

## Communiqué: 11<sup>th</sup> Africa Day of School Feeding

Gaborone, Botswana

1 March 2026

We, the Ministers responsible for school meals and education from African Union Member States, alongside school feeding experts, development organizations, representatives of civil society, the private sector, youth and children convened in Gaborone, Botswana, from February 28 to March 1, 2026, for the 11<sup>th</sup> Africa Day of School Feeding (ADSF). The event was co-organized by the Government of Botswana and the African Union, with the support of development partners and private sector, under the theme: **“Ensuring Access to Nutritious Meals, Clean Water, and Hygiene: Promoting Safety and Resilience in Every School Meal Investment.”**

Held in alignment with the African Union Theme of the Year 2026 on “Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063,” the 11th ADSF underscored the critical nexus between school feeding, WASH, climate resilience, and Africa’s human capital development agenda.

We gathered to reaffirm our collective commitment to strengthening integrated School Health, Nutrition and Hygiene Programs across the continent as foundational investments in Africa’s children and future prosperity.

- A. **Recalling** AU Assembly decision 589 (XXVI), which provides that School feeding contributes directly to Aspiration 1 of the AU Agenda 2063 which envisions “A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.”
- B. **Reflecting** the Member States commitments to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), recognizing that sustainable, well-financed school meals programs serve as catalyst enablers of these goals.
- C. **Acknowledging** the significant role of School Meals Programs in advancing education, nutrition, local economies, and sustainable development.
- D. **Noting** the remarkable progress made in School Meals Programs over the past decade while recognizing the challenges that remain as highlighted in the 2023-2024 Biennial Report.
- E. **Recognizing that** Governments, supported by regional and international partners, have increasingly institutionalized school meals within national policy frameworks, with 35 Member States establishing dedicated budget lines and over 80% of financing sourced domestically, demonstrating strong ownership and sustainability.
- F. **Aware that** investing in Sustainable School Meals Models Aligned with climate-smart agriculture and resilient food systems ensures sustainability and long-term benefits for communities.
- G. **Noting** that innovative financing mechanisms, including public-private partnerships and increased national budget allocations, are essential to mobilizing resources for school meal programs.

- H. **Further Noting** that School Meals programs play a critical role in breaking barriers to girls' education, reducing absenteeism related to menstrual health challenges, and promoting gender equality.
- I. **Aware** that more efforts are needed to ensure that school meal programs cater to children with disabilities, refugees, and marginalized communities to achieve inclusive education.
- J. **Further noting** that Strengthening data collection, research, and impact evaluations enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of school meal programs; and supports evidence-based policy development which can be leveraged to improve program implementation and advocate for increased investments.
- K. **Acknowledge** the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration among Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Health, Finance, Water and Sanitation, and Social Protection to deliver integrated, child-centered services that maximize educational and developmental outcomes.
- L. **Recognize** the voice and participation of children and youth, whose perspectives during the 11th ADSF reaffirmed that school meals represent not only nutrition, but dignity, safety, and opportunity.
- M. **Reaffirm** our collective commitment to scaling up and strengthening school feeding programmes, ensuring every child in Africa has access to nutritious meals and a safe learning environment for building a healthier, more educated, and prosperous generation, laying the foundation for sustainable socio-economic transformation across the continent.

#### **CALL UPON:**

- **Member States to:**
  - **Champion Integrated School Meal Programmes:** Prioritise and invest in holistic programs that integrates nutrition, WASH, gender equality, health, climate resilience, and educational outcomes as strategic, non-negotiable investments in human capital development.
  - **Institutionalize Home-Grown School Feeding:** Embed HGSF within national and regional policy and budget frameworks to stimulate local agriculture, empower smallholder farmers - particularly women; and promote inclusive economic growth.
  - **Strengthen Multi-Sectoral Governance:** Establish or reinforce national coordination platforms that bring together relevant ministries to ensure coherent policy design, financing, and implementation.
  - **Expand Sustainable Financing:** Increase domestic budget allocations and explore innovative financing mechanisms to progressively achieve universal access to integrated school meal programmes.
  - **Invest in WASH Infrastructure in Schools:** Prioritize safe water access, sanitation facilities, menstrual hygiene management, and food safety standards as integral components of school feeding systems.

- **Research Institutions and Academia to:**
  - **Foster Knowledge Sharing:** Promote the dissemination of evidence, innovative solutions, and successful case studies to accelerate the adoption of proven models and best practices.
  - **Highlight Impact:** Amplify stories and data showcasing improvements in children’s health, attendance, and learning readiness resulting from integrated school meal programs.
  - **Support Evidence-Based Innovation:** Collaborate with governments to pilot digital monitoring tools, climate-smart food systems, and scalable models that enhance programme efficiency and accountability.
  
- **Parliamentarians to:**
  - **Strengthen Policy, Governance and Financing:** Advocate for robust institutional frameworks, increased domestic resource mobilisation, and innovative financing to ensure sustainable programme expansion.
  - **Champion Legislative Support:** Promote enabling legislation that institutionalizes school feeding and WASH integration within national development plans.
  
- **Development Partners, Private Sector and Financial Institutions to:**
  - **Align Support with National Priorities:** Provide catalytic technical and financial support aligned with nationally led strategies and AU continental frameworks.
  - **Leverage Innovation and Technology:** Support digital public infrastructure, food safety technologies, and data systems to enhance transparency, efficiency, and impact measurement.
  
- **All Stakeholders to:**
  - **Support the Gaborone Call to Action:** Endorse and act upon actionable recommendations in alignment with the AU 2026 Theme and Agenda 2063, committing to shared accountability and sustained investment.
  - **Collaborate Across Sectors:** Engage in multi-sectoral dialogue to identify barriers and co-create practical, context-sensitive solutions for resilient school feeding programmes.
  - **Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms:** Commit to regular monitoring, peer learning, and reporting on progress through AU continental reporting platforms and regional collaboration mechanisms.

## Conclusion

We adopt this Communiqué in Gaborone, Botswana, on 1 March 2026, and commit to advancing a forward-looking investment narrative that places integrated school feeding, water security, sanitation, and hygiene at the heart of Africa’s education transformation and human capital development agenda.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Africa Day of School Feeding reaffirms that beyond the meal lies a powerful engine for resilience, equity, and sustainable development across our continent.