

# AUDA-NEPAD Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes in Africa

*A Quick reference Guide for Countries in Africa wishing to establish or review to strengthen existing National HGSF programmes*





© African Union Development Agency - NEPAD  
230 15<sup>th</sup> Road, Midrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel : +27-11 256 3600  
Email : [info@nepad.org](mailto:info@nepad.org)  
Web : [www.nepad.org](http://www.nepad.org)

[Twitter@Nepad\\_agency](https://twitter.com/Nepad_agency)  
[#TheAfricaWeWant](https://twitter.com/TheAfricaWeWant)

ISBN: 978-1-77634-911-1

February 2022

This publication was prepared by the staff of the African Union Development Agency – NEPAD, AUC and WFP with external contributions. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of AUDA-NEPAD . The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of AUDA-NEPAD concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

**Recommended citation:**

*African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency - NEPAD. 2022. AUDA-NEPAD Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes in Africa. AUDA-NEPAD, Midrand, South Africa.*

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	i
List of Tables .....	ii
List of Figures.....	ii
List of Acronyms.....	iii
Foreword .....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Executive Summary .....	1
Components Of The Five Quality Standards: Key Messages .....	3
Policy and Legal Frameworks.....	4
Overarching Policies and regulations .....	4
Sectoral Policies .....	4
School Feeding Policy .....	4
Financial capacity.....	4
A specific budget line for School Feeding.....	4
Budgeting process.....	4
Timely release of funds.....	4
Sound management and accountability of funds at all levels .....	5
Communication and advocacy: .....	5
Institutional Capacity and Coordination .....	5
Institutional home and organisation .....	5
Human resource capacity .....	5
Coordination.....	5
Design and Implementation.....	5
Setting objectives.....	5
Coverage and Targeting .....	6
Food Basket.....	6
Food preparation and availability of fuel.....	6
Food Safety and Quality.....	6
Linking the HGSP/SF Programme to Farmers.....	6
Complimentary School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Interventions .....	7
Community Participation.....	7
Monitoring and Evaluation.....	7
School Feeding in the Context of Emergencies and the Covid-19 Crisis.....	8
Conclusion .....	8
AUDA-NEPAD Guidelines For The Design And Implementation Of Home Grown School Feeding (HGSP) Programmes In Africa .....	9
Introduction.....	10
Background: AUDA-NEPAD's Engagement with Home Grown School Feeding .....	10
School feeding as a model for development .....	11
Home Grown School Feeding Explained.....	14
Why do the Links to Agricultural Development make Economic Sense? .....	14
Why HGSP Guidelines? .....	15
The School Feeding Quality Standards.....	16
Key Elements to include in HGSP Programmes within Five Main Quality Standards .....	17
Policy and Legal Frameworks.....	17
Overarching policies in support of school feeding.....	17
Sector Policies.....	17
Specific School Feeding Policies.....	18
Financial Capacity .....	21

Institutional Capacity and Coordination .....	23
Design and Implementation.....	26
Sound Design and Implementation .....	26
Setting Objectives .....	26
The Target Population .....	27
Food Basket .....	27
Linking the HGSF Programme to Farmers and Food Procurement.....	27
Complimentary School Health and Nutrition Interventions.....	35
Community Participation in School Meal Programmes.....	37
Monitoring and Evaluation .....	38
The Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation .....	38
Main Aspects to Consider in Developing a Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation System .....	40
HGSF Specific Indicators and Outcomes .....	40
School Meals in the context of Emergencies and the COVID-19 Crisis .....	41
Context.....	41
The Covid-19 crisis and impacts .....	42
References.....	45
ANNEX 1: Menu Planning Guideline.....	47
ANNEX 2: Home Grown School Feeding: Assessing the Context .....	48
ANNEX 3: Home Grown School Feeding Procurement Models.....	50

## List of Tables

Table 1: Elements for Policy Frameworks.....	18
Table 2: Elements for Financial Capacity.....	21
Table 3: Elements for Institutional Capacity and Coordination .....	24
Table 4: Elements on Design and Implementation.....	29
Table 5: Elements on Complimentary interventions.....	36
Table 6: Elements on Community Participation .....	37
Table 7: Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting of School Feeding Programmes.....	39
Table 8: Examples of HGSF Monitoring Indicators.....	40

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Policy goals and policy levers for school feeding .....	16
Figure 2: Assessments for HGSF Programmes in the context of Five Quality Standards .....	49
Figure 3: Types of HGSF Operating Models and Procurement Options.....	52

# List of Acronyms

<b>AMU</b>	Arab Maghreb Union	<b>MIS</b>	Management Information Systems
<b>AU</b>	African Union	<b>MOA</b>	Ministry of Agriculture
<b>AUC-ESTI</b>	AU Commission for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation	<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>AUDA-NEPAD</b>	African Union Development Agency-New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development	<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>CAADP</b>	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme	<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>CBA</b>	Cost-Benefit Analysis	<b>PCD</b>	Partnership for Child Development
<b>CESA</b>	(AU) Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025	<b>PNANS</b>	Plan National d'Alimentation et de Nutrition Scolaires / National School Food and Nutrition Plan
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease	<b>PPP</b>	Public-Private Partnerships
<b>EAC</b>	East Africa Community	<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teacher Associations
<b>ECCAS</b>	Economic Community of Central African States	<b>REC</b>	Regional Economic Communities
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States	<b>SABER-SF</b>	Systems Approach for Better Education Results on School Feeding
<b>EMIS</b>	Educational Management Information System	<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organisation	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>FBDGs</b>	Food-Based Dietary Guidelines	<b>SHF</b>	Smallholder Farmers
<b>FRESH</b>	Focusing Resources on Effective School Health	<b>SHN</b>	School Health and Nutrition
<b>GSFP</b>	Ghana School Feeding Programme	<b>SMP PLUS</b>	School Meal Planner Plus
<b>HGSF</b>	Home-Grown School Feeding	<b>SSA</b>	Sub-Sahara Africa
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology	<b>UNFSS</b>	United Nations Food Systems Summit
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation	<b>VGFSyN</b>	Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal	<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
		<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme





## AUDA-NEPAD CEO Foreword

Our experience at AUDA-NEPAD shows that School Meals are a significant game-changer with multiple benefits cutting across various sectors. The growing interest in Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) many years after its endorsement in 2003 by the then NEPAD Secretariat under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) clearly illustrates that moving from an idea to a project, proof of concept to a full-fledged programme takes concerted planning, resources and time. Home-Grown School Feeding is a strategic programme of AUDA-NEPAD. It aims to link School Feeding to agricultural development through the production and procurement of locally diverse foods, especially by smallholder farmers. This way, HGSF fulfils multiple objectives – local agriculture, community engagement and economic development, food security, child nutrition, health and development, and better school attendance, retention, and education.

From the 2003 Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security to the 2014 Malabo Declaration on Agriculture, African Governments agreed that HGSF is an essential programme that should be rolled out and scaled to all African countries by 2025. More than 40 African Union (AU) Member States are currently implementing HGSF, albeit in different forms given the varying contexts. With the realisation that School Meals serve as a very opportune entry point for social protection and related social safety net programmes, HGSF has gained a lot of traction. The African Common Position further bolstered this outlook during the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, where many African leaders and countries signed onto the Global School Meals Coalition, and many more continue to join. This move is further testament to the value and demonstrable benefits of School Meals. Home-Grown School Feeding creates a ready market for two other beneficiary groups – smallholder farmers and small to medium food processors. Home-Grown School Feeding will increase farmers' household income, reduce food deficits, diversify their production and thus reduce their vulnerability.

The growing interest in School Feeding and HGSF, in particular, has resulted in more significant numbers of school children receiving school meals. Data compiled by the African Union shows that about 65.4 million children in 51 countries now benefit from School Feeding in Africa, a massive increase from 38.4 million in 2013. African leaders, through the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 2016, acknowledged the contribution of School Feeding to human resources and capital development in Africa and adopted the Home-Grown School Feeding Decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI)), which instituted the Africa Day for School Feeding on 1 March. That meeting recognised the role of School Feeding in the realisation of Agenda 2063 and a strategy to advance Objective 2 of the AU Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25).

The increased interest in School Feeding and particularly HGSF models is also reflected in the rise in budgetary allocations by African Governments to support the scale-up. Historically, School Feeding programmes in Africa tended to rely on external funding and even in-kind provision of food from donor countries. However, there has been significant progress towards self-reliance in recent years. The AU report (2021) shows that between 2013 and 2020, domestic funding almost doubled in West African countries (from 37% in 2013 to 76% in 2020), while the majority of School Feeding budgets in Southern and North African countries are supported from domestic sources. In East Africa, although international donors continue to support School Feeding to a large extent, the share of domestic funding has more than quadrupled since 2013. This illustrates African governments' increased commitment to School Feeding.

Almost, if not all, countries in Africa have experience with School Feeding in some form or another. However, several challenges remain in the implementation and transition to HGSF due to the lack of coordinated and systematic implementation approaches. Many African countries now seek technical assistance in designing, implementing, managing, monitoring, and evaluating HGSF programmes. Additionally, more and more countries are seeking to improve the quality of the meals in terms of nutrition and increase the scale of their HGSF programmes. This AUDA-NEPAD HGSF Guideline document is therefore meant to fill this gap and provide general direction as well as technical guidance to AU Member States who wish to establish or strengthen their HGSF programmes to create a genuinely multi-sectoral, win-win scenario. The Guidelines are organised around the five School Feeding Quality Standards, namely i) Policy and Legal Framework, ii) Financial Capacity and Stable Funding, iii) Institutional Capacity for Implementation and Coordination, iv) Design and Implementation, and v) Community Participation (Bundy, et al., 2009). The Guidelines provide key elements (essentials) within

each standard to be considered in planning and operationalising effective HGSF programmes. These AUDA-NEPAD HGSF Guidelines will fill the gap where technical, programmatic support is lacking or limited.

While every context is different and there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to School Feeding, the Guidelines give the essential requirements and elements that can be adapted to meet the standards for School Feeding in line with the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), for example SABER-School Feeding by the World Bank and the World Food Programme.

These Guidelines can only see efficient and effective application and success through strong

collaboration and partnerships with key institutions continentally and globally to enhance advocacy and commitments to implement HGSF programmes. At AUDA-NEPAD, we value every stakeholder's input – state, private sector and civil society – in rolling out the Guidelines in AU Member States for advancing the Home-Grown School Feeding approach in Africa.

It is imperative to prioritise and promote investments in nutrition in Africa. Through these HGSF Guidelines, I urge African Governments to strengthen their financial, human, governance and accountability commitments in the light of the catastrophic impacts of COVID -19 and climate change on School Feeding.

**Dr Ibrahim A. Mayaki**  
**CEO of AUDA-NEPAD**

## Acknowledgements

The Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of AUDA-NEPAD Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes in Africa is the result of a collaborative effort initiated by the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) and supported by the AU Commission for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (AUC-ESTI) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Thank you to Dr Ibrahim A. Mayaki (CEO), Mr Amine Idriss Adoum (Director of DIPD) and Mrs Fati N'zi-Hassane (Head of HICD) at AUDA-NEPAD; and Dr Hameed Nuru (African Union Global Office) and Dr Chris Toe (Strategic Partnerships) at WFP, for their overall leadership and support in developing the Guidelines. Warm thanks to Carmen Burbano and Stanlake Samkange, directors of School-Based Programmes and Strategic Partnerships Divisions at WFP Headquarters, who made their teams available.

