal delivery platforms for primary doses of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and booster doses of tetanus vaccine.
  - The tetanus toxoid and booster immunizations in school-based programmes, making it the vaccine most commonly delivered through schools and part of the essential package.
  - An estimated 80 percent of the global burden of cervical cancer is concentrated in LMICs, underscoring the relevance of the HPV vaccine as a preventive measure. The essential package promotes the administration of two doses of the HPV vaccine to girls in a given grade in primary school, with the selected grade containing the largest share of the target age group.
- **Hygiene education** but not the water and sanitation components of Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): This decision reflects the high cost of intervention, especially the construction of water supply infrastructures and school facility infrastructures and maintenance.

### 3.2.3 The costs and benefits of integrated health and nutrition package in Home-Grown School Feeding programmes

The essential packages, which include school feeding, are a particularly good value for money, and that while the first 1,000 days of life are critical for development, much greater investment is also needed in the next 7,000 days of middle childhood and adolescence.

School feeding is a cost-effective intervention because of the multiple benefits it offers, especially when combined with the overall essential package (Bundy et al., 2017).

School-based interventions are cost-effective as they provide simple, safe, and effective health interventions to school-age children and adolescents (Bundy et al., 2017). Many of the health conditions from which school children suffer are yet easily preventable and treatable. With a global enrollment rate of 91% achieved by the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 (Bundy et al., 2018); It is clear that school-based interventions are key to facilitate cross-sectoral collaborations between Ministries of health and education to promote health, cognition and physical growth across the life course of an individual. This is based on the reality that there are more schools than health facilities in incoming settings, rural and poor areas, as result, rural and poor areas are significantly more likely to have schools than health centers. Therefore, taking into account the economies of scale, coupled with the efficiencies of using existing infrastructures and the potential to administer additional interventions through the same delivery mechanism that make SHN interventions particularly cost-effective. In total, the essential package costs an estimated US\$10.30 per child for a year in LMICs (Bundy et al., 2017).

In communities with high prevalence of children suffering from multiple conditions mentioned earlier, integration of School Health and Nutrition interventions onto a school platform may provide means to optimize programme delivery, maximize efficiencies and increase the scale

and the impact of SHN for the health and education benefit of millions of children (Sarr et al, 2017).



Credits: UNICEF/Abdul.

### Box 3.1 **School meals guidelines for Africa**

The application of nutrition guidelines and standards (NGS) within HGSP programmes, has the potential not only to improve the quality and adequacy of the meals provided to schoolchildren, but also to be used as a key instrument to support the right to adequate food in these vulnerable population groups.

Many of African Countries have no official nutrition standards (or have some criteria that needs revision) to guide the composition of the meals provided on a regular basis to students.

To be effective, NGS need to go beyond setting nutrient-based targets and require an evidence-based and context-specific process. This process involves collection and analysis of food consumption data, analysis of nutrition and dietary issues and priorities, assessment of the school policy framework, understanding of the value chain and procurement possibilities, acknowledgment of the regional and local consumption patterns, assessment of school-level infrastructure and equipment, consideration of food safety risks and evaluation of programme aims and possibilities.

However, these assessments can be resource-intensive, require technical capacities and involve the coordination of different sectors, thus are not often carried out in many countries. On the other hand, when NGS exist, they are not evaluated or linked with other key aspects of the school system.

As a direct response to this need, FAO with the support from the German government and in partnership with WFP is currently developing a global methodology to design holistic and context-specific NGS, complemented with other food environment measures and school-based food and nutrition education (SFNE).

FAO has also developed a package of tools that provide actionable guidance for countries to adapt and base their SFNE interventions. This package is based on an evidence-informed theory of change and international best practices and principles, including:

- needs-based learning with real-life, practical aims
- building on existing experience and expertise
- plenty of observation and discussion activities
- action and practice of behaviours in real-life settings
- interactions with physical and social environments in all learning activities
- family and community support and involvement
- ownership of the process

Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need to adapt learning modalities and make better use of technology, to integrate resilience aims into SFNE programmes and to ensure that SFNE is designed to strategically support school meals and other health and nutrition interventions. At the same time, it evidences the need to also expand nutrition education interventions to school and foodservice staff.

The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) In collaboration with African Union Members States prepared a Home-Grown School Feeding Handout.

### Case study 3.1 **Sao Tome and Principe: Innovation to link fish producers to school meals for a better learning of school children**

Fish and fish products are rich in essential micronutrients such as iron, zinc, vitamin-A, important fatty acids and high-quality protein – contributing to the incorporation of animal protein in the diet of local communities, and to providing income to fishermen involved in harvesting and post-harvest activities.

In São Tomé and Príncipe, fishing is one of the most important economic activities -, the consumption of fish per capita amounts to 26 kg/ year and fish products. In this context, from 2016 the Santomean government assumed all responsibilities with the feeding of children in public schools in the country, with its creation of the National

Programme of Food and School Health - PNASE. With demonstrated interest in technical assistance in the area of home-grown school feeding, by the São Tomé government, a project emerged with the purpose of strengthening food security and nutrition in the country.

The PNASE in Sao Tomé and Príncipe is an intersectoral programme that crosses and stimulates agriculture, fishing, nutrition, health, development and social protection, which addresses problems that call into question the teaching and learning process of students. The PNASE is therefore one of the tools to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, a global target supported by HGSF partners.

Sao Tomé and Príncipe is making fisheries safer, more effective and sustainable through/using one of the crucial objectives of the project. The project supports the priorities of the Sustainable Fisheries Development Programme, included in the National Agricultural Investment Plan for Food and Nutrition Security (PNIASAN) and the National Programme for School Feeding and Health (PNASE).

The fisheries sector is of vital importance for the economic growth of São Tomé and Príncipe, particularly with regard to job creation and the promotion of food and nutrition security. However, more support and improvement is still needed to improve its post-harvest activities, including processing, transportation, storage and distribution. More is also needed on the cold chain of products that do not required fisheries. Lastly, it is vitally important that strategies are created to address the constraints of the local supply of fish products to school feeding and to work with school communities to increase the acceptability of fish products into school feeding programme in Sao Tomé and Príncipe.

Source: FAO

### Case study 3.2 **Ethiopia: Reaching adolescents school-going girls with IFA supplementations and deworming services**

African countries contribute to the highest burden of anemia among women, particularly in adolescent females and young women. Iron deficiency is one of the primary causes of anaemia, which has serious health consequences for both women and children. Anemia among young women remains a public health problem in most parts of Ethiopia. One of the recommended interventions to improve iron status in adolescent girls is iron supplementation. Yet the provision of iron supplements to adolescent girls has over the years proved to be a challenging task for the health systems.

Based on a study that utilised the nationally representative Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) data, the risk of anaemia was particularly high among adolescent girls in their early age and among those living in food insecure households.

The estimated prevalence of anaemia among young women was 21.7% (95% CI: 20.7%, 22.8%). This is with young women from Somalia (56.80%) and Afar (43.93%) region having a higher prevalence of anaemia and those from Addis Ababa having a lower prevalence of anaemia. Adding to the aforementioned with regards to the nutrition status, Ethiopia has made strides in reducing undernutrition in children, with stunting in particular dropping from 58 per cent in 2000 to 38 per cent in 2016. However, the number of adolescents with severe acute malnutrition spikes up during the 'lean' season between June and August, the period when most households will have exhausted their food stocks as they await the next harvest beginning September. Prolonged and chronic humanitarian crises, such as droughts and floods, also contribute to increased malnutrition in children and adolescents.

In addressing the multifaceted nutritional and health problems faced by adolescent school going children in Ethiopia, UNICEF is supporting deworming prophylaxis and IFA supplementation for adolescent girls in upper primary and secondary schools, and expanding training for teachers and the health task force on school health and nutrition services. In 2019, UNICEF procured 4.3 million IFA supplements to reach more than 70,000 adolescents in schools. As part of the national adolescent strategy, UNICEF supported capacity building activities in 100 woredas for the provision of school health and nutrition packages, adolescent-friendly health services and deworming in schools. Additionally, more than 2,450 health extension workers and teachers, and more than 100 health-care providers were trained to provide school-based nutrition services to adolescent girls.

