



Kenya: Home-Grown School Meals Programme

Summary

Kenya's national **home-grown school meals programme** contributes to improve child health and nutrition by linking schools and local agricultural production.

Funds are transferred directly to schools, enabling them to purchase food from **local suppliers and farmers**. This allows to **(1)** increase local food production and promote smallholder farmers' access to markets, while **(2)** improving school enrolment, attendance and completion.

Kenya's home-grown school meals programme has long served as an inspiration to other developing countries, particularly "peers" in the region such as **Namibia and Zambia**.

Kenya is also developing a **National School Meals and Nutrition Strategy**, enriched by a high-level policy discussion with the Brazilian Government on their school meals and social protection initiatives in May 2016.

Challenge

In **Kenya**, 47 percent of the country's overall population lives below the **poverty line**. High levels of malnutrition afflict the country's poorest people. In the arid and semi-arid areas, around 369,000 children under the age of 5 are suffering from **acute malnutrition** – with peaks of one in three in the most affected areas. Undernutrition is a leading cause of death among children under the age of 5¹.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) works with the Kenyan Government to implement programmes designed to promote greater food security. Since 2009, WFP has been working with the Government of Kenya to facilitate the handover of its **school meals programme** (involving several thousand schools) to the Government and to support the transition to a national home-grown school meals model.

Governments increasingly invest in home-grown school meals programmes because they are an **effective safety net for children, farmers and communities**, with the potential to foster development and well-being in the long term. Home-grown school meals programmes contribute to achieving various sustainable development goals: they facilitate access to education (SDG4), help improve nutrition (SDG2), and address the structural poverty of smallholder farmers (SDG1) (WFP, 2016)².

Solution

Kenya's national home-grown school meals programme contributes to improving **child health and nutrition** by linking schools and local agricultural production. This is done by transferring funds directly to schools, enabling them to purchase food directly from local suppliers and farmers.



Photo: WFP/Charisse Tillman

The Kenyan home-grown school meals programme has several objectives that can be categorized into **(i)** increasing local food production and promoting small-scale farmers' access to markets; and **(ii)** improving school enrolment, attendance and completion.

After the transition to the government-led home-grown school meals programme, in 2012, the Ministry of Education of Kenya requested WFP to assist them with expanding the programme into Kenya's arid land areas. In response, WFP implemented a **"Transitional Cash Transfer to Schools"** pilot in Isiolo County. WFP and the Government of Kenya also started looking at options to

Replicability

To establish a truly government-led home grown school meals programme in Kenya and in other countries, high level **political engagement** and **budgetary support** is essential.

Cash-based home grown school meals programmes also require significant **technical skills**, including:

- 1) Market analysis;
- 2) Coordination and partnership building;
- 3) Project management;
- 4) Experience within the relevant Ministries (Education, Agriculture);
- 5) Food procurement;
- 6) Monitoring and evaluation procedures in place.

introduce fresh foods into school meals. Several fresh food pilots in Nairobi county are underway, reaching almost 80,000 students in 91 schools.

Stakeholders and Partners

In 2016, the government-led home-grown school meals programme **targeted 950,000 children** in both arid and semi-arid counties. At the same time, WFP continued to provide school meals for **430,000 children** in the arid land areas and targeted schools in the informal settlements in Nairobi that are not yet covered by the home-grown school meals programme. To support the expansion of the programme, WFP also prepared schools in Nairobi, Tana River and parts of Turkana to transition to the home-grown model, involving another **152,000** children.

The key partners are:

- **The Government of Kenya, Ministry of**



Education: responsible for the Government-led home-grown school meals programme;

- **The Government of Kenya, Ministry of Health:** responsible for the inspection of food quality, food safety, guide menu planning and healthy dietary habits;
- **The Government of Kenya, Ministry of Agriculture:** responsible for promoting access of smallholder farmers to school markets;
- **County Officials:** responsible for supporting the Government in

planning, oversight and monitoring;

- **School Meals Committee:** responsible for the administration and management of the home-grown school meals programme including procurement, food preparation and reporting at the school level;
- **Local traders:** participate in tenders and supply food to schools;
- **Farmers' organizations:** responsible for informing farmers about market opportunities.

Methodology

In Kenya's home-grown school meals model, funds are transferred from the National Treasury to the Ministry of Education and then to school accounts. Each school meals programme committee – composed of 4 teachers and 4 parents – announces a call for tenders and buys food from local suppliers (traders or farmers) with a school meals' bank account. This model is used in both rural and urban areas, linking smallholder farmers and traders to schools in both contexts.

As **South-South Cooperation broker**, WFP identified other developing countries in the region with similar needs, like **Namibia and Zambia**, and facilitated a South-South Cooperation exchange with Kenya as described in the "South-South Cooperation" section.

WFP, as a partner for technical assistance, provides capacity development support to smallholder farmers, small scale traders and food processors nationwide. This is done through training and coaching, food purchases, donation of equipment and facilitation of access to structured markets. Thanks to these trainings and market linkage forums, targeted farmer organizations are now aware of the business opportunity offered by the home-grown school meals market.