We acknowledge the excellent work of the technical and editorial team at AUDA-NEPAD, AUC-ESTI and WFP: Kefilwe Rhoba Moalosi (AUDA-NEPAD), Josephine Kiamba (School Feeding Consultant/Author), Abraham A. Herano (AUC-ESTI), Sandra Hittmeyer (WFP), Sophie Jenter (WFP) and Abdub Jirmo (WFP). The Guidelines have also benefited from the substantive inputs and editorial comments of many colleagues and collaborators: Boitshepo Bibi Giyose (AUDA-NEPAD/FAO headquarters), Edna Kalaluka (WFP), Edward Lloyd-Evans (WFP), Jutta Neitzel (WFP), Peter Haag (WFP), Michele Doura (WFP), Hambani Masheleni (AUC-ESTI); and from the following Regional Economic Communities (RECs): the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), East Africa Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). We are also very grateful for the technical advice and support of the following people at WFP: Trixie Belle Nicolle, Alti Bema, Emma Anaman and Christiani Buani. Thank you to all WFP Regional Bureaus in Africa for their extensive support.

The process of developing the Guidelines culminated in the continental meeting for the validation of the Guidelines held virtually in December 2021. Thank you to AU HGSF Cluster members and countries for their participation and invaluable input. We have made a great effort to incorporate comments from stakeholders in each country at every stage of writing these Guidelines.

We offer our appreciation and gratitude to the Governments of Botswana (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development), Ghana (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection) and Côte d'Ivoire (Ministry of Education) for hosting in-person extensive stakeholder consultations and analytical work. Thank you to the WFP regional and country teams for their efficient planning and coordination. In this same light, we thank the Governments of Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Nigeria, and Zambia for assessing the Guidelines virtually through the survey tool.

A special thank you to Dubai Cares and WFP for funding the Guidelines' review and validation processes. Another special thank you to the AU Homegrown School Feeding Cluster (co-led by AU-ESTI and WFP) for hosting the continental multi-sectoral stakeholder workshop in December 2021, which served to ratify the final draft of the Guidelines.





## Executive Summary

Health, nutrition and education during childhood and adolescence contribute to human capital and School Feeding by improving health and indirectly enhancing education attainment (Verguet, et al. 2020). Although School Feeding is often perceived as an expensive intervention, particularly in low-income countries, studies show that it can yield substantial benefits for the costs invested of around 9 US Dollars for every 1 Dollar invested in School Feeding programmes (Verguet, et al., 2020). The returns on education are highest, but the potential returns on health, nutrition, local economies and the safety net impact realised from in-kind income transfers can be substantial if there is a sustained and predictable demand for locally produced food. School Feeding programmes offer multiple benefits and are more cost-effective when viewed through a multi-sectoral lens rather than only a single outcome or impact.

School nutrition programmes are an important intervention for school-going children. They can address many of the nutritional needs during middle childhood, helping to close the gap between infant and young child nutrition interventions on the one hand and the youth/adolescents and maternal nutrition on the other.

African leaders have recognised the contribution of School Feeding to human resources and capital development in Africa and for its central role in inclusive growth and education, health, rural development and gender equality, particularly for the poor and socially marginalised communities (African Union, 2018). More significant numbers of school children are now receiving school meals. Data compiled by the AU shows that approximately 65.4 million children in 51 countries now benefit from School Feeding in Africa, a massive increase from 38.4 million in 2013 (African Union, 2021). There has been a shift from reliance on international donors to more substantial domestic funding as African governments increase their commitment to School Feeding.

While it is notable that School Feeding, and HGSF in particular, is widely implemented in many African countries, many others still face significant difficulties in the large-scale implementation of these programmes and seek technical assistance in the design and management of HGSF programmes. The nutrition quality of school meals is inferior, and the component of linking school meals to local agricultural production and Smallholder Farmers (SHF) still requires support. These HGSF Guidelines provide general direction or guidance to AU Member States who wish to establish HGSF programmes or review existing School Feeding programmes to link them more directly with smallholder farmers and other role players in the school food value chain while addressing the nutrition component more adequately.

The organisational structure of these Guidelines is built around the five School Feeding quality standards: i) policy and legal framework, ii) financial capacity and stable funding, iii) institutional capacity for implementation and coordination, iv) design and

implementation v) and community participation (Bundy, et al., 2009). These Guidelines feature the key elements within each standard that should be considered when planning and operationalising HGSF programmes.

Health, nutrition and education during childhood and adolescence contribute to human capital and School Feeding by improving health and indirectly enhancing education attainment (Verguet, et al. 2020). Although School Feeding is often perceived as an expensive intervention, particularly in low-income countries, studies show that it can yield substantial benefits for the costs invested of around 9 US Dollars for every 1 Dollar invested in School Feeding programmes (Verguet, et al., 2020). The returns on education are highest, but the potential returns on health, nutrition, local economies and the safety net impact realised from in-kind income transfers can be substantial if there is a sustained and predictable demand for locally produced food. School Feeding programmes offer multiple benefits and are more cost-effective when viewed through a multi-sectoral lens rather than only a single outcome or impact.

School nutrition programmes are an important intervention for school-going children. They can address many of the nutritional needs during middle childhood, helping to close the gap between infant and young child nutrition interventions on the one hand and the youth/adolescents and maternal nutrition on the other.





Components Of  
The Five Quality  
Standards:  
Key Messages

## Policy and Legal Frameworks

School Feeding programmes should be enshrined in national policies and plans. A good and effective policy and legal environment are necessary. They facilitate the quality and sustainability of national programmes and convey the government's attachment to School Feeding. The policy environment includes overarching policies at the national level, as well as sectoral and specific policies on School Feeding.

### Overarching Policies and regulations

These support of School Feeding and include National Development Plans (NDPs), Poverty Reduction Policy or Strategy documents, National Food and Nutrition Security Policies, and laws and regulations that protect School Feeding and regulate certain aspects such as the proportion of food purchases that should come from smallholder farmers.

### Sectoral Policies

The sectors and institutions involved in school feeding will depend on the context and governance structures but there is need to have complementary policy or regulatory documents that make it possible for each sector to make the necessary contribution for the effective implementation of school feeding. The sectors commonly involved in school feeding include Education, Finance, Trade and industry, Agriculture (Plant and Animal Production), Fisheries/Aquaculture and Horticulture, Social Protection, Health and Nutrition/Food and Nutrition Security, Local Government, and sectors dealing with Children, Youth and Women's services. It is important to ensure alignment and harmonisation in the development of, or transformation of these sectors to make provision for supporting HGFSF implementation. Elaboration of school feeding in sector policies makes it possible to pull additional resources toward school feeding activities.

### School Feeding Policy

It is important that there is a policy for school feeding in place in all countries that have or desire to implement school feeding. Countries need to prioritise the development of an evidence based HGFSF technical policy that is multi-sectoral, with objectives across the different sectors, and that provides the rationale, scope, design and funding of the programme. For instance, the policy should establish clear linkages between the school meals programme and social protection (particularly

linkages with other safety net programmes), health, nutrition, water and sanitation and agriculture. The nutrition objectives should be well articulated in the policy document and as far as possible the nutrition goals or standards to be achieved from school meals should be established and included. Similarly, such a document should show linkages between local food production (all sub-sectors of agriculture) and school feeding, especially highlighting the support needed for smallholder farmers to be able to respond to the school food demand. The policy should address the other four policy goals (financial capacity, institutional capacity and coordination, design and implementation and community participation).

### Financial capacity

A national School Feeding programme should ideally be funded from national core resources. This is important for sustainability and demonstrates a commitment to the programme. African Governments have dedicated an increasing share of domestic resources toward School Feeding, with East Africa (+24%) and West Africa (+39%) showing the most notable increases (African Union, 2021).

### A specific budget line for School Feeding

Government should provide adequately for HGFSF from the core national budget and, preferably, for such funding to be ring-fenced and cabinet-approved. Additionally, the private sector should help improve value chains, processing and contribute to the programmes.

### Budgeting process

This should be a participatory and consultative process, often done at the national level, but engaging stakeholders from the lowest level up and using credible research data to ensure that all programme costs are provided. Budgeting is usually done based on the number of children to be catered for and involves the full costing of school menus (the plan for a nutritionally adequate menu). Arriving at a reliable budget consists in determining the actual cost of food and warehousing, equipment, food transportation to school and food preparation.

### Timely release of funds

Timely planning and budgeting at the national level are required to make sure funds to districts, or other decentralised levels are released on time. This requires improved coordination and communication



between different departments and role players and the timely communication of information necessary for allocating funds.

### **Sound management and accountability of funds at all levels**

Maintaining transparency and trust among and between the different role players, including the local community, is essential. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that programmes have the skills required to improve financial management and ensure sound execution. It is obligatory to train Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) representatives, school staff who manage feeding budgets, and district level staff who provide oversight.

### **Communication and advocacy:**

It is important to create awareness among parliamentarians, high-level government policymakers and officials, parents, community members and potential donors on the value and multiple benefits of school meals. It is also important for all stakeholders and beneficiaries to understand that School Feeding programmes are a game-changing investment. It is helpful to conduct country-specific cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of School Feeding if resources allow it because it helps illustrate the cost-benefit relationship of School Feeding and should form part of the awareness creation/advocacy strategy for School Feeding budget support.

### **Institutional Capacity and Coordination**

A School Feeding or HGFSF programme is better executed and more effective where a strong institution is mandated and accountable for implementing and monitoring such a programme. Programme coordination is a substantive function and should be adequately negotiated because, by their nature, School Feeding programmes require the support and coordination of tasks in different sectors (education, health, nutrition, social protection, agriculture, finance, WASH, etc.) and the congregation of stakeholders with varying expertise.

### **Institutional home and organisation**

It is important to appoint a dedicated well-staffed agency or secretariat to coordinate the School Feeding programme and elevate such an agency to a prominent position in government structures. It would also be important to confer this role on a neutral sector that can convene meetings and

facilitate decision making and accountability across the different participating sectors.

### **Human resource capacity**

The HGFSF agency should have diverse adequate, and competent staff with a range of skills and expertise that reflects the diverse nature of the programme. In addition to a sound management structure and qualified and competent administrators, programme managers should be experts in food and nutrition, agriculture and rural development, procurement, information and communications technology (ICT), management information systems (MIS), monitoring and evaluation, communication and advocacy. Regular capacity building workshops at all levels of implementation (national, provincial, district and school levels) will help guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme.

### **Coordination**

Many programmes suffer from weak inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral linkages. Proper coordination across sectors ensures that adequate resources are mobilised and directed to vulnerable groups who need support, such as smallholder farmers, food processors and others in the food value chain. It is vital to establish functional multi-sectoral HGFSF coordinating committees at different levels of governance, from the national to the school level, that are recognised and report to an agreed government structure to facilitate the coordinated planning and implementation of HGFSF programmes.

### **Design and Implementation**

The design and implementation standards guide the actual operation and day to day running of the programme. A School Feeding programme is planned in response to the country-specific problems, objectives, goals, targets and expected outcomes. Therefore, the country's context and needs should determine the programme's beneficiaries, food basket (menus), food modalities, and the supply chain. In this regard, countries and partners should work towards local food procurement to support local economies without jeopardising the quality and stability of the food supply.

### **Setting objectives**

The objectives must be clearly defined but also show the benefits of HGFSF across different sectors (education, health and nutrition, agriculture, social protection, and local economic development) for

different target groups such as children, women, households/communities, smallholder farmers, small and medium-size enterprise processors and traders while managing the trade-offs. Well defined objectives help secure cross-sector support by showing the benefits that the sector will derive from the HGSF programme; justify the requests for any amendments to existing policies, strategies and programmes; help secure the allocation of adequate resources; and guide the monitoring and evaluation process.