### Case study 3.3 **Tunisia: Feeding dreams in schools**

School feeding is part of a package of school health and nutrition services that not only provides children with the calories to fuel their learning but also gives parents (who might otherwise insist that their children, particularly girls, stay at home) a strong incentive to send their kids back to school. As such the government of Tunisia through the Tunisian Ministry of Education and the inter-ministerial National School meals Steering Committee with the support from WFP and other partners has over the last 6 years been implementing the National School Feeding Programme in the country. The programme is set to improve attendance and prevent dropouts, particularly in rural areas, and also offer healthy, nutritious balanced meals to remediate nutritional deficiencies and address new health and nutrition concerns.

The Government-run National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) reaches 260,000 children (125,000 girls and 135,000 boys) in 2,500 primary schools. The programme is fully funded by the national government of Tunisia and in the year 2019 the budget for national school feeding doubled reaching USD 16 million per year. With the growth of the programme, the Tunisian Government allocated USD 1.7 million for the

construction and equipment of a pilot central kitchen and development of a School Food Bank.

The National School Feeding Programme in the country is crafted under a multi-dimensional approach for sustainable school meals. This including features such as:

- Creating revenue-generating opportunities for rural women
- Fostering links with local agricultural production
- Designing nutritious balanced meals
- Strengthening programme governance
- Supporting nutrition education through school gardens
- Promoting community participation

Overall, school meals are a key component of Tunisia's ongoing education reform. Sharing a meal can help children form long-lasting connections with their peers, communities and nation, and build a sense of justice and belonging. Under this reform, schoolchildren have classes in the morning, a locally produced nutritious lunch at noon, and cultural and recreational activities in the afternoon.



Credits. UNICEF/Nkoju.

### Case study 3.3 **Chad: The garden of life**

Ranking the second to last on the human development Index in 2019, Tchad has 66% of its 15.5 million population living in extreme poverty with the highest levels of hunger globally. In response to this difficulty, partners to the government of Tchad, primarily the WFP, have cooperated and offered their commitment to implementing the Country Strategic Plan 2019-2025. The strategic plan focuses on three pillars including:

1. An integrated response to the poverty and hunger crisis.
2. An integrated assistance for the lean season, nutrition and resilience programmes to provide vital and nutritional food to save lives.
3. The reinforcement of capacity building and services through both school meals and other homegrown school feeding programmes.

Targeting primary children and parents, a Garden for life project was initiated in 2017 to support the school health and nutrition initiatives in Tchad. It aims to provide diversified meals with cultivated vegetables produced from the garden for life, with 30% of all harvested vegetables being given to school canteens, 40% to households and 30% sold and reinvested in supporting teacher salaries.

Based on the recommendations of the 2018 African Union sustainable school feeding framework, within the same year, other projects in line with school health and nutrition in Tchad were expanded through the integrated long-term resilient activities. This includes activities such as nutrition education, food assistance, post-harvest loss management and lean season support focusing on their replicability, feasibility and sustainability. For the purpose of scaling up the aforementioned activities, Tchad applied the criteria on good practices of school health and nutrition with quantity and quality meals for school children developed by CERFAM.

The experience of Tchad on integrated school health and nutrition packages has a lesson to be shared: “The legal and policy framework that supports a clear HGSF strategy and builds advocacy to the successful implementation of school health and nutrition interventions.” The table below (Table 2) combines the type of institutional arrangements needed for each level of policy and the implementation design as well as policy objectives to integrated health, nutrition, education and agriculture initiatives.

## **3.3 KEY STRATEGIES FOR ACCELERATION OF INTEGRATED SCHOOL HEALTH AND NUTRITION PACKAGES IN AFRICA**

Various prevalent health conditions affect the education of school-age children in terms of their learning outcomes. These include and are not limited to infection with soil-transmitted helminths (STHs), hunger, and malnutrition. In recognition of the multiple issues affecting the health and education of school-age children, a proactive approach is required in establishing, implementing and coordinating integrated school health and nutrition packages. Consequently,

the following are among many the key strategies for accelerating integrated school health and nutrition:

### 3.3.1 Systematic evidence generation and use

Generating and disseminating accessible, timely and quality data on school health and nutrition packages as well as children and adolescent needs is key to critically monitor progress and inform planning, policy, advocacy and programming at all levels. Many African Member States face the challenge of children missing out on health and nutrition needs due to the unavailability of the data to aid their required support. Such evidence is further supported by the lack of established guidance and standards in countries. (see Case Study 3.2.5.2). Current evidence also highlights the limited research resources available to explore the status of integrated school health and nutrition package implementation, impact and/or challenges. To address this scarcity, stakeholders are implored to establish robust data and evidence systems that are guided by appropriate frameworks, relevant indicators and supported by the right resources (human, financial and technical) and for the consumption of all relevant parties.

### 3.3.2 Policy Development

A system of principles to guide decisions and achieve the necessary outcomes for school-aged-children demand deliberate efforts at National, Regional and Continental levels. Policies on integrated school health and nutrition packages must be established for school-aged children and should outline the role of respective stakeholders in addressing the health and nutritional needs of learners. (see Case Study 3.2.5.1 and 3.2.5.3). To ensure that a strong school health and nutrition service operates according to clear standards, policies should also focus on addressing both the immediate problems of learners (including those that constitute barriers to learning) as well as implementing interventions that can promote the learner's health and well-being during childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

### 3.3.3 Communication and Advocacy

Change rarely happens on its own. Advocacy and communication are key to raising awareness about a need, building public and political will, setting priorities and improving policies to leverage health and nutrition outcomes from actions taken across sectors and stakeholders. Advocacy and communication form the bedrock of driving and empowering health and nutrition outcomes. When backed by a solid evidence base, and clearly presented, advocacy and communication undoubtedly bring about tangible and lasting results. With the right tools, advocacy should clearly communicate the problem, using stories and an evidence-base, the urgency of addressing the problem and the programmatic and policy solutions to help convince decision makers as well as those who can influence decision makers about the need to implement and accelerate the provision of integrated school health and nutrition packages.

This is an area that requires much more attention and efforts especially for the inclusion of integrated school health and nutrition packages.

### 3.3.4 Systems Strengthening

In any given attempt to provide inclusive school health and nutrition packages, it is cardinal to acknowledge that the entire process works within a system. Paying attention to the unpredictable interactions among actors, sectors, disciplines, and determinants of both health and nutrition. System strengthening comprises of actions that establish sustained improvements in the provision, utilization, quality and efficiency of health and nutrition services delivered. These actions may also influence the overall inclusive education, health and nutrition system, including key performance drivers such as policies that impact school-going-children health and nutrition activities, governance, financing, management, capacity for implementation, and overall community level participation in initiatives designed to maintain national and global targets within the ecosystem. They also implicitly improve health and nutrition security by strengthening the system's resilience and its preparedness to respond efficiently and effectively to various contexts (including emergencies). Systems strengthening must involve activities at all levels, acknowledging the importance of community engagement and sub-national management capacity to the overall performance of the SHN packages. Systems strengthening should be guided by a results-based approach that includes situation analysis, followed by the identification of priorities and resolution of bottlenecks to effective coverage of inclusive health and nutrition packages.

### 3.3.5 Partnerships for Scale

Deciding on organizations to involve as partners and the roles that partners play in scaling up integrated school health and nutrition packages is a major strategic consideration. For the purpose of going to scale, an overall partnership constellation comprises of several types of national, regional or international organizational partners: lead partners that direct scaling efforts, distribution partners that provide connection to local implementers, supporting partners that provide expertise and/or funding, and implementing partners that provide direct services to intended beneficiaries. (see Case Study 3.2.5.2 and 3.2.5.3). All these types of partners have interrelated and overlapping roles in scaling up integrated school health and nutrition packages.

