



Africa Day of School Feeding: Enhancing Education and Human Capital in Africa

Side event on the margins of the first regular session of the Executive Board
Wednesday, 28 February 2024, 13:30–14:30
Auditorium, WFP headquarters – In-person session

Context

Africa is the most youthful continent globally and it will continue to be so for at least the next two decades. However, since the pandemic, learning poverty has increased by a third, creating a generational catastrophe that could waste untold potential and undermine decades of progress in education. Globally, 70 percent of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries are unable to understand a simple written text, rising to nearly 90 percent in Africa.

It is urgent to focus on the youth of the continent today to ensure the future growth of Africa. The African Union is prioritizing this issue and putting the education of children at the heart of its efforts, by dedicating the next Theme of the Year to education.

While traditional education investments, like teachers, infrastructure, and curriculum are crucial, we equally need to focus on investments in the learner – their health, nutrition, and wellbeing. Sick children cannot go to school and hungry children cannot learn.

African countries recognize this need and have made exceptional steps towards prioritizing and strengthening school health and nutrition interventions – particularly school meals programmes.

In 2016, African countries celebrated the first African Day of School Feeding, demonstrating a collective call for bold actions and commitments to support school meals across the continent. This commitment materialized as the African Union and its member states took action to implement and scale up national programmes, ensuring that children are not left behind during ongoing crises.

The African Day of School Feeding has evolved into a crucial platform that brings together stakeholders from the public, private, civil society, and multilateral sectors. Its primary objectives include raising awareness and understanding of school feeding, evaluating progress made, and rallying political support for the adoption, implementation, or sustainability of school feeding policies and programmes.

The African Union and its member states have emerged as a driving force behind the School Meals Coalition, reinforcing its commitment to advancing this cause. In March 2021, the Communiqué of the African Day of School Feeding called upon all governments and partners to join the School Meals Coalition, urging advocacy efforts to integrate home-grown school feeding into global discussions. Demonstrating leadership on school meals, many African countries have actively participated, with 42 out of the 98 member states in the School Meals Coalition coming from Africa.

Objectives

This session will commemorate the 9th African Day of School Feeding, emphasizing how school meals programmes are a crucial priority for African countries to drive education outcomes and build human capital.

1. Celebrate progress of African countries towards improving scale and quality of national school meals programmes.
2. Discuss the benefits of school meals programmes particularly for driving educational outcomes and human capital development.
3. Highlight Africa's leadership within the School Meals Coalition and how the continent is shaping global and regional discussions.

Agenda

1. Opening and welcoming remarks

- Ms Cindy McCain, Executive Director, WFP

2. Moderated round table

Moderator: Ms Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department, WFP

- Her Excellency Claudiana A. Cole, Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, Government of The Gambia
- Her Excellency Saintha Ndem Ngoidi, Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy, Planning and International Cooperation, Government of Chad
- Ms Fanja Raharinomena, Secretary General, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Government of Madagascar
- His Excellency Haladou Salha, Senior African Union/NEPAD Technical Advisor to the Group of Rome-based African Ambassadors
- Ms Gerardine Mukeshimana, Vice-President, IFAD
- Ms Lynnette Neufeld, Director, Food and Nutrition Division, FAO

3. Q&A and remarks from the floor

4. Closing remarks