### Coverage and Targeting

Universal feeding is ideal but not always possible where resources are limited. It is necessary to identify the appropriate target groups to be reached with school meals and establish both the targeting criteria and targeting methodology. Generally, geographic targeting is preferred, but all children within a school in identified regions and districts should be reached. It is important to ensure that the criteria for selection of districts/regions are objective, transparent and widely shared with stakeholders.

### Food Basket

The food basket should be nutritious, based on local foods, including traditional and indigenous foods as far as possible, and include a diverse number of foods/food ingredients to ensure diet quality. The nutritional standards applied to the general population should apply to school meals. As much as practicable, the Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) and the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN) should be essential tools to consider<sup>1</sup>. Where possible, a country should look at specifying the nutritional targets for school children to address the nutritional needs of the school population in a specific context, given the complexity of multiple forms of malnutrition.

Countries should develop a comprehensive national school menu plan/guide which can be adapted at the sub-national level to reflect regional food variations and preferences. The menu should specify the quantities of each food per child and the nutrients to be achieved by the meal. Due to seasonal variations, it is important to look at other options to boost micronutrient value when the meal is not diverse or desired foods are not locally available. This is possible by using fortified blends, biofortified foods, and locally processed fruits and vegetables with additional micronutrient mixtures where possible or bringing in seasonal food items from other locations.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/nutrition/nutrition-education/food-dietary-guidelines/en/>

### Food preparation and availability of fuel

Timely delivery of food requires an adequate number of cooks and sufficient fuel to prepare the food. The availability of fuel influences food or menu selection and cooking times. At the same time, cooks and caterers should be trained regularly to use timely and efficient food preparation methods, practice food safety and maintain the nutritional quality of meals.

### Food Safety and Quality

The safety of food supplied and consumed in schools should be given priority to minimise risks, especially those posed by aflatoxin and other detrimental food contaminants which can undermine child health and cognitive development. It is important to institute systems to maintain food quality and safety at all times. In addition, it is necessary to observe and maintain food hygiene and personal hygiene standards throughout the value chain.

### Linking the HGSF/SF Programme to Farmers

It is necessary to establish the connection between school meals and sustainable local food production by providing adequate support and guidance to smallholder farmers and businesses. The first step in facilitating this link is to design a culturally appropriate menu, acceptable to the children that includes local foods. The procurement process is the second chief way to facilitate this link. Its primary objective should be the timely and stable supply of quality food for School Feeding while increasing farmers' and producers' ability to access the market.

Efforts should be made to understand the food value chain/systems environment by carrying out a supply chain analysis of key commodities in the food basket to establish the production potentials of each food commodity, particularly the potential to meet school food demand. Based on the food basket and the supply chain analysis, it is important to assess the options for the procurement model to be used and decide between opting for a fully centralised or decentralised procurement model or a combination of both procurement models, depending on the logistics.

To overcome the challenges of purchasing small volumes of food from several smallholder farmers, it is helpful to encourage food procurement from aggregators (for example, traders) and farmer cooperatives (who buy from the smallholder farmers) to ensure better quality control. In this regard,



countries ensure the development and organisation of farmer cooperatives and aggregators in the local communities with support from agriculture or other relevant service providers. In addition, explore flexible tendering systems to accommodate smallholder farmers and ensure they are assisted in responding to food tenders as suppliers. It would be essential to provide training on procurement where it is needed.

### **Complimentary School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Interventions**

These interventions are intended to promote the school as a healthy environment and enhance the effectiveness of the School Feeding programme. A wide range of activities is covered under school health and nutrition interventions. The most common actions include deworming, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), nutrition education, health and hygiene education, and school gardens.

Clean water and sanitation help prevent diseases such as helminthic (worm) infections, allergies, and diarrhoea by providing adequate water and toilets in schools. These diseases can impair children's physical development and reduce their cognitive development due to pain and discomfort, competition for nutrients (Vitamin A, Zinc) and anaemia, among others.

Nutrition education is vital for long term behavioural change toward healthy eating habits. It should be provided in the curriculum, separately or infused in other science subjects, and reinforced as part of school meals and gardens. Attention should also be paid to food vendors who trade within or outside school premises as they form a critical part of the school food environment. To avoid conflict, nutrition messages and consumer education to both school children and parents should be well synchronised and reinforced in the school environment. Deworming is important where the prevalence of intestinal helminths is high to ensure that nutrients from school meals are adequately absorbed.

Other activities that can be considered, depending on need, are micronutrient supplementation, height and weight measurement to assess nutritional status, eye testing and eyeglasses to address poor eyesight, dental hygiene to deal with dental cavities and menstrual hygiene to support girls during menstruation. The lack of sanitary facilities could result in lost school days for girls.

### **Community Participation**

School Feeding programmes that promote strong community ownership, participation (through contributions from the local community), and accountability are stronger and more likely to transition to national and local ownership successfully.

The community should be involved in planning and decision making and therefore should be represented in school management committees. To standardise the participation of communities in a given country, it is important to provide guidance on the expected roles of the community in School Feeding (these will differ from country to country) within the HGSP Guidelines or manual.

Conduct community mobilisation, advocacy and sensitisation for school communities, including the Parent-Teacher Associations and the local leadership, on the importance and benefits of HGSP. Community participation also involves engaging the community in decisions on what foods to include in the food basket, the selection of cooks, sharing/providing information on the nutritional quality of the school meal, the food quantities required and what can be grown/supplied from the local area.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is critical in planning and implementing programmes. School Feeding/Homegrown School Feeding Programmes helps assess the benefits across the various objectives (education, child development, health, nutrition, agriculture, diversification, market access, and social protection). It also makes it possible to detect programme challenges and address them in time. However, there is a low application of M&E for School Feeding programmes in Africa. It is important to have School Feeding data or capture and report indicators at the highest level through national structures. In addition, governments are also encouraged to align with the Data Collection and Monitoring Initiative of the School Meals Coalition to ensure that there is essential, up to date, reliable data to optimise programmes and monitor and track progress over time. The Africa Position presented at the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) supports this viewpoint. To ensure that regular monitoring and reporting takes place, countries need to make resources available both for running the programme and for M&E. Overall, Governments are expected to strengthen M&E systems through the following:

- Encourage the development of globally agreed-upon indicators and definitions.
- Develop appropriate monitoring tools or revise existing ones (data collection, reporting tools, monitoring checklists) based on these agreed-upon objectives and indicators.
- Include M&E staff as part of staff requirements.
- Build capacity on M&E among national, subnational (provincial/district) and school staff, to include school-level data capturing, reporting on food flows, financial flows, and the use of IT equipment.
- Use the results for evidence-based planning and policy transformation to create robust legal instruments for accountability.

### **School Feeding in the Context of Emergencies and the Covid-19 Crisis**

Home-Grown School Feeding in emergencies presents different challenges than those experienced in stable conditions and offers opportunities to develop resilience among households and communities with school-going children. Emergencies may arise from political unrest, conflicts, wars, insecurity and health outbreaks, or natural disasters such as floods, drought and famine. Emergencies result in food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. For school children, access to education and regular School Feeding may be destabilised, disorganised or even destroyed where there is a protracted crisis. With COVID-19, schools were closed, and many vulnerable children were sent home and could not access formal learning, school meals and other school health interventions for extended periods. It is estimated that 370 million went without school meals at the height of the crisis in 2020.

Planning for home-grown School Feeding in an emergency requires the engagement and participation of different stakeholders comprising government, non-governmental and international

organisations, including implementation partners, schools and communities. These stakeholders need to be involved in assessing the situation (overall effect of the crisis on people's lives, including school children, who is affected and where), but also in determining the delivery model to be used for the school meals, and mobilising the available and additional resources required to provide the school meals in response to the emergency.


With COVID-19, the priority has been to urgently look for mechanisms to provide school meals and other health and nutrition interventions to build back and maintain the upward trend in access to education and school meals that had been maintained up to 2020 prior to the pandemic (WFP, 2020).

The school food environment should include water and sanitation facilities, nutrition education and nutrition services. The school meal and the modality for providing it should be re-examined and strengthened to ensure that COVID-19 safety protocols are observed and that health and nutrition are protected in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Conclusion**

The HGSF model emphasises a multi-sectoral approach to School Feeding and prioritises purchasing foods from the local school environment as far as possible. It has been shown that the most sustainable and government-owned programmes are designed and implemented collaboratively by the education, health and agriculture sectors and engage several other sectors as the need arises. Countries that have successfully transitioned from externally supported to nationally supported programmes have explored using the HGSF model. This suggests an opportunity for low-income countries to kick-start their transition to nationally owned School Feeding programmes by establishing sustainable sources for some of their commodities and contributing to local economic development through School Feeding programmes that depend on local procurement and community support.



A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark, curly hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a white school uniform. In her right hand, she holds a ripe red and yellow apple. In the foreground, a pink lunchbox is visible, containing a meal of pasta, vegetables, and meat. The background is softly blurred, showing another child with curly hair. A green rectangular box in the upper right corner contains the title text in white.

**AUDA-NEPAD  
Guidelines For  
The Design And  
Implementation Of  
Home Grown School  
Feeding (HGSF)  
Programmes  
In Africa**



## Introduction

### Background: AUDA-NEPAD's Engagement with Home Grown School Feeding

Home Grown School Feeding is one of AUDA-NEPAD's flagship programmes under the food security and nutrition programme, initially Pillar 3 under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). The commitment was made in 2003 when African leaders through the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) agreed that the education, health and nutrition of young children, leaders of tomorrow, had to be the centrepiece for achieving the erstwhile Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other targets. The programme was adopted that year as a key intervention to address hunger and malnutrition by African governments within the CAADP agenda. Soon after, the UN Millennium Task Force on Hunger (2003) proposed that School Feeding be linked to agricultural development by purchasing locally or domestically produced food. Here NEPAD, under CAADP, teamed up with other partners to craft the HGFSF. This programme addresses the needs and growth of the local smallholder farmers while providing nutritious meals for pupils and improving enrolment, retention in schools and educational performance. Twelve countries were identified to host pilot programmes: Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia. However, implementation was slow, and not all countries went on to implement HGFSF immediately. Ghana initiated its pilot HGFSF programme in 2005 and has since scaled up and grown to be one of the successful HGFSF programmes in Africa<sup>2</sup>.

With strategic leadership from NEPAD, as it was known then, and with support from partners such as the Partnership for Child Development (PCD), Governments in Africa were encouraged to embrace HGFSF as a key intervention within the food security pillar of the CAADP framework. In 2011, PCD, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, partnered with NEPAD to support Governments to establish and deliver sustainable, nationally owned HGFSF programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. Under this partnership, some initial pilot countries received direct, evidence-based, and context-specific support and expertise for designing and managing HGFSF programmes. They included Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, and Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup> Ghana's programme has been sustained until today and has grown in size from feeding 1,840 school children in 2005/2006 to just over 3.4 million children in 2021, a coverage of 57% of school children (GSFSF communication, 2021).

As part of developing the evidence base for HGFSF, NEPAD, with support from PCD, carried out case studies in the Southern Africa sub-region (Namibia, Botswana and South Africa) to determine critical success factors in School Feeding for lesson sharing<sup>3</sup>.