### 3.3.6 Community Engagement

Schools do not exist in isolation of the communities in which they operate, and it has long been recognized that schools are more likely to be effective through cooperation with others. The school community is composed of the parents of learners in the school, teachers, staff, community leaders, members of the business community, the Non-Governmental organizations, a network of agencies, religious societies and government departments, among others. It is individuals from these communities that have a potential to support and sustain a protective, healthy school environment. It is true that effective school change involves learners

and their families for the operational success and credibility. Schools provide services to their communities and although not often acknowledged, they require the advice and support of these communities in order to effectively respond to their aspirations and needs. There is need, therefore for real participation as opposed to token participation by all relevant stakeholders. Thus, school community participation is one of the propagations of conceptual frameworks that help to guide the movement of and inclusion of school health and nutrition promotion from theory to practice. It is therefore important for all stakeholders to acknowledge their roles, the importance and methods of execution for a holistic and practical community engagement in providing integrated school health.

### 3.3.7 Involvement of Teachers

In school feeding programmes, teachers can play the roles described below to improve school participation; ensure food safety, students' health status and learning performance; and raise awareness on healthy diets, nutrition and eating habits.

- **Role model:** Teachers are in an excellent position to help students understand the importance of food safety and to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to handle food safely (e.g. washing hands).
- **Cheerleader:** Teachers help create an equal and positive environment for all students to learn good habits and qualities through school feeding.
- **Planner:** Teachers require good planning skills to manage mealtimes, incorporate school feeding into classrooms, track the health, nutrition and learning outcomes of students.
- **Creating classroom culture:** Teachers help emphasize the significance of food safety, nutrition, health and their importance in learning. They can do this through activities such as handwashing and making nutrition poster classrooms.
- **Mentor:** Teachers provide the opportunity for students to openly ask questions or offer reflections about school feeding. Occasionally sitting and eating with students is a great opportunity for teachers to enhance their roles as mentors.
- **Supervisor:** A major role of teachers regarding school meals is to watch out for warning signs of malnutrition in students that needs attention to appropriate and timely interventions.
- **Expert:** Teachers should be trained with relevant knowledge and management skills regarding health, nutrition, food safety and hygiene.

While teachers have powerful roles to play in school feeding programmes, they are not alone in implementing the programme. Students themselves should be involved as well as school leaders, school cooks, parents and the larger community.

## 3.4 CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

As highlighted in chapter 1, complementary school health and nutrition activities are the norm in Africa. Most countries in Africa are making great strides in implementing school health and nutrition programmes, including school feeding, deworming, vitamin and mineral supplementation, among other interventions. Much more support is required especially in ensuring that these interventions are innovative, creative and effective. In real terms, ongoing efforts are often small-scale and implemented as pilot projects, focusing on children with special needs and prioritizing the transfer of knowledge over the promotion of active learning and the creation of appropriate attitudes, life skills and behaviours.

As a way forward for both country level action and partner level action, it is cardinal, especially during the period of the ongoing pandemic, to consider consolidated and strengthened school-based health and nutrition programmes, aiming at improving the nutritional status and learning outcomes of school children and creating an appropriate learning environment. This will provide an avenue for reimagining the provision of nutrition and health interventions. The aforementioned can be supported through initiatives like health and nutrition education, school gardening and school meals, clean water and sanitation, as well a physical activity education. Furthermore, this can be supported by timely and quality data on specific needs as well as applying a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder holistic approach to support effective school-based health and nutrition programmes and policies at national and local levels.

In terms of external support, partners are encouraged to establish a coordinating mechanism for standardising data collection on school-age children (i.e. food consumption, dietary and eating patterns, anthropometry and physical activity) at the regional and local level. Having that available, partners can better analyse data and explore opportunities for generating evidence to enhance programmes and policies at all levels. They can also explore opportunities for providing technical assistance in the development and implementation of inclusive school health and nutrition projects and facilitate the provision of assistance to countries in the establishment of Monitoring and evaluation systems for the monitoring of progress against project goals and objectives. Globally, there is no systematic tracking of the health and nutrition status of the schools and projects. There is also need to introduce the cost benefit analysis on school health interventions and policy frameworks related to integrated school health and nutrition initiatives.

### Conclusions

- **Schools can serve as a platform to offer health and nutrition services to school-age children.** Schools can offer basic health services and address hygiene and sanitation, supporting education and helping mainstream nutrition while promoting lifelong healthy eating habits. School health and nutrition is a multi-sectoral approach to design and deliver coordinated and comprehensive strategies, activities and services that are integrated and sustained within the education system for protecting and

promoting the physical, emotional and social development, health and wellbeing of students and the whole school community.

- **Key strategies for accelerating the integration of school health and nutrition packages in Africa include:** systematic evidence generation and use, policy development, communication and advocacy, systems strengthening, partnerships for scale, community engagement, and the involvement of teachers.

## Recommendations

- **As there are more schools than health facilities in Africa, schools represent a unique opportunity to scale-up health and nutrition interventions targeting school-age children.** African countries should invest in school health and nutrition interventions to maximize the returns of their investments in the education sector and yield high returns in human capital.
- **The African Union and its member states need to develop a database to collect, curate and publish data on school-age children and school health and nutrition interventions across the continent.** This mechanism will inform policies and programmes and help donors and partners provide technical assistance to governments to deliver health and nutrition packages to school-age children.
- **The African Union and development partners should strengthen their collaboration to provide technical assistance to governments.** Knowledge sharing, evidence generation and technical assistance is key to developing effective school health and nutrition policies and programmes and provide governments with the support they need to meet the needs of their schoolchildren.

## Chapter 4

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# **The impact of and response to the COVID-19 pandemic on school health and nutrition in Africa**

## Chapter 4

# The impact of and response to the COVID-19 pandemic on school health and nutrition in Africa

In February 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, becoming one of the largest health crises in recent history and by mid-March most governments world-wide had resorted to lockdowns. In the months that followed, the pandemic has had devastating effects on the lives of schoolchildren as governments throughout Africa announced country-wide school closures; about 90 percent of the world's school age children – 1.6 billion children - who no longer have access to school; to reduce the spread of the virus. By April 2020, 42 countries in sub-Saharan Africa closed schools, leaving an estimated 50 million children without access to education or school meals (WFP, 2020c). This may have profound, long-term consequences: a recent study (Malala Fund, 2020) estimates that up to 10 million secondary-school aged girls may never return to the classroom once schools re-open.

This chapter describes the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on schoolchildren in Africa and how governments have sought to mitigate the risks of school closures by modifying, replacing, or supplementing their school health and nutrition programmes. The chapter also explores how these programmes, especially school feeding, can accelerate schools reopening and incentivize children's safe return to school.

### 4.1 IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES ON CHILDREN DUE TO COVID-19

The effects of COVID-19 on children and their families are dire. For the unprivileged families, the value of a meal in school is equivalent to about 10 percent of a household's monthly income. For families with several children in school, that can mean substantial savings. The loss of the school meal means a loss of income, particularly to smallholder farmers that supply produce to schools. With schools closed, children are also at risk of hunger and will no longer have the protection of key vitamins and micronutrients they receive from school meals. Most of the member states have developed or are developing guidelines on health and safety protocols for reopening of basic education institutions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Development partners, the UN and International Organizations have also developed several guidelines and checklists that member states could adopt for safe schools reopening depending on their contexts.

While closing schools aimed at reducing transmission of COVID-19, it presents dire implications to children, who are now facing adverse effects on their learning, safety, health, and wellbeing. Children no longer have access to education and to the other benefits of the education system as a platform for delivering community services, safety nets and other critical transfers, diminishing the prospects of a better future life. The risks for children during this pandemic include families falling into deeper poverty, threats to survival, health, and child safety, and exacerbating the learning crisis (United Nations, 2020).



Credits: WFP/Hugh Rutherford/Uganda.