To **incorporate locally sourced fresh foods in the school meals** in Nairobi County, WFP and the Government tested several

models in 2016:

- **Providing additional transfers to schools:** a nutrient and cost analysis revealed that fresh food could be added to the food basket for only an additional KES2 (USD 0.02) per meal per day.
- **Using an off-site kitchen** that aggregates fresh foods.
- **Repurposing cosmetically unacceptable fresh foods** into nutritious school meals.

Effectiveness/ Validation

The programme is transitioning from a WFP-led to a government-led programme and in 2016 over 60% of the served school meals were managed by the Government.

The Kenyan **home-grown school meals programme was evaluated by an external evaluator** in mid-2014 and it found that schools had received a total of KES. 2.2 billion (USD 21 million) for local food procurement between 2009 and 2014 under the programme. These results show how effectively **school meals turned into a major market opportunity for the local farmers.**

While the evaluation did not assess in depth the changes in food security and nutrition, evidence from around the world consistently finds a **positive effect on the weight-per-age of the school children.** A meta-analysis of 42 studies of school meals programmes found an effect of +0.24kg per child per year in pre-school and +0.37kg per child per year in school (Kristjansson et al., 2016)³.

By 2019, with sufficient funding and the required legal frameworks in place, **Kenya could have one of the largest locally procured and fully government-financed school meals**



Photo: WFP/Francesco Broli

programmes in Africa.

South-South Cooperation

Kenya's home-grown school meals programme has long served as an inspiration to other developing countries, particularly "peers" in the region.

For example, **Namibia and Zambia, with the support from WFP as South-South Cooperation broker** (particularly WFP's Regional Bureaus in Johannesburg and Nairobi), engaged in a cross-regional peer learning initiative in 2016 on home-grown school meals programmes.

Apart from learning from Kenya's model, the participating countries also used this opportunity for mutual experience exchange on how to **monitor and evaluate national school meals programmes.** For example, Namibia presented its innovative **"Namibian School Feeding Programme Information system"** technology, which promotes immediate improvements in the management of the national school meals systems. Amongst other things, this platform **(1)**

enhances data capture, analysis and reporting and ensures data consistency; **(2)** enables linkage between suppliers and schools; **(3)** ensures accountability on food deliveries, food use and waste; **(4)** generates automatic reports and graphical visualizations, and **(5)** offers a basis for timely and quality decision-making, and resource mobilization.

Beyond engaging in South-South exchanges with peers in the region, Kenya also participated in a South-South study visit to Brazil. A delegation from the **Government of Kenya visited Brazil** in May 2016 to learn about the Brazilian initiatives in school meals, social protection and Zero Hunger. This journey informed the preparation of Kenya's National School Meals and Nutrition Strategy, which will be launched in 2017.

Innovation

Home-grown school meals programmes can be implemented in various ways, and the Kenyan model has included several innovative features:

1. The current **fresh foods pilot** in

SDG Targets



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.



Nairobi county is contributing to the global evidence base on the impact of using different modalities for diversifying school meals. One innovation tested in this pilot is the incorporation in school meals of **commercially unacceptable fresh foods**, which have been rejected from export markets due to their appearance. Kenya provides nearly 10% of the EU's horticulture market, exporting over 115,000 metric tonnes of fresh fruit and vegetables annually. Nearly 25% of these fruits and vegetables that are fit for human consumption are rejected for **cosmetic reasons**, which amounts to **over 75 metric tonnes each day**.

2. The separate **“Transitional Cash Transfer to Schools”** pilot in Kenya's arid land areas provides new evidence that, with the right support, even schools in areas with limited production and relatively weaker markets can purchase food locally, and empower parents and teachers to manage their own quality school meals programmes.

Sustainability

The Kenyan home-grown school meals programme is sustainable at many levels:

- **National Ownership:** the Government leads the school meals programme, and is taking on increasing responsibility for funding the scheme. By 2019, Kenya could have one of the largest locally procured and fully government-financed school meals programmes in Africa. For this to be achieved, it is vital that national funding commitments and the required legal frameworks are maintained.
- **Community Engagement:** school management committees administer and manage the implementation of the home-grown school meals programmes at the school level. Since local procurement is the fundamental feature of this school meals model, local investment and engagement with the programme are high.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** by procuring locally-grown foods, home-grown school meals help to shift towards a more environmentally sustainable school meals model.

Resources

To learn more about Kenya's home-grown school meals program, please refer to the following resources:

- **WFP (2017). *Home-grown school meals resource framework*.** Available at: <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/resources/wfp290721.pdf>
- **WFP (2016). *Supporting National School Meals Programme in Kenya*.** Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/content/supporting-national-school-meals-programme-kenya>

References

¹ WFP, 2017. [World Food Program: Kenya](#);

² WFP, 2016. [Home Grown School Meals Benefit Children, Farmers and Communities](#);

³ Kristjansson et. Al (2016). [Costs, and cost-outcome of school feeding programmes and feeding programmes for young children. Evidence and recommendations.](#) International Journal of Educational Development 48:79-83.

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