Over the years, a growing interest in School Feeding and HGFSF could be observed. Data shows that about 65.4 million children in 51 countries now benefit from School Feeding in Africa, a massive increase from 38.4 million in 2013 (African Union, 2021). Furthermore, the AU report (2021) shows that between 2013 and 2020, domestic funding almost doubled in countries in the West Africa region (from 37% in 2013 to 76% in 2020), while most School Feeding budgets in countries in Southern Africa and North Africa are supported from domestic sources. In East Africa, although international donors continue to support School Feeding to a more considerable extent, the share of domestic funding has more than quadrupled since 2013. This external to domestic funding shift illustrates African governments' increased commitment to School Feeding. This also takes into consideration the Malabo Declaration regarding going to scale with HGFSF.

School meals are a regional priority for AU Member States. Strategic Objective 2 of the AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) aims to "build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and to expand access to quality education". African leaders have identified School Feeding as one strategy to advance this objective and have intensified support and recognition for School Feeding programmes. AU Heads of State and Government instituted the Africa Day of School Feeding (Assemblée/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI)). In that meeting, School Feeding was recognised as having an important role in inclusive development, health, rural development, gender equality and inclusive education, particularly for the poor and socially marginalised communities (African Union, 2018). In March 2021, recognising the need to restore and scale-up school meals after the COVID-19 pandemic, the AU issued a declaration calling for the creation of a School Meals Coalition at the Food Systems Summit. The AU and AUDA are urging governments to sign up to the Global School Meals Coalition and commit to attaining the

<sup>3</sup> These three countries were among the few countries in Africa by 2011/2012 with fully government funded and nationally managed School Feeding programmes. It is important to note that even though School Feeding programmes in the three countries were not set up as HGFSF models, the programmes have evolved overtime and include important components identified with HGFSF such as the links to small holder farmers, and/or use of locally produced food for their School Feeding programmes.



set objectives. These are to re-establish and restore effective school meal programmes to the pre-COVID-19 levels by 2030, reach the most vulnerable, including those that were not being reached even before COVID-19 by 2030, and improve the quality and efficiency of existing school meals programmes in all countries by facilitating a healthy food environment and promoting safe, nutritious and sustainably produced food, and provide balanced diets linked to local and seasonal produce, where appropriate (Global School Meals Coalition, 2021). Detailed descriptions of the coalition objectives are provided below.

One of the key objectives of the AUDA-NEPAD HGSP programme is to improve the nutritional quality of school meals by encouraging countries to develop nutrition standards for school meals and to plan nutritious meals using menu planning tools, such as the School Meal Planner (SMP) PLUS. AUDA-NEPAD piloted the tool in 2019 in three countries, Nigeria, Ghana and Botswana. The tool is available online and offered for free to governments worldwide, hosted by WFP and supported by a network of partners, including academics (PCD-Imperial College), regional bodies (AUDA) and private and public sector (Sodexo-Stop Hunger, NORAD).

Many countries still face significant difficulties in the large-scale implementation of HGSP programmes and seek technical assistance in designing and managing HGSP programmes, specifically focusing on nutrition. These HGSP guidelines provide general direction or guidance to AU Member States who wish to establish HGSP programmes or review

existing School Feeding programmes to link them more directly with smallholder farmers and other role players in the school food value chain while addressing the nutrition component more adequately. While it is accepted that every context is different and there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to School Feeding, the Guidelines give the basic requirements and elements needed to meet the standards for School Feeding in line with the Systems Approach for Better Education Results on School Feeding (SABER-SF) (FAO and WFP, 2018). The document also aligns with the policy objectives and levers outlined in the African Union's conceptual framework for sustainable School Feeding (African Union, 2018). The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) may use these Guidelines to support Member States in designing and implementing HGSP programmes. In some cases, the RECs may wish to develop their own specific HGSP guidelines, such as the recent regional guidelines for SADC Member States (SADC, 2021). Therefore, they should use these Guidelines to inform the regional guide for better alignment. Some countries may also wish to develop their own guidelines and may adapt these continental Guidelines to develop a School Feeding programme guide that is responsive to the local environment.

### **School feeding as a model for development**

The role of School Feeding in enhancing educational outcomes is well documented. In Africa, a major reason for investing in School Feeding has been the expected outcomes in education and learning. This is not surprising given that Africa has some of

the lowest scores on education indicators globally (African Union, 2018). It is widely accepted that School Feeding programmes can help get children into school and help keep them there by enhancing enrolment and reducing absenteeism (Bundy et al., 2018). School Feeding programmes also contribute to children's learning by improving cognitive abilities and helping avoid hunger and malnutrition. It has been shown that children with diminished cognitive abilities naturally perform less well and are more likely to repeat grades and drop out of school. They also enrol in school at a later age, if at all, and finish fewer years of schooling (Jukes et al., 2007 as cited in Gelli, et al., 2013; Bundy et al., 2018). School Feeding may also directly or indirectly reduce gender disparities. It encourages school attendance of boys and girls and guarantees access to adequate food for vulnerable children while in school. School Feeding helps girls break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and reduces the dropout rate for girls (FAO, 2019). School Feeding improves farmers' access to markets and increases the economic activities of local businesses along the school food supply chain. It is recognised as a key instrument for achieving the right to adequate food, education and health. School Feeding, therefore, does more than provide food, particularly when linked to other health, nutrition, social protection and agriculture interventions. From the perspective of the AU, it should be conceptualised as an "all-encompassing social protection intervention, which can achieve preventive, protective, promotive, and transformative impacts on multiple actors" (African Union, 2018).

School nutrition has been relatively neglected as a subject of research and activities. Great attention has been given to the critical window of opportunity for a child's development in the first 1,000 days, leading to the prominence given to nutrition interventions in this period. While the importance of this phase in the child's cognitive development is recognised, the bigger question is what happens to the child after day 1,000. Investments in the next 7,000 days of middle childhood and adolescence have certainly been neglected. It is necessary to think about nutrition interventions more broadly across the lifecycle so that there is seamless movement from one age group to the next. Poor nutrition and health among school children contribute to the inefficiency of the education system. School nutrition programmes can address many of the needs during middle childhood and are essential in closing the gap between infant and young child nutrition interventions and the gap between youth/adolescents and maternal nutrition. Complementary actions, for example, deworming and provision of micronutrients, are also essential

in contributing to the benefits mentioned above for children participating in School Feeding and together form a school-age package of health and nutrition interventions that further contribute to human development. Overall, "well-designed health interventions in middle childhood and adolescence can leverage the already substantial investment in education, and better design of educational programmes can bring better health." (Bundy et al., 2017).

School Feeding is near-universal and is provided in low, middle and high-income countries. It has grown tremendously and become the most extensive social safety net in the world, reaching an estimated 388 million children every day. It is estimated that between 2013 and 2020, the number of children receiving school meals grew by 9% globally and 36% in low-income countries (WFP, 2021). In Africa, 65.4 million children were receiving school meals in 2020, a massive increase of 71% from 38.4 million in 2013 (African Union, 2021). Data shows that 33% of children enrolled in primary schools now receive school meals, up from 22% in 2013 (WFP, 2020).

The global growth in School Feeding came to an end after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic early in 2020 (WFP, 2020). The pandemic resulted in school closures globally and left 370 million children without access to the school meal they were used to. In the initial response to this situation, some countries sought to reach the children at home through take-home rations, cash transfers and food vouchers. This illustrated yet again the social safety net function of school meals. However, to avoid the serious consequences of school closures, it was a priority to get children back into school in 2020-2021. School meals were an important strategy to achieving that.

An international School Meals Coalition has been established to help rebuild what was lost. This Coalition brings together governments, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organisations, civil society, the private sector, researchers and academics to drive actions that can urgently re-establish, improve and scale-up school meals programmes in countries around the world in this period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coalition aims to act as a catalyst for actions and share knowledge on school meal research, design and delivery, thereby serving as a key driver of pandemic recovery, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and AU Agenda 2063. The objectives of the Coalition as presented in the School Meals Coalition concept note and summarised below are to:



1

2

3

### Restore what we had (by 2023)

This involves supporting all countries to re-establish effective school meal programmes and repair what was lost during the pandemic by:

- Ensuring that all countries, regardless of income level, restore access to school meals programmes for the 370 million children who lost access during the pandemic.

### Reach those we missed (by 2030)

This objective aims to:

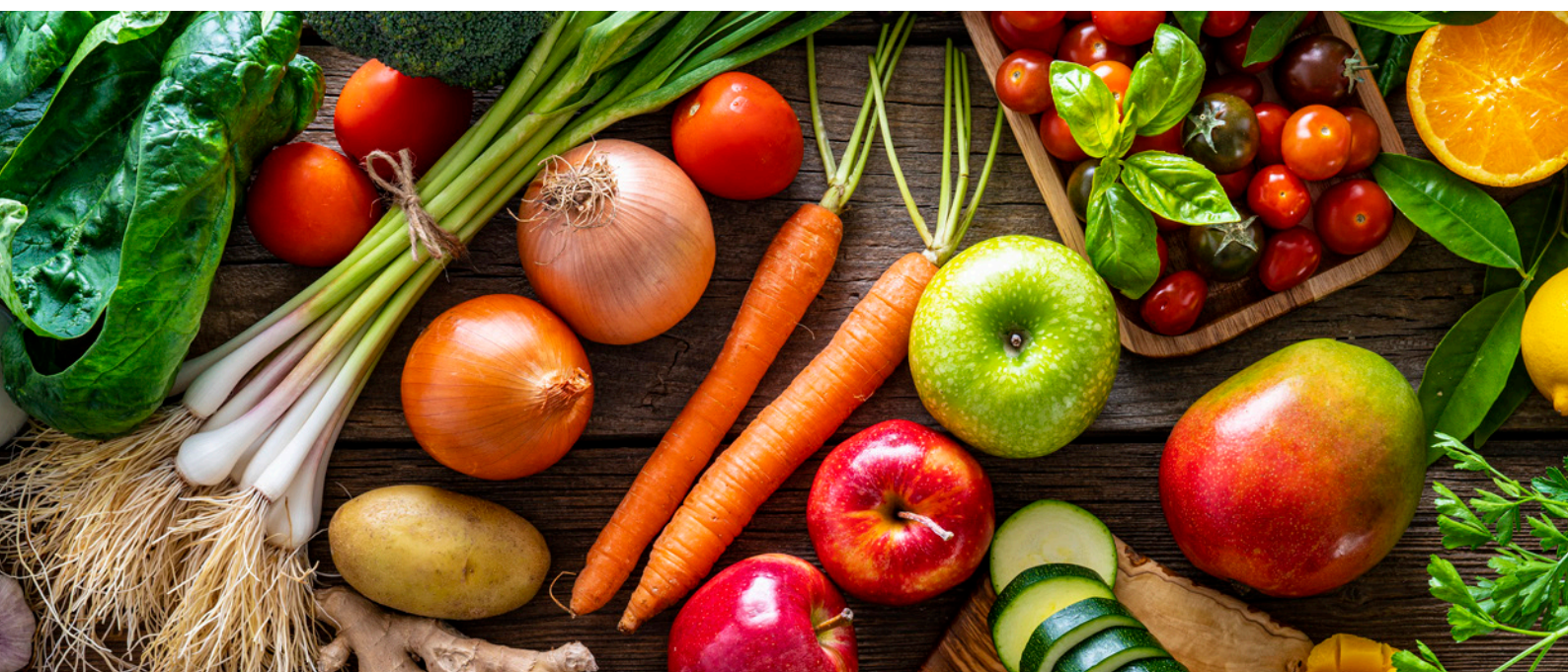
- Reach the most vulnerable, in low and lower-middle-income countries, that were not being reached even before the pandemic;
- Increase the efficiency of programmes to enable low and lower-middle-income countries to become more self-reliant. Specifically, it aims to:
  - Reach 73 million girls and boys living in extreme poverty and hunger in 60 low and lower-middle-income countries;
  - Mobilise funding to cover the cost of reaching the most vulnerable in low and lower-middle-income countries with sustainable programmes;
  - Enable low and lower-middle-income countries to transition from donor-supported to nationally owned and funded School Feeding programmes.