The World Bank (2020) describes the learning, health and safety impacts on children due to school closures as follows:

- For most children, academic learning will come to a halt. Evidence suggests that time out of school can lead to learning losses that continue to accumulate after schools reopen.
- Early childhood education and foundational learning in early primary school are negatively impacted. This is a very important period for child development; if children fail to acquire foundational skills at this stage, they may find it much more difficult to learn later (Crouch and Gove, 2011).
- Learning inequality will increase, as school closures exacerbate the already high levels of learning inequality in many low- and middle-income countries. The more educated and more wealthy families are more likely to sustain their children's learning at home and are more likely to have the necessary equipment, books and other resources. This

means that when schooling restarts, disadvantaged children will find themselves even further behind their peers.

- Attachment to schooling may fall, as school closures can lead some children and youth to disengage and reduce their schooling persistence.
- Student nutrition and physical health are compromised, particularly for children who rely on school feeding programmes as a primary source of nutrition. School closures also shut down access to crucial health programmes such as deworming.
- Student dropout could rise, with many students leaving schooling forever. In Africa, adolescent girls out of school are on average twice as likely to start childbearing than those who are in school (United Nations, 2020).

## 4.2 WHAT ARE COUNTRIES DOING IN RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS - EXAMPLES OF ALTERNATIVE MODALITIES TO SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES

In responding to the absence of school-based provision of meals, a number of different modalities were employed to substitute for the daily meal that children normally receive at school, including take-home rations and cash-based transfers. Some examples are shown below:

**Liberia** – As part of its COVID-19 emergency response programme, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with WFP, provided take-home dry rations to nearly 100,000 girls and boys for use by their entire households. This was to avert child hunger and encourage children to continue studying their lessons at home (Lieberman, 2020).

**Nigeria** - The National Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Programme was greatly affected by the impacts of COVID-19 such as school closures. The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, announced the distribution of food vouchers for school children to continue receiving support after schools closed. The programme provided food vouchers that enable school children to receive food packages, targeting 37,589 households monthly with children years 1-3, in public primary schools, as of June 2020. This food package is worth N4,200 or 10.85 USD for thirty days and will assist school children in having nutritional meals daily while reducing exposure to the virus. Countries can learn how to adapt a national School Feeding programme to COVID-19 measures (Okogba, 2020).

**South Africa** - In South Africa's Gauteng Province, the Minister of Education announced they will begin food distribution and dignity packs for girls including masks and gloves to be provided to children who relied on the school nutrition programme. South Africa's Western Cape provincial government has allocated 18 million Rand (~US\$ 958,000) to go to supporting the 483,000 learners that are beneficiaries of the province's School Nutrition Programme by providing take-away meals or take-home food rations, with schools being responsible for the modality used to deliver meals to learners (Government of South Africa, 2020).

## Case Study 4.1 **Kenya: The government response to Covid-19 Pandemic**

Contributed by: WFP East Africa

In March, when the first case of coronavirus was detected, the Kenyan Government took the decision to close schools and colleges nationwide, sending more than 17 million learners home indefinitely. A gradual return to physical learning started in October with the government citing a slowdown in the rate of infections.

Across Eastern Africa some 10 million schoolchildren are now missing out on school feeding and school-based health and nutrition services from WFP and the government because of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For some children, the meal they get in school is often the only meal they will get in a day. This scenario case was experienced by many vulnerable school age households in Kenya like Loise's family, as one of the estimated 739,000 Kenyans in the arid and semi-arid areas are severely food insecure and need immediate humanitarian assistance, according to a government-backed assessment. For seven months, Loise has had to stretch her husband's meager wage to try to feed her children, but it is often not enough and some days she is forced to watch her children go hungry. She is not alone, for hundreds of thousands of mothers across the country face the same choice.

The headmaster of Sosobora School – Dzombo Lewa: “When they get lunch in school, it means my only worry is what they will have for dinner,” she says. “That is a big relief for me especially during these difficult times.” Dzombo as a parent had benefited too from school meals first-hand “My children ate the school lunch at Viriko primary school,” she says. “That was a relief to me because I did not have to budget for their lunch expense.”

Primary schools in Kilifi receive cash transfers from the Ministry of Education to buy food for the school meals from the local markets. The Home-Grown School Meals Programme is seen as a major boost to local agricultural production and trade. Dzombo says that delays in cash disbursements is one of the challenges to the smooth implementation of the school meals programme. Often, this means that schools cannot buy food in time which affects the enrollment and attendance.

“If I had a chance to speak directly to the lawmakers who decide on school meals budgets, I would urge them to increase the funds so that each and every child in Kenya can benefit from school meals,” says Dzombo. “I would also urge them to budget and disburse the funds early so that by the time the new term starts, the food is already in the school.”

The closure of schools is putting at risk the futures of millions of children globally, affecting not only their ability to learn, but also their access to nutritious food and health support schemes. While the schools are closed, hunger and malnutrition for school going children is on the rise, like in the rural areas of Kilifi in Kenya and in many arid and semi-arid areas, parents struggle to provide enough food at home. A school

meal is therefore critical in ensuring that children go to school and can learn without interruptions.

In conclusion, WFP handed over the day-to-day management and implementation of school meals programme to the Government of Kenya in 2018. With the support of the US Department of Agriculture, WFP has continued to provide technical support to the Ministry of Education.

In the last quarter of the year 2020, the Ministry of Education and WFP will train 1,400 school heads, teachers in charge of school meals and chairpersons of school boards in Kilifi, Kwale, Taita Taveta and Tana River counties.

Schools are expected to fully re-open in January 2021. The Government is investing in more desks and classrooms across the country in order to meet the social distancing requirements. However, what many are hoping for is that there will be a hot lunch waiting for them.



Credits: UNICEF/Emorut.

## Case study 4.2 **Ghana: School Feeding Programmes COVID-19 Strategies**

In Ghana, the basic concept of the programme is to provide children in public primary schools and kindergartens in the poorest areas with one hot, nutritious meal per day, using locally grown foodstuffs. Currently, about 3 million pupils are benefiting from the meals provided in schools across all districts in the country. Upon the declaration of the novel corona virus outbreak as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) and recording of the first 4 cases in Ghana, the Ghana Education Service (GES) announced closure of all schools on 16th march, 2020.

However, the President of the republic of Ghana directed that all Junior High School (JHS) final year and JHS2 students return to school to complete the academic year after the lockdown was lifted in April 2020. The final years have since completed their examinations while the JHS2 are billed to vacate on 18th December 2020. In view of the President's directive, the Ghana School Feeding Programme under the auspices of Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) provided through existing caterers one hot nutritious meal for the final year JHS pupils and their counterparts in JHS2. It must be noted that the Junior High Schools in Ghana are not original beneficiaries of school feeding. Therefore, this was a one-off intervention designed to curtail the spread of COVID-19 and provide meals to boost the immunity of the JHS candidates preparing for examinations.

The school feeding emergency intervention is justified by the public health concerns due to COVID-19 pandemic. In those critical times, it was important to restrict the movement of pupils in search for life's basic needs especially food while at school. The provision of one hot nutritious meal supplemented the meals of candidates as well as boosted their immunity. GSFP caterers already have a leverage in the area of infrastructure, capacity and coverage (proximity to schools). These caterers have been trained in food safety and hygiene. GSFP caterers have been trained in innovative ways of combining local ingredients to provide balanced meals.

### **COVID-19 MEASURES FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL FEEDING.**

Even though every district has its localized menu, this special feeding programme had a menu with alternatives for the national exercise. This was to ensure uniformity and enhance monitoring activities. Key among the instructions to caterers all in a bid to check covid-19 include:

- food strictly packaged in 'take-away' packs
- caterers provided water, spoon, and tissue paper per child.
- caterers were to provide trash bag for children to put used packs in
- caterer should arrange with cleaner at school to dispose of trash bags after meals.
- Other agencies such as the health ministry made sure each child was provided with a set of nose mask which teachers ensured were worn before entering the class.

- Veronica buckets were also provided at the entrances of all classrooms with soap and water always available. Hand sanitizers were also made available at the school.

### **MONITORING OF COVID-19 SCHOOL FEEDING**

There was a very comprehensive monitoring for this special feeding programme involving the Chief of Staff at the Presidency, Ministry of Finance, Health, Education and Local Government and Rural Development. The monitoring was to ensure that service providers followed all the laid down procedures to achieve the intended purpose of the programme. Management created a social media platform such as WhatsApp where stakeholders including the Chief of Staff and the sector Minister were updated on a daily basis. In addition, caterers were also requested to post food prepared on a separate platform for information sharing.

