

Joint News Release

1 March 2019

FOURTH AFRICAN DAY OF SCHOOL FEEDING CELEBRATED IN ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVOIRE

ABIDJAN –The fourth edition of the African Day of School Feeding, celebrated under the theme “Investing in home-grown school feeding for achieving Zero Hunger and sustaining inclusive education for all, including refugees, returnees and internally-displaced persons in Africa” was officially opened today by His Excellency Daniel Kablan DUNCAN, Vice President of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire, and celebrated under his distinguished patronage.



The African Day of School Feeding was instituted in January 2016 through Decision Assembly /AU/Dec. 589 (XXVI) by African Union Heads of State and Government in recognition of the immense value of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF). Home-grown school feeding links local agricultural production to food procurement for schools, with direct benefits for smallholder farmers as

well as for children. The date marks the commitment of African countries to promoting home-grown school feeding programmes as a key strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The first edition of this celebration took place in Niamey, Niger, while the second and third editions were respectively organized in Congo and Zimbabwe in 2017 and 2018.

The event spanned three days, with the celebrations culminating on 1st March. It was attended by H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union and H.E. Mr. Daniel Kablan DUNCAN, Vice President of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire who highlighted this event with his presence, thereby demonstrating the commitment of the Government of Côte d’Ivoire to implement and sustain school canteens and school feeding programmes. The event was also graced by senior government representatives from African

governments, African Union Commission Staff, development partners and members of the diplomatic corps.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire made Education a priority and as such demonstrates its commitment through the implementation of a school canteen programme aiming to increase schooling rates in primary school but also give more chances to children from poor households to pursue their studies, thereby reducing failures and drop outs.

Taking the floor in his capacity as Vice President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, H.E. Mr. Daniel Kablan DUNCAN recalled the progress made by Côte d'Ivoire in promoting school feeding programs with statistical evidences: the country counts 5,688 school canteens in 2019 including 5,422 canteens sponsored by the Government and the World Food Program to the tune of 16.2 billion CFA F. He added that the country is currently developing a National Investment Plan in Agriculture that will boost the agricultural production and help to fight against food insecurity. He further expressed joy for the settlement in Côte d'Ivoire of the Centre of Excellence to fight against hunger in West Africa.

H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology pleaded for more investments in school feeding programmes "If we are to produce the quality human virtues for the Africa We Want". Quoting the AU theme of the year 2019, she added that "our school feeding programmes as well as other social interventions that promote access and success in education have to mainstream displaced persons".



In her opinion, "school Feeding is definitely among the social protection systems that will make a critical contribution to meeting durable solutions to forced displacement and their causative social and environmental crises in Africa".

Madame Kandia Camara, Minister of National Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training also delivered a speech in which she

reaffirmed the determination of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to build a quality education-training system, cornerstone for country's development. She further asserted that "the country chose **inclusive quality education** for all children and adults, which takes into consideration the transformative needs of citizens, empowers them to contribute to the socio-economic development of their community and the Ivorian society and provides them with competitiveness and technological innovation skills". To achieve this goal, she thinks that "school feeding policies become an important tool to stimulate the need for education services with regard to the target set: "by 2025, all the students in Côte d'Ivoire enrolled in basic education institutions should everyday have a hot and balanced meal".

Activities marking this celebration actually kicked off on 27 February with an experts meeting on the highlights of the School Feeding Cluster Strategy and Work Plan. Yesterday, 28 February was dedicated to field visits in N'Zikro, Aboisso where the delegation visited the farm of a group of farmers

who give part of their production including bananas, cassava and corn, to school canteens in their village.

The delegation also visited a group of women transforming cassava into "Attieke" and providing hot meals to children in schools. The delegation was also honoured to discover the whole production and transformation of the process used by these women. The third visit took place in a school canteen in N'Zikro where the delegation discussed with children who gave positive testimonies on the benefits of school feeding in their education.



"The commitment from African Ministers to make sure African children are getting the meals and support they need to thrive in school is extraordinary. I know that what is happening on this Africa Day of School Feeding will make a real difference in the lives of boys and girls throughout the continent. I look forward to working with the African Union and these country leaders to make sure school feeding programmes can be as effective as possible in helping African children reach their full potential." said Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme WFP speaking at a parallel celebration hosted at the WFP Headquarters in Rome, Italy, attended by official representatives from Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Republic of Congo, as well as UN partners FAO and IFAD.

"In recent years, we have witnessed school feeding shifting from social protection programmes to a core feature of many countries' strategies to ensure food and nutrition security for all," said Mr. Daniel Balaban, Director of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil. "School feeding has become a key intervention for countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2, and the African Union has been a great advocate for the adoption of home-grown school feeding as a continental strategy to improve nutrition, increase smallholder farming and eliminate hunger".

African nations continue to prioritise school feeding through policy and legislation, to improve retention, attendance and the performance of children in schools as well as creating economic growth. Across the continent, 39 countries have school feeding programmes managed and financed by governments; 21 of them have home-grown school feeding programmes. Ghana, Malawi, Kenya and Zimbabwe all feed over 1 million. South Africa and Nigeria each feed more than 9 million children every day of the school year.

The fifth edition of the African Day of School Feeding could be organized in the Republic of Chad which has expressed interest in hosting this event next year.

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