### Improve our approach (by 2030)

This entails improving the quality and efficiency of existing school meals programmes in all countries by:

- Facilitating a healthy food environment in schools;
- Promoting safe, nutritious and sustainably produced food;
- Promoting diverse and balanced diets linked to local and seasonal produce where appropriate.

As indicated earlier, it is expected that African Governments continue to sign up for the movement to prioritise School Feeding and the important role it plays in the development of children. Getting children into school and keeping them there is a social imperative.



## Home Grown School Feeding Explained

School Feeding programmes are generally framed as social protection or poverty-reduction programmes and have been used to respond to emergency and relief situations. They are increasingly recognised to support smallholder farmers and overall community development (Gelli, A., Kretschmer, A., Molinas L., and de la Mothe, MR, 2013). It is this component – of engaging farmers – that explains the concept now referred to as Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF).

Home-Grown School Feeding programmes have received increasing attention in recent years because of the link to local agricultural development through purchasing and using locally and domestically produced food. The number of African countries implementing this model has grown, with more than 20 countries implementing HGSF to varying degrees. The model has been widely viewed as a means to address food insecurity while promoting rural development, potentially contributing to the achievement of the SDGs for food security, nutrition, education, health, and agriculture (FAO, 2018). The model is designed to provide children in schools with safe, diverse and nutritious food sourced locally from smallholder farmers (FAO and WFP, 2018). There is also increasing recognition that social protection measures are necessary to reduce or prevent hunger and poverty and link agriculture to School Feeding or other public procurement that benefits smallholder farmers, including sustainable capacity building.

The HGSF model can have multiple impacts and therefore requires the involvement of different sectors (health, nutrition, education, finance, agriculture, trade and markets, social protection, among others) for it to have this impact. It requires convergent and coherent policies in agriculture, social protection etc. The social protection objective focuses on the health and nutrition of school-age children (and their families) and is addressed through School Feeding policy instruments. In contrast, the agriculture objective is primarily focused on small scale agriculture and the development of markets. The policy instruments used to support agricultural development revolve around structured demand, generated through public procurement to open up markets and advance economic development for smallholder farmers (Sumberg and Sabates-Wheeler, 2011). Case studies documented in the Global School Feeding Sourcebook (Drake et al., 2016) showed that countries are moving towards local sourcing and production of food and away from food aid except in humanitarian crises.

Since 2008<sup>4</sup>, development partners involved in School Feeding have shifted their attention to supporting countries in the transition and helping governments develop and implement cost-effective, sustainable national School Feeding programmes. In some cases, the home-grown modality is supported by food assistance agencies such as WFP before Government funding becomes available. 'Home grown' is about local production or local sourcing of food but also about ownership of programmes and relevance to the context. Recognition is given to the fact that each context (climate change effects, environmental degradation, planet health) is different with differing production potentials. To support this goal, it is necessary to build agricultural production capacities to ensure a sustainable food supply to the school system.

There is limited evidence of the impact of School Feeding programmes on agriculture and local economic development. Despite this, an AU report indicates that evaluations of HGSF programmes show that they have proven to be more productive and have expanded smallholder cooperative societies, as demonstrated through increased yields and a greater feeling of community empowerment (African Union, 2018). Many countries have recognised HGSF as a key strategy for economic growth and human development. As School Feeding programmes transition to national ownership, expanding the HGSF model will likely be a key focus of policymaking and advocacy in Africa.

## Why do the Links to Agricultural Development make Economic Sense?

Almost two-thirds of Africa's population is rural and thus directly dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods (OECD/FAO, 2016). There are now over one billion hungry people in the world, and food insecurity increases every day. Africa has the highest proportion (one third) of people suffering from chronic hunger. Hunger in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is widespread and persistent (NEPAD, 2009). In SSA, for instance, smallholder farmers using centuries-old growing techniques are locked in a downward spiral of falling yields, declining productivity and spreading poverty. Even when they do adopt improved production methods, they are often unable to sell their produce easily in markets, which, for smallholders, are thin, volatile and costly. Efforts to enhance production are typically compromised by the lack of local markets for their products and the absence of transport to reach distant markets.

<sup>4</sup> The period 2007/2008 is known for the global food, fuel and financial crisis which resulted in scaling up School Feeding programmes as a social safety net.



School Feeding programmes, which stimulate local demand for food, effectively stimulate the local economy while creating a social safety net and promoting education, health, and nutrition.

As programmes expand and become nationally-owned and part of the national policy framework, the size and stability of the demand will also increase. This will also provide an opportunity to put into practice contextualised productivity-enhancing innovations, technologies, and techniques to support local agricultural production and smallholder farmers, especially women who comprise over 70% of smallholder farmers in SSA. It will also improve nutrition and benefit the local economy. The local private sector also benefits in that jobs and profits may be created for farmers and those involved in transporting, processing, and preparing food along the School Feeding value chain. These jobs created in rural communities will provide off-farm income-generation opportunities, many of which are usually filled by women. Off-farm investment may in turn further stimulate productivity and agricultural employment, producing a 'virtuous cycle' benefitting long-term food security and improving welfare in rural households. However, there is an urgent need to provide more concrete evidence around these outcomes. It is, therefore, crucial in the long term to measure the returns from School Feeding, particularly in the agricultural domain (AU,2018). As indicated earlier, the HGSF model is likely to play a dominant role in developing sustainable School Feeding programmes in Africa.

### Why HGSF Guidelines?

According to a recent FAO study, approximately 80% of African countries have had some experience with School Feeding at one level or another (FAO, 2018). However, they encounter several challenges in implementing programmes, and the transition to HGSF lacks systematic implementation.

The 2018 FAO study on school food and nutrition programmes in Africa found that school meal programmes implemented by governments in 41 countries still face numerous challenges. These include low coverage, lack of dietary guidelines, weak policy frameworks, poor sectoral coordination and weak monitoring and evaluation. Findings also suggested that the programme objectives are limiting and not comprehensive enough to guide implementers toward achieving the full benefits, particularly the potential benefits of HGSF. For instance, most School Feeding programmes are designed mainly to increase school attendance and retention (education objectives) by ensuring that children are not hungry. To a lesser extent, they aim to improve nutrition, support local agriculture or empower communities (FAO, 2018).

Findings from the 2018 FAO report also suggest strong government interest in procuring foods for school meals from local smallholder farmers. Still, there are no pro-smallholder farmer policies or legal instruments and strategies to support this interest. Furthermore, standard public procurement rules and practices are often not favourable for purchasing from smallholder farmers. As a result, only a few countries have been able to source the majority of commodities from local farmers. This exclusion represents a key barrier for local smallholder producers to access these markets. These issues and challenges identified around the delivery of School Feeding programmes illustrate the need to provide better evidence and guidance in the design of programmes. The Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework document (FAO and WFP, 2018) and the Global School Feeding Sourcebook (Drake et al., 2016) provide insight into the components necessary for evidence-based HGSF programmes. The latter additionally provide working models and good practices from the case studies, which can be learned and adapted for use in other countries.



On the other hand, this document is a quick reference document that guides School Feeding policymakers and programme officers to operationalise School Feeding more easily as it responds to day-to-day issues that they are likely to encounter within the five broad quality standards (see section 2 below). The Guidelines can be used to help African governments improve School Feeding programmes in line with the Global School Meals Coalition objective of improving school meal programme approaches by 2030. The document may also be used as a guide for the internal evaluation of country programmes.

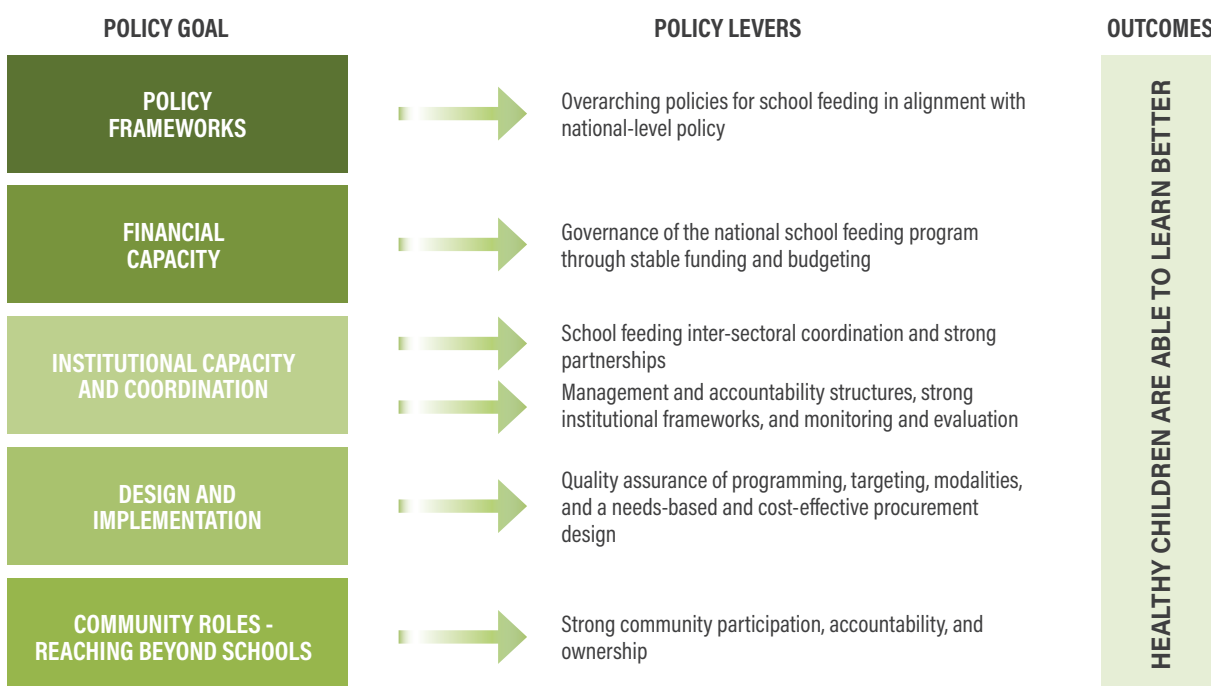
## The School Feeding Quality Standards

There are five main standards recognised for developing quality School Feeding programmes: Policy and Legal Framework, Financial Capacity and Stable Funding, Institutional Capacity for Implementation and Coordination, Design and Implementation, and Community Participation (Bundy, et al., 2009). These standards have been used as a basis for quickly assessing or benchmarking national School Feeding systems across countries globally in what is referred to as the Systems Approach for Better Education Results - School Feeding (SABER-SF). They provide the necessary enabling environment for implementing Home-Grown School Feeding programmes.

In Brazil, lessons from years of implementing School Feeding illustrate certain key elements for the success of programmes that validate the quality standards highlighted above. These are government funding; a legal and regulatory framework; inter-sectorality; decentralised management; universal coverage; systematisation and continuity of supply; quality of food offered at schools, with defined nutritional recommendations; social control; purchase and aggregation of food from smallholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs; food and nutrition education through school gardens, and healthy and diversified menus, among others; and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems (FAO, 2018).