#### **Case study 4.3 South Africa: Western Cape Education on implementing school feeding of vulnerable learners during Coronavirus COVID-19 lockdown**

The Western Cape Government in South Africa has been working hard to find a solution that would ensure that learners who normally receive school meals during term time do not go hungry during the school closure and lockdown. There had been an allocation of emergency funding from the Province in order to support learners who ordinarily receive school feeding during term time. The school closure declared by the President was an extended holiday, with the 'lost' teaching days to be made up during the rest of the year. The Western Cape government was thus unable to use the existing National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) funding to assist during the lockdown, as the funds were needed to continue feeding learners when the 'lost' days are made up later.

During the first quarter of the year 2020, the head of Department reached out to school principals asking that they prepare for the reintroduction of school feeding. There were many things to consider as it was a complex process to activate while schools were still closed for learners. Some of these considerations included:

- Learners that do not necessarily go to their nearest school and travel instead, by choice, to schools outside of their living area, but still require feeding
- Rural learners that live far from their schools
- Social distancing while collecting meals
- The distribution of takeaway meals or food parcels, and the safety of learners travelling home with food parcels.
- Safety of feeding volunteers.
- The issuing of permits for travel of volunteers and school staff required to manage the process.

These are few of the challenges that were faced, and which affected the decisions that needed to be made within the short period that was available on reintroducing the scheme. Additionally, there were some variances at local level and flexibility was required to ensure that many of the vulnerable learners as possible were reached.

The plan was set out to be that districts communicate with schools as plans per school were finalized. This included the days of distribution at the various schools. In most cases it was expected that schools would feed on specific days and others would feed daily on weekdays. The decision was taken by individual schools and communicated to their school communities, depending on circumstances on the ground.

Source: Government of South Africa: <https://www.gov.za/speeches/western-cape-education-implementing-school-feeding-vulnerable-learners-during-coronavirus#>

### 4.3 BACK TO SCHOOL PLANNING – HOW TO ENSURE CHILDREN’S SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL

An important lesson to learn from this crisis is how important the education system is for the normal functioning of our societies. Coping and mitigation have been vitally important while schools are closed, but even the best efforts fall far short of the coverage and equity of the school-based approaches that they sought to replace (UNESCO et al., 2020). The focus now is on moving quickly to reopen schools.

As schools reopen, the priority is to provide a safe school environment and ensure the number of children returning to school reach pre-COVID-19 levels. School-based services must then resume to help children regain their health and nutrition after the rigours of lock down and exclusion. As countries explore the realities of what is required, three key elements of back-to-school have emerged (UNESCO et al., 2020):

- Create a safe school environment that minimizes the risks of COVID-19 transmission among children and from children to staff.
- Put in place school health and nutrition services that promote the health and wellbeing of children and, through provision of school feeding, offer an incentive for parents to send their children back to school.
- Build an education system that uses the stimulus of the crisis as an opportunity to build a stronger and more equitable system.

While there is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic and the shocks to education and school health and nutrition will have immediate costs to our societies, countries can mitigate the damage if they act quickly through adequate planning and policies to support continued learning and health and nutrition services for schoolchildren. This crisis could, therefore,

become an opportunity to build more inclusive, efficient, and resilient education systems (World Bank, 2020).

## 4.4 WAY FORWARD

### 4.4.1 Conclusions

- **The COVID-19 pandemic and school closures threaten to have life-long impacts on the most vulnerable children in Africa, affecting their learning, health and nutrition.** This crisis has shown that the education system is a fundamental aspect of our societies. Schools contribute to the development of human capital, while providing opportunities to address inequality and poverty, and they serve as platforms for community services, health and nutrition services, and safety nets. It is now, more important than ever, to expand the notion of education, including through the enhancement and scale-up of health and nutrition services for children.
- **Governments have implemented coping and mitigation measures, yet these efforts fall far short of the coverage and equity of school-based programmes** as they were implemented before the crisis. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated inequalities and its negative impacts have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable children across the continent.

### 4.4.2 Recommendations

- **The restoration of school-based school health and nutrition services, starting with school feeding, is a priority.** School closures have helped countries recognize the true value of schools as a means of reaching school-age children with essential services. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that no alternative modality can achieve the same levels of coverage and equity as universal, school-based programmes. Moving forward, governments should seek to restore at least the same levels of coverage as those achieved before the crisis.
- **School feeding will be an essential contributor to the safe and effective re-opening of schools.** Efforts should be taken to re-open schools safely and build better and more resilient school systems that mitigate the risks of closures more quickly. School feeding and school health and nutrition interventions should be used to incentivize households to send children back to school and keep them healthy and well-nourished. This crisis could serve as an opportunity to build more inclusive, efficient, and resilient education systems, and for school health and nutrition services to be scaled up appropriately, leveraging on cross-sectoral partnerships.

## Chapter 5

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# Partnerships and governance in school feeding

## Chapter 5

### Partnerships and governance in school feeding

Previous chapters have shown how countries across Africa increasingly recognize that well-designed home-grown school feeding programmes contribute to growth and development. Multi-sectoral partnerships are critical to ensure that this recognition translates into effective and integrated programmes, which bring together education, health, social protection and other development partners to promote and implement integrated school health and nutrition programmes.

Global coalitions of partners have been built over the past two decades in support of school health and nutrition. The school health and nutrition agenda was revitalized in 2019 when UNESCO re-convened an Inter-Agency group on School Health and Nutrition with the objective of strengthening UN agency collaboration and promoting a more effective and integrated multi-agency school health and nutrition approach.

South-south Cooperation mechanisms are critical in supporting the exchange of knowledge and technical know-how between countries that are establishing national school feeding programmes. The Brazil and WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger is one major mechanism which promotes cooperation, and currently supports some 30 countries on a continuous and long-term basis. Tools and activities include technical missions for countries, support to regional workshops, and knowledge exchange. In 2019, the Government of the Ivory Coast and WFP launched a Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition which will play an important role in documenting, promoting and sharing practices for the eradication of hunger and malnutrition learned from Cote d'Ivoire and other countries of the region.

There has been significant progress in the development of formal regional structures to promote partnership and coordination on school feeding at the regional level. These platforms provide an opportunity for countries and partners to come together to set policy, agree on action and channel specific support. The African Union (AU) for instance, is a major essential partner in supporting the scale up of nationally owned school health and school feeding programmes.

Country level partnerships are critical in the development of integrated school health and nutrition packages which require multi-stakeholder engagement. School health and nutrition approaches help to foster improved relationships at the national level, both through the promotion of inter-ministerial engagement within governments, as well as in the national coordination of development partners working in different thematic areas.

## 5.1 OPERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCHOOL FEEDING

The African Union (AU) is an essential partner in supporting the scale up of nationally owned school health and school feeding programmes (see case study 4.1). At the AU Summit in 2016, the Heads of States recognized school feeding as a major tool for achieving the goals set in the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), including access, high performance and completion of education for all, while also contributing to ending hunger and alleviating poverty especially where Home Grown School Feeding is practiced.

As part of the Continental decision a multidisciplinary group of African experts was formed. The Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster was launched in 2017 by the African Union (African Union, 2019). The Cluster has five priorities: policy and legal framework; coordination; knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, accountability and learning; strengthening and building capacity; and advocacy for political commitment and resource mobilization. The Cluster is a continental platform where stakeholders from different sectors can engage and share technical information on the design and implementation of effective school feeding programmes. The Cluster works to ensure coordination, strengthened partnerships, and dynamic links between knowledge, policy and practice among African school feeding policy makers, practitioners and researchers. The Cluster also facilitates knowledge exchange amongst African countries and partners, as well as with non-African partners. The Cluster is supported by the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil, the WFP Africa Office, FAO, UNESCO, and UNICEF. As one of the first action points, the AU together with WFP and the Economic Policy Research Institute carried out a baseline study for school feeding efforts in Africa. The publication “Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union” was published in 2018. In 2019, the African Union sent out a request to all G7 Education Ministers to prioritize the issue of school health and nutrition and school feeding.

