



Home-Grown School Feeding in Malawi: Building a Sustainable Model

Side event on the margins of the second regular session of the Executive Board
Thursday, 16 November 2023, 13:30–14:30
Auditorium, WFP Headquarters

Objectives

This side event will demonstrate how partnerships and national leadership can produce concrete results for the benefit of schoolchildren and smallholder farmers, and will offer a unique platform for insights and learning, emphasizing the crucial role of home-grown school feeding, especially in challenging times. It connects directly to the Executive Board's discussions about WFP activities and serves as a testament to how effective partnerships can drive transformative success in the field.

Specifically, this side event aims to:

1. *Showcase the success of home-grown school feeding:* highlight the positive impact of the home-grown school feeding model in Malawi. Emphasis will be placed on its transformative effects on Malawian farmers, education results, teacher support, nutrition, dropout rates, and overall health. Special focus will be given to how this model has navigated the challenges presented by COVID-19, cholera outbreaks and cyclones.
2. *Amplify voices from the field:* provide a platform for students, farmers, families and local communities to share their real-life experiences and stories about how home-grown school feeding has positively impacted their lives and the local economy.
3. *Highlight effective partnerships:* showcase how effective partnerships have contributed to the success of home-grown school feeding in Malawi. This event will also facilitate the Government of Malawi in presenting its vision of a fully owned national school meals programme.

Context

Malawi, a small landlocked country ranking 169th on the 2021/2022 Human Development Index, is highly vulnerable to recurring weather-related and economic shocks given its heavy reliance on agriculture. Many rural families grapple with poverty, with female-headed households bearing the brunt. Ongoing climate-induced shocks, the lingering impact of COVID-19, the Ukraine conflict, surging inflation, and a challenging economic climate further imperil food and nutrition security. Food and fuel prices have been on the rise, eroding the limited purchasing power of Malawi's poor and ultra-poor households, which already survive on less than USD 165 per person, per year. WFP is making a significant impact on education and nutrition in Malawi by supporting home-grown school feeding in 11 districts. This initiative is reaching approximately 676,000 children, providing them with diversified and nutritious school meals while imparting valuable nutrition messaging to foster healthy eating habits within communities. To reinforce this effort, WFP has established connections between 35,000 smallholder farmers and 744 schools in rural areas, creating a reliable market for agricultural value chains and supporting local economic growth.

In Malawi, despite an almost 88 percent primary education enrolment rate, significant challenges exist concerning completion rates, high dropout and repetition rates, often attributed to food insecurity. A substantial portion of learners leave school without basic literacy and numeracy skills. Only around 24 percent complete secondary education, with girls disproportionately affected by dropout rates. Chronic malnutrition, affecting one in three children under 5, remains a pressing concern. The school meals programme, integrated into key national policies such as the National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy, the Education Policy, and the National Education Sector Implementation Plan, plays a crucial role in ensuring that school-aged children are healthy and capable of achieving their maximum learning potential. The primary modality used for these programmes is the home-grown school feeding approach, although there is flexibility to switch to the centralized model when necessary.

In Malawi, home-grown school feeding is more than a meal; it is a potent catalyst for change. Studies highlight the remarkable returns on investment, with each USD 1 spent on school feeding resulting in an impressive USD 20 return in improved health and lifelong productivity for learners. Since 1999, WFP has been a steadfast partner, providing daily meals to millions of children and supporting the Government's school feeding programme. This collaboration has had a transformative impact. In primary schools, it led to a 5 percent reduction in absenteeism, a 3 percent decrease in dropout rates, and increased attendance from 77 percent to 92 percent.

Agenda

1. Opening remarks

- Welcome and introduction to the event's objectives
Moderator: Mr Menghestab Haile, Regional Director, Southern Africa, WFP

2. Video Presentation: "Home-Grown School Feeding in Malawi: A Success Story"

- A visual presentation illustrating the impact of the home-grown school feeding model in Malawi, featuring testimonials from beneficiaries.

3. Panel discussion: "The Impact of Home-Grown School Feeding in Malawi"

Moderated discussion by Dr Menghestab Haile, WFP Regional Director, Southern Africa featuring key experts:

- Ms Maureen Maguza-Tembo, Deputy Director for School Health and Nutrition, Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi
- Ms Carmen Burbano, Director, School-based Programmes, WFP
- Mr Paul Turnbull, Country Director, Malawi, WFP

4. Interactive Q&A and closing remarks

- Open floor for questions and insights from attendees
- Reflection on the significance of this model and plans for the future