The Guidelines are organised around the five School Feeding quality standards mentioned above. They provide the key elements (essentials) within each standard that should be considered in planning and operationalising effective HGSF programmes. Figure 1 below illustrates these policy goals or standards used in the SABER framework to identify strengths and weaknesses in the School Feeding system in a given country. From this starting point, other countries can proceed to identify core areas in which to focus investment and develop plans of action (FAO and WFP, 2018). The diagram identifies the standard or policy goals and the main policy levers/guide for each one. The framework has been used to help countries determine the gaps in newly established School-Feeding programmes.

**Figure 1: Policy goals and policy levers for school feeding**



(From: World Bank, WFP and PCD, 2016. Manual for SABER-SF exercise). [http://wbfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting\\_doc/Background/SHN/SABER\\_SchoolFeeding\\_Manual.pdf](http://wbfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/Background/SHN/SABER_SchoolFeeding_Manual.pdf)

The outcomes of the SABER holistic and integrated assessment of how the overall policy in a country affects young children’s development are classified as latent, emerging, established or advanced, depending on the levels of policy development that exist among different dimensions of School Feeding and interpreted as follows:

1. Latent: very little policy development or none at all
2. Emerging: initial/some initiatives towards policy development
3. Established: some policy development
4. Advanced: a comprehensive policy framework

These Guidelines provide a general description of these five School Feeding standards and key elements to be included or considered in School Feeding programming<sup>5</sup>. The Guidelines also give a table-format summary of critical factors to consider for each standard.

## Key Elements to include in HGSF Programmes within Five Main Quality Standards

### Policy and Legal Frameworks

A good “policy foundation for the School Feeding programme helps strengthen its potential for sustainability, accountability and the quality of its implementation” (SABER-School Feeding 2016)<sup>6</sup>. Policy development should be a participatory process based on available evidence for the given context.

### Overarching policies in support of school feeding

School Feeding programmes should be enshrined in national policies and plans. An effective policy and legal environment are necessary because they facilitate the quality and sustainability of the programme and convey the importance that government attaches to School Feeding. The importance of mainstreaming School Feeding into national policies and plans, especially education sector plans, is now widely recognised as necessary for the transition to sustainable national programmes. This means that not only does a country need to develop a specific policy on School Feeding, but higher up in the government hierarchy, there is a need for overarching statements such as Acts of Parliament or constitutional pronouncements, and national development plans that speak about or are in support of school meals/School Feeding. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) recommends passing legislation for adequate food and nutrition in schools through a school food and nutrition law (FAO, 2019). The school food and nutrition law is not a single law but encompasses a set of laws and regulations governing the different aspects of a holistic approach to school meals. Such legislation will define clear institutional responsibilities, establish participation and coordination mechanisms among the various stakeholders, and encourage adequate budget allocation and a framework for monitoring and enforcement. The policy development should involve a broad spectrum of sectors and stakeholders. The policy document should highlight the roles and responsibilities of each sector and facilitate the coordination of the programme across the identified sectors.

<sup>5</sup> Material taken from the *Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework: A Technical Document*, FAO and WFP, 2018

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, World Food Programme, and Partnership for Child Development 2016. *SABER-School Feeding: Manual for SABER-SF Exercise*

### Sector Policies

All the sectors and institutions involved in School Feeding need to have complementary policy or regulatory documents that make it possible for that sector to make the necessary contribution for effective implementation of School Feeding. For example, suppose there are policies and programmes to support smallholder farmers in the Ministry of Agriculture. Such documents should specifically show how such programmes will be linked to the School Feeding programme or how farmers will benefit from the demand created by the HGSF programme. Similarly, the social protection sector may wish to connect the families identified for safety net programmes to the school food market. Collaboration and sharing of information across sectors are critical aspects of policy implementation.

### Specific School Feeding Policies

A comprehensive HGSF programme requires a multi-sectoral policy with clear linkages to the relevant strategic sectors (education, nutrition, social protection, trade and agriculture (plant and animal production, fisheries/aquaculture, and horticulture)). Often, School Feeding is conceptualised within the education sector. However, it would be difficult for the education sector to carry out all the planning and execution of school meals, together with the desired complementary activities, without the support of other sectors. For instance, the policy should establish clear links between the school meals programme and social protection (particularly links with other social services), health, nutrition, water and sanitation and other social services, including consumer education. The nutrition objectives should be well articulated in the policy document. As far as possible, the nutrition goals or standards to be achieved from school meals should be established and included. Similarly, such a document should show linkages between local food production (agriculture and livestock) and School Feeding and highlight the support needed for smallholder farmers to respond to the school food demand.

There must be a School Feeding policy in all countries that have or want to implement School Feeding. Therefore, countries that do not have one should strive to develop one as a matter of urgency. In conjunction with the policy, a law should ideally also be passed that holds the government accountable for school meals as part of legislating for the rights of the child to adequate food and nutrition.

**Table 1: Elements for Policy Frameworks**

Elements to consider	Recommendations
<p><b>1. National Development Plans (NDP) and Legal Instruments.</b> National level poverty reduction strategy, national development plans, national agriculture investment plans, national food and nutrition security plans or legal documents that endorse School Feeding, and specific School Feeding laws.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The umbrella policy documents in a country such as the NDP, poverty reduction policy documents or national food and nutrition security policy should mention School Feeding. Madagascar has a National School Food and Nutrition Plan (PNANS III), the updated reference document for the School Feeding programme for 2020-2024.</li> <li>• Advocate for enacting a regulatory government document that signifies commitment such as a law, a bill/Act of Parliament or regulation that protects School Feeding and ensures it is budgeted for. A school food and nutrition law is one such example (refer to the FAO, 2019 document, which outlines possible provisions of such a law).</li> <li>• Countries may also develop regulations that ensure that a significant proportion of food purchases are made from immediate smallholder farmers. Such laws and regulations are binding and hold governments accountable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Sectoral policies and strategies</b> such as education sector plans/policies, social protection, agriculture and animal production sector plans/policies, and nutrition policies (e.g. school health and nutrition, or nutrition and food security policy), identify School Feeding as an education and social protection policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure alignment and harmonisation in the development or revision of key sector policies such as that for education, finance, trade and industry, agriculture, animal production and fisheries, social protection, health and nutrition/food and nutrition security, local government and sectors dealing with children, youth and women’s services, so that they make provision to support HGSF implementation.</li> <li>• For instance, there is a need for a policy statement (in education, agriculture, animal production/fisheries, and nutrition) that stipulates the purchasing of local food for school meals from smallholder/family farmers.</li> <li>• The Policy documents should have clearly defined objectives and spell out sectoral responsibilities.</li> </ul>



Elements to consider	Recommendations
<p><b>3. School Feeding/HGSF policy.</b> This multi-sectoral policy provides strategic direction to the programme and should be aligned to national policy.</p> <p>The policy development process should involve regular consultations with all relevant stakeholders from the very beginning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise the development of an evidence-based HGSF technical policy that is multi-sectoral, with objectives across the different sectors, and that provides the rationale, scope, design and funding of the programme, addresses the other four policy goals (financial capacity, institutional capacity and coordination, design and implementation and community participation) and outlines the strategy for local sourcing of food, including links to local agricultural production and smallholder farmers. The HGSF policy may mention the proportion of food that should come from smallholder farmers when the supply is available.</li> <li>• Develop specific objectives for Improving the nutritional quality of school meals in HGSF policy.</li> <li>• Each country needs to spell out the proportion of daily nutrient requirements for the school child that should come from school meals and the standards for the essential nutrients. This will inform the development of the school menu (see Design and Implementation section).</li> <li>• Provide guidelines on consumption or restriction of specific foods given to school children in the policy (e.g. restrictions on processed foods, fatty foods, artificially sweetened foods, etc.), including restrictions on the sale of certain foods and beverages in schools (canteens) or immediate school environment.</li> <li>• In terms of community participation, the policy should outline the roles and responsibilities of the community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. HGSF implementation manual/operational manual</b> A School Feeding/HGSF manual is a document that should contain information on how the programme is run. Such a document operationalises the policy and provides guidance on day to day processes – what should be done and how?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and disseminate a comprehensive School Feeding manual or user guide covering all operational components of a programme to guide implementers at all levels. The primary focus is the elements within the design and implementation standard showing what needs to be done, by who and to what degree/ standard.</li> </ul>



## Example of roles and responsibilities of sectors relevant to school feeding



### Health and Nutrition

1. Provide relevant data and information on the nutritional status of school-going children and the food and nutrition situation of communities where School Feeding is implemented.
2. Help to define the nutritional objectives of the School Feeding programme.
3. Determine and prescribe the nutrition standards to be met by school meals.
4. Advocate for and indicate the role of nutrition education and stipulate where this may be provided: during school meals, as part of school gardens, infused in different subjects within the curriculum, or offered in subjects such as food and nutrition or home economics/consumer sciences.
5. Identify, prescribe and support the implementation of school health activities to be provided that will complement the School Feeding programme. These include deworming, nutrient supplementation, school gardens, water, sanitation and hygiene programme, eye health, dental hygiene, menstrual hygiene, etc.
6. Assist with monitoring food quality control by carrying out regular inspections of the fresh food supplied to schools, including meat and poultry products, if used in school meals.



### Finance and Budget

Need to understand the role of School Feeding and the importance of providing an adequate budget. The sector should be involved in decisions that have budget implications. The overall function is budget support.

1. Assist with the budgeting process.
2. Lobby cabinet to ring-fence School Feeding funds.
3. Play a leading role in resource mobilisation engagement with other sectors, partners, and donors.
4. Assist with monitoring financial accountability at the various levels of School Feeding oversight and implementation



### Agriculture

1. Provide information or mapping on agricultural production and seasonal availability of the various agro-ecological zones in the country.
2. Monitor the safety and nutrition content of cereal and other foods supplied to schools.
3. Provide agriculture support services and skills training to farmers: financial resources, communication and capacity building on farming/production methods, value addition and bookkeeping, and how to respond to supplier contracts.
4. Develop guidelines for the procurement of agricultural products.



### Social Protection

1. Assist with identifying vulnerable farming households and children in need.
2. Link households that receive cash transfers or other social service support to the HGSP demand.



### Trade and Industry

1. General marketing and development of or sourcing of markets.
2. Usually involved in dealing with suppliers, can help with discussions on pricing, contracting arrangements, etc.
3. Support farmers to form cooperatives to facilitate food collection and aggregation to meet the required quantities.

## Financial Capacity

Financial capacity is portrayed by stable and predictable funding for School Feeding. Funding for these programmes has historically been done through a combination of government and non-government (i.e. WFP) sources. When the government appropriates a programme, funding should primarily come from government core resources, and ideally, there should be a national budget line for long-term School Feeding for sustainability. Globally, many Governments have increased domestic spending on School Feeding, including low-income countries where the share of domestic funding as a percentage of the overall budget for School Feeding has grown from 17% in 2013 to 28% in 2020 (WFP, 2020). Establishing a specific budget line for the programme facilitates a progressive allocation of public resources for School Feeding. Although it is recognised that governments may need external financial support in the early stages of the programme, increasing the government share of resources toward School Feeding ensures sustainability in the long term. It is encouraging to note that domestic funding for School Feeding has increased steadily everywhere in Africa, with the most notable increases occurring in East Africa (+24 percentage points) and West Africa (+39 percentage points) (African Union, 2021).