In January 2020, WFP and UNICEF launched a new partnership to ensure that by 2030, 35 million children in 30 of the poorest countries receive a package of essential health and nutrition services using schools as a platform (see box 2.3). WFP and UNICEF will work together to ensure that children not only receive nutritious meals but also complementary health services including deworming, vaccines and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions. Initially, the two agencies are working with governments in six countries - three from the Sahel (Chad, Mali and Niger) and three from the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan), to reach the most vulnerable children with the school health and nutrition package.

## 5.2 SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

South-South cooperation plays a key role in the transfer of technical expertise on school feeding between countries. The Brazil and WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger (WFP, 2017b) for instance emerges from the joint engagement of Brazil and WFP to support governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America to forge sustainable school feeding solutions (See Box 6.10). The WFP Centre is a global hub for South-South cooperation, and for knowledge-building, capacity

development and policy dialogue regarding food and nutrition security, social protection and school meals. The Centre was established in Brasilia in 2011, and currently supports some 30 countries on a continuous and long-term basis. Tools and activities include technical missions for countries, support to regional workshops and international seminars, engagement in regional and global networks, and knowledge production and exchange for countries to share challenges and innovative approaches to address the multidimensional issues of poverty and hunger. Concretely, the Centre has contributed to new national school feeding policies in 12 countries (WFP, 2017a).

Building on the successful experience of the Centres of Excellence in Brazil and China, in March 2019, the government of the Ivory Coast and WFP launched a Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM) based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. CERFAM will play an important role in documenting, promoting and sharing — at both regional and national levels — good practices for the eradication of hunger and malnutrition learned from Cote d’Ivoire and other countries of the region. The Centre will also provide technical assistance in the implementation of policies and programmes to fight against hunger and malnutrition and mobilize resources for the adoption of good practices and innovative solutions.



Credits: WFP/Ricardo Franco/Mozambique.

### 5.3 PARTNERSHIPS AT THE CONTINENTAL LEVEL

The African Union (AU) is a major supporter for African countries in scaling up nationally owned school health and school feeding programmes. At the AU Summit in 2016, the Heads of States

recognized school feeding as a major priority for achieving the goals set in the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), including access, high performance and completion of education for all, while also contributing to ending hunger and alleviating poverty especially where Home Grown School Feeding is practiced.

CESA is a continental operationalization framework of the global SDG4, developed as informed by Agenda 2063. The main operational modality of CESA is thematic clustering, and HGSF is one of several clusters under CESA. The thematic clustering is anticipated to enhance alignment and harmony among stakeholders as well as facilitate the identification and deployment of synergies for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

The establishment of a multidisciplinary technical committee of African experts, under the chairmanship of the AUC and the support of institutions such as the WFP and the Centre of Excellence Against Hunger (CoE-Brazil) is one of the decisions of the AU Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI). Accordingly, HGSF cluster was established in 2017 during the meeting of the 'Third Continental Consultation of the AU and the WFP on HGSF, as an effective tool for enhancing coordination and strengthening partnerships around common themes. Initial membership of the cluster was Multi-sectoral Technical Experts of SF composed of Member States, WFP Africa office, WFP CoE-Brazil, FAO, UNESCO IICBA, and UNICEF among others. At the launch, WFP agreed to coordinate the cluster.

The Cluster aims to bring together actors working on SF, and aligning their respective initiatives through the following five priority areas:

- supporting the development of national policy and legal framework;
- strengthening national and regional coordination platforms;
- increasing Knowledge Management, and Monitoring & Evaluation;
- strengthening and building capacity of Member States;
- advocating for political commitment and resource mobilization

As one of the first action points, the AU together with WFP and the Economic Policy Research Institute carried out a baseline study for school feeding efforts in Africa. The publication "Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union" was published in 2018. In 2019, the African Union sent out a request to all G7 Education Ministers to prioritize the issue of school health and nutrition and school feeding



Credits: WFP/Edward Lloyd-Evans/Côte d'Ivoire

In January 2020, WFP and UNICEF launched a new partnership to ensure that by 2030, 35 million children in 30 of the poorest countries receive a package of essential health and nutrition services using schools as a platform (see box 2.3). WFP and UNICEF will work together with governments across the continent to ensure that children not only receive nutritious meals but also complementary health services including deworming, vaccines and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions. Initially, the two agencies are working with governments in six countries in Africa - three from the Sahel (Chad, Mali and Niger) and three from the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan), to reach the most vulnerable children with the school health and nutrition pack.

### Box 1 Africa Day of School Feeding

An important annual regional forum is the Africa Day of School Feeding celebration. The AU has designated the 1st of March as the African Day of School Feeding. The first event took place in Brazzaville in 2016. Since then, each year Ministers from around the continent meet to review the advancements in school feeding, advocate for its prioritization in national policies and agree on next joint efforts.

On the 1st of March of 2019 the fourth commemoration was hosted by The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. Representatives from 23 Member States (including 13 Ministers and Deputy Ministers), NEPAD Agency, Regional Economic Communities, stakeholder institutions, UN Agencies, and more than 300 participants took part in the continental celebration, which was officially opened by His Excellency the Honourable Vice President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, Dr Daniel Kablan and Her Excellency Prof Sarah Anyang Agbor the Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation.

One of the key and urgent decisions that came out from this meeting was: "The Ministers present requested that, through the African Union Commission, a letter be sent to G7 Ministers of Education and Development before the G7 ministerial meeting on 5th July 2019, for increased support to national school feeding programmes in Africa. The letter emphasized that while great national investments have been made by African States, increased support is still needed for scaling up national school feeding programmes."

Accordingly, action was taken, and letters sent to G-7 Ministers through the AU chairperson.

At the sub-regional level, there are a few active school-feeding networks. In West Africa there are active coordination structures working towards common education objectives, including the Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030 for West and Central Africa, which is chaired by UNESCO, and the Regional Education in Emergency working group which is coordinated by UNICEF and Plan International.

## 5.4 PARTNERSHIPS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Country level partnerships are critical in the development of integrated school health and nutrition packages which require multi-stakeholder engagement. School health and nutrition approaches help to foster improved relationships at the national level, both through the promotion of inter-ministerial engagement within governments, as well as in the national coordination of development partners working in different thematic areas. An important lesson learnt over the past decades is that operational partnerships work better when they are aligned with national policies and coordinated under national coordination mechanisms.

At the operational level, there are a number of examples of integrated programme design which brings together education, health and agriculture stakeholders to promote coordinated approaches to meeting the needs of children at the country level. Examples of integrated school health and nutrition packages that bring together governments, UN agencies and NGO partners to improve girls' access to education are successfully being implemented in several countries including Chad, Niger, and Malawi among others mentioned above.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are key players in the implementation of school feeding programmes and increasingly influencing international politics by raising awareness at global and national level of the importance of school health and nutrition for children's

development. NGOs are able to bring perspectives from people affected on the ground into international institutions and are key partners at all levels. There are more than 1,000 NGOs around the globe, from small grassroots groups to large international aid agencies working on issues related to food security. From food distribution in emergencies to longer-term initiatives, NGO partners deliver quickly and effectively and access areas that other bigger agencies would be unable to reach alone. They are often in the unique position of having a long-term presence in, and a deep contextual understanding of, the communities. Their daily contact with communities provides an invaluable link to the children and families they serve. UN agencies work closely with NGOs in the implementation of school feeding. In 2019, WFP for example worked with 49 International NGOs and more than 80 local NGOs on providing school feeding across the world.

## 5.5 WAY FORWARD

### 5.5.1 Conclusions

- **There is a growing coalition of partners working together to support governments in their efforts to promote integrated packages.** This coalition, which includes UNICEF, WFP, and FAO among others, promotes school-based health and nutrition service delivery, with school feeding as an essential component.
- **South-South Cooperation plays a key role in the transfer of technical expertise on school feeding between countries.** African governments continue to benefit from knowledge sharing and technical assistance through mechanisms such as the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil, and the Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM) in Côte d'Ivoire.
- **At the continental level, the African Union plays an essential role in fostering partnerships and collaboration in support of its member states.** WFP and UNICEF have been working in close collaboration with the African Union to support the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) and meet the needs of the most vulnerable children across the continent.
- **Country level partnerships are critical in the development of integrated school health and nutrition packages which require multi-stakeholder engagement.** School health and nutrition approaches help to foster improved relationships at the national level, both through the promotion of inter-ministerial engagement within governments, as well as in the national coordination of development partners working in different thematic areas.

## 5.5.2 Recommendations

- **Increase understanding of existing funding, and landscape of opportunities for school health and nutrition.** The absence of an exhaustive dataset on global funding flows for school feeding, and more broadly for school health and nutrition, is an important gap that needs to be addressed. Dubai Cares and the World Food Programme will be working in partnership with the African Union to develop a new continental database to collect, curate and publish indicators on school feeding. This new resource will improve institutional coordination and inform decision making and policies for national governments, donors and implementing partners.
- **Support regional groups that have prioritized school feeding and school health and nutrition:** Support should be provided to the African Union, as well as partnerships with the African Union Development Agency (AUDA), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and other regional bodies as they seek to increasingly support regional efforts and ownership. These partnerships should be strengthened to support regional coordination and knowledge exchange. Expert technical and policy advice should be provided in social safety nets and protection, food security and nutrition and education with specific emphasis on reaching goals that promote gender equality.
- **Expand south-south cooperation approaches:** Partners including the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil and CERFAM are key in this regard, along with other technical actors. Countries across Africa have developed strong school feeding programmes and have already received delegations for exchange visits. This engagement could be formalised, with lessons shared through Centres of Excellence.

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# Conclusions

# Conclusions

The report highlighted significant achievements in the development of school feeding programmes in Africa since 2013, as demonstrated by official data, case studies and best practices collected by the African Union and its partners. Recognizing these achievements, and the AU's continued commitment to the CESA objectives and SDGs, this section identifies forthcoming opportunities, challenges, and recommendations that can be addressed to further advance the school feeding agenda across the continent.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Governments have made great strides to scale-up school feeding programmes, but large coverage disparities remain between regions and income groups. School feeding programmes cover 78% of children in upper middle-income countries, but only 21% of children in low-income countries. Similarly, school feeding programmes cover more than 55% of children in Northern and Southern Africa, but only 5% in Central Africa. Increased government efforts are required to bridge this gap.

77% of African countries have now adopted a school feeding policy, compared to 23 percent in 2013. However, 22% of low-income countries and 27% of lower middle-income countries still do not have a school feeding policy. The African Union and development partners are committed to working with governments to help these countries adopt a policy framework to foster investments in school feeding.

Virtually all governments in Africa provide school feeding in conjunction with at least one complementary school-based health and nutrition intervention. However, in 36% of countries, the package of complementary interventions remains insufficient. Only 15% of African countries provide a fully integrated package of 7 to 10 complementary interventions in conjunction with school feeding.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on school closures will continue to have life-long impacts on the most vulnerable children in Africa, affecting their learning, health and nutrition. Schools contribute to the development of human capital, while providing opportunities to address inequality and poverty, and they serve as platforms for community services, health and nutrition services, and safety nets. It is now, more important than ever, to expand the notion of education, including through the enhancement and scale-up of health and nutrition services for children.

The absence of an exhaustive dataset on global funding flows for school feeding, and more broadly for school health and nutrition, is an important gap that needs to be addressed. Identifying institutional and thematic resourcing to school feeding, and school health and

nutrition, will lead to improved institutional coordination and decision making for national governments, donors and implementing partners alike.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

1. This report demonstrates the value of using a high-quality survey approach to collect up-to-date data on school feeding in the African continent. Moving from ad-hoc survey to a formal, regular data collection process through a continental database supported by the African Union would be an important step forward.
2. The African Union and governments should work together to improve coverage and prioritize countries where vulnerable children are not yet supported through school feeding programmes.
3. The African Union and development partners are urged to continue working with governments to help countries adopt a policy framework for home-grown school feeding.
4. Complementary school health and nutrition interventions are essential to reap the full benefits of education and bridge the human capital gap. Building on existing platforms, governments can further structure their efforts in this area and broaden the package of school health and nutrition interventions they provide to learners in schools.
5. Key strategies recommended to accelerate the integration of school health and nutrition packages in Africa include systematic evidence generation and use, policy development, communication and advocacy, systems strengthening, partnerships and community engagement.
6. Following continent-wide school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the next immediate step is to re-open schools safely and ensure children resume their learning. Guidance available to governments highlight three priorities: create a safe school environment to minimize COVID-19 transmission, put in place school health and nutrition services, and build a stronger and more equitable education system.
7. International fora and development partners can help governments advance school feeding policies and programmes through knowledge exchange, technical assistance and country capacity strengthening.

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# Glossary

<b>Cost per child</b>	The per-child cost of school feeding is estimated as the total expenditures 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.
<b>Coverage</b>	The proportion of school-attending children who are beneficiaries of a school feeding programme.
<b>Development partners</b>	An umbrella term for stakeholders that support the development efforts of national, subnational or local authorities, depending on the particular context.
<b>Deworming</b>	A treatment to control the intestinal worm infections such as helminths (roundworm, ringworm and hookworm) and schistosomiasis.
<b>Fortification</b>	The practice of deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients, such as Vitamin A, iron, iodine or zinc, to foods.
<b>Home-Grown School Feeding</b>	A school feeding model that is designed to provide children in schools with safe, diverse and nutritious food, sourced locally from smallholders.
<b>Investment</b>	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.
<b>National school feeding programme</b>	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.
<b>School Feeding</b>	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.
<b>School Health and Nutrition</b>	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).

# Acronyms

<b>ABC</b>	Brazilian Cooperation Agency
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AUC</b>	African Union Commission
<b>AUDA</b>	African Union Development Agency
<b>CAADP</b>	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development
<b>CERFAM</b>	Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition (Côte d'Ivoire)
<b>CESA</b>	Continent Education Strategy for Africa
<b>CoE</b>	Centre of Excellence
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>DCP3</b>	Disease Control Priorities 3rd Edition
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FNDE</b>	Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação [Brazil]
<b>GCNF</b>	Global Child Nutrition Forum
<b>HGSF</b>	Home-Grown School Feeding
<b>HPV</b>	Human Papillomavirus
<b>IICBA</b>	[UNESCO] International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
<b>LMICs</b>	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>NEPAD</b>	New Partnership for Africa's Development
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>OIC</b>	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
<b>PAP</b>	Pan African Parliament
<b>PCD</b>	Partnership for Child Development
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SHF</b>	Smallholder Farmer
<b>SHN</b>	School Health and Nutrition
<b>SNNP</b>	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
<b>STH</b>	Soil-transmitted Helminth
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Fund
<b>USDA</b>	United States Department of Agriculture
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