**Table 2: Elements for Financial Capacity**

Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p><b>1. Specific budget for School Feeding</b> School Feeding should be funded by the government and be adequately provided for as a budget line item of the Ministry of Education or other implementing sectors.</p> <p>The capacity to fund School Feeding from the national budget demonstrates a commitment to the programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby government to provide adequately for HGSF from the core national budget.</li> <li>• A specific budget line for HGSF is necessary and should preferably be ring-fenced as a cabinet approved budget.</li> <li>• Try to increase awareness of School Feeding among high-level government officials and community members so they understand and appreciate its importance.</li> <li>• Countries are encouraged to explore other innovative financing and funding possibilities, which the financing task force can help do. The financing task force is being established under the leadership of the Global Education Forum. It aims to improve donor coordination, efficient current funding arrangements, help countries increase their fiscal capacity through innovative solutions and marshal the resources necessary to address this global challenge.</li> <li>• Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) within a country are another option to explore for additional support for School Feeding. This requires a well-planned advocacy strategy that focuses on the benefits of School Feeding, including its benefits to the private sector as a corporate social responsibility.</li> <li>• Plan and mobilise resources to conduct a country-specific cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of School Feeding<sup>7</sup> and use the information/data to design an effective communication strategy. This illustrates the cost-benefit of School Feeding to Government and donors and should form part of the awareness creation/advocacy strategy for School Feeding budget support.</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> A School Feeding cost benefit analysis can be supported separately from other sources (usually development partners) if well advocated for and requested.



Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p><b>2. Budgeting process.</b> This should be participatory and consultative. The budgeting process is often done at the national level. Still, it should be a comprehensive and consultative process involving stakeholders from the lowest levels up and using well-researched data to ensure that all programme costs are taken into consideration.</p> <p>Budgeting is usually done based on the estimated number of children to be catered for. It can start small and scale up with a view to universal coverage where possible.</p> <p>The total cost of school menus should include the actual cost of food, costs of warehousing and delivery costs to arrive at an adequate budget.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a comprehensive assessment of the funding requirements on an annual basis. Historical budgets (often done to accommodate available resources) are not as reliable as they do not consider the programme's changing needs, including changes in the number of children requiring school meals.</li> <li>• Determine what costs will be borne by the community and other stakeholders (contributions in kind or cash).</li> <li>• The budget process should include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Investment costs such as School Feeding and WASH infrastructure (refer to infrastructure under section 3.4). How this is worked on may differ from country to country. It is considered part of the development budget for some, which is dealt with separately under the general school development infrastructure. Infrastructure also needs maintenance, and this should be budgeted for.</li> <li>b. Running costs:                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost of food (per child per meal) multiplied by the number of children and the number of school days based on a nutritionally adequate and costed meal plan.</li> <li>• Including transport, storage/warehousing, staff, fuel, and food preparation costs.</li> <li>• Management at all levels, including systematic monitoring and periodic evaluations.</li> <li>• Continuous capacity strengthening structures and processes to manage staff turnover.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Note: the cost per child is a composite of the actual cost of the meal/food, supply chain costs and administrative costs. There is a need to balance the objective of cost-efficient procurement to involve and benefit smallholder farmers (prices for food from smallholder farmers may be higher).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene meetings with the local community or smallholder farmers and other suppliers to discuss the food requirements and the food prices to be presented in the budget. Budget planning and budget projections should feature discussions on food prices in relation to market prices that will be considered for suppliers to the School Feeding programme.</li> </ul>
<p>A comprehensive budget makes it possible to identify where there may be budget gaps and then develop a strategy for raising funds from other sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet budget gaps, it is recommended to look for innovative funding partnerships for HGSE, including PPPs and other co-financing or pre-financing arrangements to supplement core government funds. It is, however, important to review and assess the cost implications of such agreements if any, to see if the cost outweighs the benefit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. The timely release of funds</b> from the national level to regions/ districts and school level through the various government processes is necessary. Home-Grown School Feeding programmes often experience delayed release of funds which hampers timely and effective delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely planning and budgeting at the national level are required to make sure funds to districts, or other identified levels are released on time. Planning should take place 4 to 6 months ahead of expected school delivery.</li> <li>• Timely planning and delivery require improvements in coordination and communication among different sections and role players to ensure that information desired for allocating funds is communicated on time.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Identify suppliers for different foods on the menu, get quotations and negotiate prices for the year (this may be done by district if there are variations across the country).</li> <li>» Determine the number of children to be fed in each district. This will be an estimated figure based on the previous year's enrolment data.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Identify suppliers for different foods on the menu, get quotations and negotiate prices for the year (this may be done by district if there are variations across the country).</li> <li>» Determine the number of children to be fed in each district. This will be an estimated figure based on the previous year's enrolment data.</li> <li>» Assess and communicate monitoring costs (funds and staff) at provincial/sub-national level and district level.</li> <li>» Communicate or relay budgetary information to the Department/ Section that releases funds, e.g. Education, Finance, and Agriculture (for agriculture component).</li> <li>» Strengthen technical capacities for the HGSF programme (see institutional capacity assessment below), e.g. monitoring.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To avoid delays, it is recommended that countries secure a pre-financing arrangement through a third party that would provide funds in the interim. This ensures that funds are released on time. If any, the cost implications of such arrangements should be determined as indicated above.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Sound Management and accountability of Funds at all levels.</b> This is particularly important where a decision has been made to decentralise procurement down to school level, as such skills are often non-existent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and provide short refresher courses on financial management to improve capacities at school level, for representatives of PTAs and school level staff who manage the School Feeding budget, and for the district/provincial level staff who provide oversight.</li> <li>• Develop a financial accountability structure for School Feeding funds that shows the persons responsible for specific procedures and approvals at the various levels of governance to maintain effective financial control environment. Failure to account should be a punishable offence, and the consequences should be clearly outlined.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Communication and Advocacy</b> This is about strategic advocacy and communicating benefits around School Feeding to different stakeholders for improved buy-in and support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an information, education and communication strategy which outlines methods and activities to be used to reach the community with necessary information.</li> <li>• Create awareness about School Feeding and its benefits among parliamentarians as this will create a push factor when advocating for funding.</li> <li>• Create awareness among farmers and the community on the potential role of School Feeding in creating a demand for their produce. This should be followed by specific information on what to grow (based on the school food basket) and the expected quantities. Community and farmer sensitisation on the School Feeding market can create support for the need to fund School Feeding and related activities for a predictable and stable market for agricultural produce.</li> <li>• Information on community contributions where this is necessary.</li> </ul>

### Institutional Capacity and Coordination

Effective institutional capacity and coordination develop robust institutional frameworks and management and accountability structures. A School Feeding programme is better executed where an institution is mandated and accountable for implementing such a programme. It requires a dedicated agency/unit or secretariat within the identified sector and with a good number and mix of staff with a range of expertise/skills to reflect the diverse nature of the programme (including food and nutrition, agriculture and rural development, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and communication). However, where the HGSF programme should sit is not always straightforward.

The Ministry of Education is often the preferred institution for housing School Feeding programmes in many countries, even though the intervention by its nature cuts across several sectors. There are exceptions, and some countries have School Feeding under the Ministry for Social Protection (Ghana) and with Local Government (Botswana).

Home-Grown School Feeding is not a single sector intervention and requires the support of other sectors. It is multi-sectorial and demands the well-coordinated involvement of other sectors such as education, health, social protection, agriculture, trade and industry, finance, local government, and other school health programmes.

There is a consensus from several meetings with delegates from African Countries that the School Feeding governing structure needs to sit in a more neutral sector for coordination purposes. Where possible, it should move to a higher institutional structure such as one located under the Office of the President or Vice-President. This raises the profile of School Feeding and makes it easier to coordinate support activities from other sectors. Another alternative used in Countries such as Ghana and Nigeria is to have a strong and independent School Feeding unit or secretariat within the appointed sector (e.g. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in Ghana, and Nigeria the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme has been under the Presidency since its inception until 2021<sup>8</sup>, and under the Office of the Governor at State Level).

Each country should identify the coordination mechanism that works best. Unfortunately, a lack of coordination among HGSF stakeholders remains the biggest challenge facing African Governments in the management of School Feeding programmes (African Union, 2020). Home-Grown School Feeding programmes are multi-sectoral and require different stakeholders with different knowledge and expertise to plan and implement programmes. This involves coordination as a substantive function.

<sup>8</sup> The National Home-Grown School Feeding programme in Nigeria has since been moved to the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development

**Table 3: Elements for Institutional Capacity and Coordination**

Elements to Consider	Recommendations
<p><b>1. The institutional home of the HGSF programme nationally and at the sub-national level should be a carefully considered decision.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise/elevate the HGSF governing structure to the highest level or a more neutral governing body in the country for better recognition. (See discussion in the opening paragraph above).</li> <li>• Establish a dedicated and independent HGSF management agency or secretariat with access to the requisite resources and complimentary staff skills at the national level.</li> <li>• Where possible, HGSF management/coordination offices or positions can be established at the provincial (sub-national level) or district level for closer management, monitoring and training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Coordination</b> This function should be built into the institutional structure after it has been established. Many programmes suffer from weak inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral linkages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home-Grown School Feeding needs to be well coordinated with relevant sectors such as education (where this is not in the education sector), health, nutrition, agriculture and other social assistance programmes.</li> <li>• Establish a functional multi-sectoral HGSF coordinating committee that is recognised and reports to an agreed government structure to facilitate coordinated planning and implementation. Alternatively, countries may explore using existing multi-sectoral committees and ensure that School Feeding is a regular agenda item.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition,                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Strengthen coordination and involvement of senior government staff.</li> <li>» Train the relevant Ministerial staff on roles and responsibilities regarding the school meals programme.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Elements to Consider	Recommendations
<p>Proper coordination across sectors ensures that adequate resources are mobilised and directed to vulnerable groups such as smallholder farmers and others in the food value chain (food processors, etc.) who need support to improve production and supply to the school food market.</p>	<p>Programme planning for HGSF is a multi-sectoral activity. It should form part of discussions at high-level meetings in the different sectors and cooperatively/collectively so that specific attention is given to beneficiaries of other social assistance programmes. In this regard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Liaise with sectors such as agriculture, particularly on agriculture assistance programmes for smallholder farmers, and social protection on the cash transfer to recipient households, so that they are linked to HGSF demand, etc.) and especially if poverty alleviation is an objective.</li> <li>▪ Similar support may be mobilised through coordination mechanisms for food processors and other role players in the food value chain.</li> <li>▪ Ensure active coordination and communication with the agriculture sector, specifically the agricultural extension service to support smallholder farmers in the form of financial resources, communication and capacity building on farming/production methods, value addition and bookkeeping, responding to supplier contracts, among other skills, if they are to respond to the school food demand adequately. This service has to be well coordinated with the HGSF programme.</li> <li>▪ Appoint representatives from the community for the school management committee as a way to involve the community and make them an active part of the programme. Furthermore, this committee can support the stocktaking process at the schools, design school meals, and much more.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Human Resource capacity</b></p> <p>An independent unit, as suggested above, requires the right staff complement. The mix will inform the number of staff skills needed.</p> <p>A fully functioning HGSF programme also requires skilled staff at national, provincial and district levels in core areas of the programme. This includes programme managers, nutrition, agriculture, procurement, M&amp;E and WASH. At the school level, there is a need for cooks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a staff structure for the HGSF secretariat or agency that includes the typical management structure (Director, support/administrative staff, finance manager, etc.) and individuals with the requisite staff skills to run the HGSF programme efficiently.</li> <li>▪ The skills include programme managers in food and nutrition, agriculture and rural development, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, water, hygiene and sanitation, advocacy and communication, management information systems, and Information Technology. The actual numbers will depend on the size of the programme but also specific requirements for a given context and the design of the programme.</li> <li>▪ Provide regular capacity-building workshops at all levels of implementation (national, provincial, district and schools). This component is necessary and should be budgeted for. Training content should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Procurement for relevant officers and school staff.</li> <li>» Menu planning, rations and portion sizes, food storage, store management, food safety, nutrition education, for relevant staff for national, provincial and district staff.</li> <li>» Food preparation and food hygiene training for cooks and caterers at the school level.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Capacities in the agriculture sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Liaise with the agriculture sector to provide dedicated training and other extension services to improve smallholder farmers' production and processing capacities. This requires that the sector have adequate staff with regards to extension officer to farmer ratios.</li> <li>▪ Funding should be addressed as indicated under budgeting.</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with other agriculture support service providers. That is, NGOs should extend their services to farmers.</li> </ul>