# Annex I

## Children receiving school feeding

Country	ISO code	Income level	AU Region	Children receiving school feeding	Source
Algeria	DZA	Upper middle	Northern	39,632	WFP (2019)
Angola	AGO	Lower middle	Southern	1,516,133	AU (2017)
Benin	BEN	Low	Western	460,063	GCNF (2018)
Botswana	BWA	Upper middle	Southern	358,854	GCNF (2018)
Burkina Faso	BFA	Low	Western	3,863,926	GCNF (2018)
Burundi	BDI	Low	Central	613,452	WFP (2019)
Cabo Verde	CPV	Lower middle	Western	3,168	SSSN (2015)
Cameroon	CMR	Lower middle	Central	18,315	GCNF (2018)
Central African Republic	CAF	Low	Central	241,957	WFP (2019)
Chad	TCD	Low	Central	138,078	WFP (2019)
Comoros	COM	Lower middle	Eastern	0	GCNF (2018)
Congo	COG	Lower middle	Central	141,961	WFP (2019)
Côte d'Ivoire	CIV	Lower middle	Western	976,443	GCNF (2018)
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	COD	Low	Central	124,485	WFP (2019)
Djibouti	DJI	Lower middle	Eastern	19,590	WFP (2019)
Egypt	EGY	Lower middle	Northern	11,201,245	GCNF (2018)
Equatorial Guinea	GNQ	Upper middle	Central	no data	
Eritrea	ERI	Low	Eastern	no data	
Ethiopia	ETH	Low	Eastern	2,539,286	GCNF (2018)
Gabon	GAB	Upper middle	Central	no data	
Gambia	GMB	Low	Western	165,422	GCNF (2018)
Ghana	GHA	Lower middle	Western	1,700,000	AU (2017)
Guinea	GIN	Low	Western	<i>est. 376,614</i>	<i>estimation</i>
Guinea-Bissau	GNB	Low	Western	180,000	WFP (2019)
Kenya	KEN	Lower middle	Eastern	1,754,000	GCNF (2018)
Lesotho	LSO	Lower middle	Southern	386,923	GCNF (2018)
Liberia	LBR	Low	Western	287,456	GCNF (2018)
Libya	LBY	Upper middle	Northern	20,754	WFP (2019)
Madagascar	MDG	Low	Eastern	567,763	GCNF (2018)
Malawi	MWI	Low	Southern	2,936,455	GCNF (2018)
Mali	MLI	Low	Western	514,842	GCNF (2018)
Mauritania	MRT	Lower middle	Northern	51,917	WFP (2019)
Mauritius	MUS	Upper middle	Eastern	75,000	SSSN (2011)
Morocco	MAR	Lower middle	Northern	1,267,109	SSSN (2014)
Mozambique	MOZ	Low	Southern	200,302	WFP (2019)
Namibia	NAM	Upper middle	Southern	365,854	GCNF (2018)

<b>Country</b>	<b>ISO code</b>	<b>Income level</b>	<b>AU Region</b>	<b>Children receiving school feeding</b>	<b>Source</b>
Niger	NER	Low	Western	193,301	GCNF (2018)
Nigeria	NGA	Lower middle	Western	9,829,603	GCNF (2018)
Rwanda	RWA	Low	Eastern	724,059	OS (2018)
Sao Tome and Principe	STP	Lower middle	Central	46,766	GCNF (2018)
Senegal	SEN	Lower middle	Western	587,810	GCNF (2018)
Seychelles	SYC	High	Eastern	<i>est. 7,829</i>	<i>estimation</i>
Sierra Leone	SLE	Low	Western	836,000	GCNF (2018)
Somalia	SOM	Low	Eastern	164,708	WFP (2019)
South Africa	ZAF	Upper middle	Southern	9,200,000	GCNF (2018)
South Sudan	SSD	Low	Eastern	460,413	WFP (2019)
Sudan	SDN	Lower middle	Eastern	1,361,789	GCNF (2018)
eSwatini	SWZ	Lower middle	Southern	365,089	GCNF (2018)
Togo	TGO	Low	Western	91,319	GCNF (2018)
Tunisia	TUN	Lower middle	Northern	360,000	GCNF (2018)
Uganda	UGA	Low	Eastern	3,651,225	GCNF (2018)
United Republic of Tanzania	TZA	Low	Eastern	28,000	AU (2017)
Zambia	ZMB	Lower middle	Southern	1,193,996	GCNF (2018)
Zimbabwe	ZWE	Lower middle	Southern	3,218,924	GCNF (2018)

## 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	23,800,000	0	24,008,948	47,808,948	50%
Botswana	BWA	Yes	30,114,875	0	0	30,114,875	100%
Burkina Faso	BFA	Yes	37,800,000	0	8,083,081	45,883,081	82%
Burundi	BDI	Yes	2,400,000	0	17,600,000	20,000,000	12%
Cabo Verde	CPV						
Cameroon	CMR	No	0	0	4,000,000	4,000,000	0%
Central African Republic	CAF	No					
Chad	TCD	Yes	300,806	0	3,338,455	3,639,261	8%
Comoros	COM						
Congo	COG	Yes	50,406	0	6,087,690	6,138,096	1%
Côte d'Ivoire	CIV	Yes	8,997,229	0	6,417,098	15,414,327	58%
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	COD	Yes					
Djibouti	DJI						
Egypt	EGY	Yes	55,368,086	0	0	55,368,086	100%
Equatorial Guinea	GNQ						
Eritrea	ERI						
Ethiopia	ETH	No	11,700,000	0	9,700,000	21,400,000	55%

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
Gabon	GAB						
Gambia	GMB	Yes	1,935,000	0	5,015,000	6,950,000	28%
Ghana	GHA						
Guinea	GIN						
Guinea-Bissau	GNB	No	852,640	0	9,000,000	9,852,640	9%
Kenya	KEN	No	14,036,000	0	13,360,000	27,396,000	51%
Lesotho	LSO	No	13,207,620	0	0	13,207,620	100%
Liberia	LBR	No	0	0	10,273,520	10,273,520	0%
Libya	LBY	No					
Madagascar	MDG	Yes	4,227,273	822,172	4,888,353	9,937,798	43%
Malawi	MWI	Yes	125,830	0	15,152,940	15,278,770	1%
Mali	MLI	Yes	4,762,092	1,400,000	18,600,000	24,762,092	19%
Mauritania	MRT	Yes	20,000	0	0	20,000	100%
Mauritius	MUS						
Morocco	MAR						
Mozambique	MOZ	No	0	0	8,000,000	8,000,000	0%
Namibia	NAM	Yes	10,343,500	0	196,300	10,539,800	98%
Niger	NER	Yes	1,800,074	111,600	11,239,724	13,151,398	14%
Nigeria	NGA	No	257,623,736	0	0	257,623,736	100%
Rwanda	RWA	Yes	10,227,534	0	5,402,781	15,630,315	65%
Sao Tome and Principe	STP	Yes	30,000	230,497	0	260,497	12%
Senegal	SEN	Yes	2,027,690	0	4,628,761	6,656,451	30%
Seychelles	SYC						
Sierra Leone	SLE	Yes	2,365,230	0	5,000,000	7,365,230	32%
Somalia	SOM						
South Africa	ZAF	Yes	503,079,000	0	0	503,079,000	100%
South Sudan	SSD	No	0	0	40,000,000	40,000,000	0%

<b>Country</b>	<b>ISO country code</b>	<b>Existence of a school feeding budget line in the national budget</b>	<b>National budget funding for school feeding</b>	<b>National donors and private sector funding for school feeding</b>	<b>International donors funding for school feeding</b>	<b>Total funding for school feeding</b>	<b>Share of domestic budgets in total funding for school feeding</b>
Sudan	SDN	Yes	4,943,994	0	18,026,218	22,970,212	22%
eSwatini	SWZ	Yes	3,625,394	0	0	3,625,394	100%
Togo	TGO	Yes	1,772,526	0	2,658,789	4,431,315	40%
Tunisia	TUN	Yes	26,551,000	0	0	26,551,000	100%
Uganda	UGA	Yes	400,000	900,000	8,800,000	10,100,000	4%
United Republic of Tanzania	TZA						
Zambia	ZMB	Yes	3,659,652	0	2,235,830	5,895,482	62%
Zimbabwe	ZWE	Yes	14,600,000	0	0	14,600,000	100%

## 2019-2020 Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding

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In 2016, the Heads of State of the African Union (AU), acknowledged school feeding's contribution to human resources development in Africa, resulting in the realization of Agenda 2063, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), and the adoption of 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 2019-2020 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 identify 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 AU 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, and gender equality, as well as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, it highlights the growing importance of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF), as governments increasingly invest in improving the nutrition of schoolchildren and boosting local economies through procurement from local sources.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought an end to a near-decade of sustained growth 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. It examines how home-grown school feeding programmes combats malnutrition, improves education outcomes, stimulates local agricultural production, creates stable demand for quality and safe foods from smallholder farmers, while supporting job creation through skills development.

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