Elements to Consider	Recommendations
<p>Capacities in the supply chain sector. The supply chains should be reliable and able to provide healthy, safe and nutritious food efficiently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with all components of the supply chain to establish existing capacities and skills and gaps in skills and resources.</li> <li>• Provide training and allocate funds to strengthen the sector accordingly. The School Feeding model is often adapted to the capacity of supply chains available, hence the need for supply chain assessments as suggested under section 3.4 on procurement (Design and Implementation). Strengthening local supply chains is important so that they can support the preferred model.</li> </ul>
<p>Capacities of community members to run the School Feeding programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide short exposure training sessions for PTA members and other community members involved in school committees on basic nutrition principles and available technologies, the school menu and its selection, and the general running of the School Feeding programme.</li> </ul>

## Design and Implementation

### Sound Design and Implementation

This policy goal/standard is critical as it guides the actual operation and day to day implementation of the programme. School Feeding programmes in Africa are very diverse in their design, structure and implementation arrangements. These programmes also operate in various contexts and under different constraints, as observed in the AU report on Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union (African Union, 2018). Therefore, each country needs to find the most appropriate School Feeding arrangements with available resources and strive to incrementally reach the desired standards for an effective and efficient school meal programme.

A School Feeding programme is planned in response to the country-specific problems, objectives, expected outcomes and impact. As such, the country’s context and needs should determine the programme’s beneficiaries, food basket (menus), food modalities and supply chain. In this regard, governments and their partners should work towards creating a good balance between international, national, and local food procurement to support local economies without jeopardising the quality and stability of the food supply.

The main elements to be included and clarified are: the objectives that the programme seeks to achieve; the target population for school meals; the food basket or menu and the extent to which local foods are included; the food procurement model to be used (including whether to centralise or decentralise procurement); and the extent to which procurement will be addressing smallholder farmers and how. The entire design and implementation process should be participatory, engaging various sectors and stakeholders in government, development partners, civil society and private sector groups, as well as the school children and communities that the programme seeks to benefit.

### Setting Objectives

The objectives of an HGSF programme depend on the needs of the population in the country. They are set to satisfy the identified needs of different population groups. Home-Grown School Feeding programmes combine programmatic activities around the actual feeding with potential education, health and nutrition, agriculture, social protection, and local economic development objectives. The process, therefore, inherently requires the involvement of different stakeholders. The objectives must be clearly defined and show the benefits that HGSF will have across these sectors for different target groups such as children, women, households/communities, smallholder farmers and traders while managing the trade-offs.

There is not a one-size-fits-all programme approach or model to School Feeding as each context is different. Therefore, each country must develop primary and secondary objectives, clearly articulate its programme theory behind linking the different target groups and identify the programme activities and impact pathways, including drawing process maps as a first step. This will be based on what is likely to work best for them. Having clearly defined objectives has the following advantages as outlined in the Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework (FAO and WFP, 2018):

- i. They help in getting cross-sector support by showing the benefits that the sector will derive from the HGSF programme;
- ii. They justify the requests for any amendments to existing policies, strategies and programmes;
- iii. They justify the allocation of adequate resources to the programme;
- iv. Identifying objectives guides the M&E process, requiring indicators to be developed to match the objectives. These indicators for monitoring ensure that credible information is collected and documented to illustrate the extent to which benefits are achieved.

### **The Target Population**

Universal feeding is ideal, but it is not possible in many countries due to limited resources. In most African countries, school meals are primarily for children in public primary schools in areas with a high prevalence of poverty and food insecurity and other vulnerable populations such as children with disabilities and orphans (African Union, 2018).

A transparent database with good targeting criteria should be implemented where targeting is necessary. It is necessary to identify the appropriate target groups to be reached with school meals. This can only be achieved after a situation analysis that assesses School Feeding needs and establishes the targeting criteria and methodology. The targeting criteria should be communicated to and agreed upon by School Feeding stakeholders to avoid conflict and tension, particularly in areas where school children who get meals and those who don't live in the same administrative area.

### **Food Basket**

Countries must run school meals programmes with defined, context-specific national school meals quality and nutritional standards and policies for their programmes (WFP, 2021). The menu should be designed to meet nutritional goals and use local foods as much as possible. Meal planning is an important step in developing a food basket, and the food basket informs the rest of the implementation steps, particularly with regard to food procurement.

This should not be a haphazard decision and requires meal planning considerations such as the nutritional targets for the school children, the availability of selected and alternative foods across the country, the feasibility of delivery, storage and ease of preparation (See the diagram in Annexure 1). On the whole, meal planning should be a consultative process led by the HGSF office but involving different stakeholders: education, health, agriculture and district or school level committees. Countries must use available meal planning tools such as the School Meal Planner Plus (SMP PLUS) software, which can support governments to create nutritious, affordable school meals. Sales Management Plus is simple to use and provides specific food quantity calculations for the desired nutrient values and, where data is available, can provide costed meal plans.

The composition of the food basket determines to what extent the School Feeding programme addresses nutrition while maintaining direct links with local agricultural production. It is indeed possible for school meals to drive a more diversified agricultural production.

### **Linking the HGSF Programme to Farmers and Food Procurement**

African countries should ensure that School Feeding programmes promote the connection to sustainable local food production, respecting national and





subnational contexts and providing adequate support to small farmers and businesses, where appropriate (School Meals Coalition, 2021). The first step in developing the link to local farmers is to design a culturally relevant menu that is acceptable to the children and includes food from the local environment. Promoting consumption of local foods is necessary and should be advocated for in various community structures, including farmer training sessions and in school level meetings with parents and community opinion leaders and at relevant high-level meetings at national and sub-national levels. Having local nutritious foods in the school food basket, including nutrient-enriched crops, creates the necessary demand to spur production by local smallholder farmers, thus addressing food insecurity while promoting rural socio-economic development.

Procurement is the next important step through which farmers are linked to the HGSF programme. Whichever food procurement approach is chosen, its primary objective must be the timely and stable supply of quality food for School Feeding. At the same time, the procurement approach should be designed to increase farmers' and producers' ability to access the market. Support to smallholder farmers to respond to the demand from the School Feeding market should be framed under the objective of safe and stable supply. Research is needed to explore the trade-offs of different pro-smallholder procurement models, analysing the data on the costs and impacts, including issues around market integration, scale, timeliness, prices, food types (including perishables), and seasonality.

Home-Grown School Feeding procurement is often subject to the same regulations as other public procurement processes governed by policies, laws and detailed rules that aim to ensure the efficient use of resources and transparency in procurement decisions. The question of decentralisation highlights the inherently conflicting interests between procurement processes objective to prioritise transparency, accountability and value for money, with the HGSF objective to prioritise procurement from smallholder farmers. Though not wholly conflicting priorities, these competing interests must be balanced to generate stakeholder buy-in and the intended financial and social return.

Because public procurement procedures are complex, they hinder smallholder farmers' ability to access the market for School Feeding programmes. Countries should, therefore, explore more flexible procurement procedures.

The pricing of food commodities is also sensitive and requires careful thought since it may result in smallholder farmers not being able to supply food to schools if the price is too low. Pricing is tied to contracting and competitive tendering procedures and regulations that bind procurement decisions to accept the lowest price. This works for large producers and suppliers who can benefit from economies of scale and offer lower prices, but not for small scale farmers and traders. There is a need to look at alternative criteria for awarding tenders and other interventions such as adopting reservation or preferential strategies that ensure that a percentage of the food contracts go to smallholder farmers at a fair price. Countries like Botswana have suggested having bargaining councils for producers who would look at market prices and ensure that the prices arrived at are fair for producers and that the government gets value for money. Countries are advised to refer to Module 3 of the Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework (FAO and WFP, 2018), which details procurement procedures and alternative contractual arrangements that may be considered in support of smallholder farmers. Table 4 provides the essential elements and recommendations for the key components of the Design and Implementation Standard.



Table 4: Elements on Design and Implementation

Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p><b>HGSF Programme objectives</b></p> <p>Programme objectives should be clear or specific enough to guide implementation. It is generally expected that School Feeding expresses objectives with outcomes and impacts across education and learning, health and nutrition, safety net, and agriculture and local economic development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and implement School Feeding programmes to achieve cross-sectoral policy objectives.</li> <li>• The HGSF strategic plan and guidelines should state objectives on education, health and nutrition, agriculture, and local economic development, clearly stating the goal of advancing local agricultural productivity and overall social and economic development through local purchase of foods to the extent possible. The intended beneficiaries should include school children and farmers, with a particular focus on women farmers and other secondary beneficiaries along the supply chain.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coverage and targeting</b></p> <p>The ideal is to have universal feeding, but given limited resources, expansion should be gradual to ensure adequate technical guidance and support. Targeting is therefore essential. This means reaching families and communities that lack resources to provide for their school-age children and encouraging them to take these children to school. It is a critical element of any effort to improve the impact of a school-feeding programme on education.</p> <p>There should be shared understanding and agreement among a multi-sectoral group of stakeholders on the criteria/indicators used and the methodology for targeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, geographic targeting is preferred. The aim is to target all children in school, particularly in government-registered public primary schools, including early childhood education programmes, in the regions and districts selected.</li> <li>• Ensure that criteria for selecting districts/regions are objective, transparent and widely communicated.</li> <li>• The selection or targeting criteria should be shared with stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p><b>Some targeting criteria and indicators to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Geographic targeting of districts/areas most affected by food insecurity and high poverty rates (some countries work with poverty or socio-economic ratings or profiles agreed upon at the national level).</li> <li>» Areas with high levels of malnutrition.</li> <li>» Disaster affected areas.</li> <li>» Areas with poor access to social services.</li> <li>» Household targeting to food-deficient households, female-headed, child-headed, low-income households etc. It is possible to rely on a community's subjective assessment of needy households, which may take several of these factors into account.</li> <li>» The above targeting criteria should also include educational indicators such as enrollment, dropout, and attendance to support select districts or regions with school meals.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out regular monitoring and surveys to assess the extent and reasons for not reaching targeted groups/schools, and propose remedial action. Often the most vulnerable are missed by School Feeding programmes.</li> </ul>

Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p><b>Nutrition, Food Supplies and Procurement</b></p> <p><b>1. Determining the food basket</b></p> <p>This discussion on the food basket is part of the menu planning process. The food basket should be nutritious, based on local foods as far as possible, and include a diverse number of foods/food ingredients, including nutrient-enriched crops, to ensure diet quality.</p> <p>The nutritional standards applied to the general population should apply to school meals.</p> <p>Where possible, a country should look at specifying the nutritional targets for school children to address the nutritional needs of the school population in a given context.</p> <p>Due to seasonal variations, it may be necessary to consider other options that will help to improve or maintain the nutrient value of the meal.</p>	<p>Diversification of the food basket and inclusion of local foods is necessary to reflect regional and seasonal variations and improve nutritional content. Strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote consumption of local foods in local community fora (this can be done through agriculture extension and nutrition education services).</li> <li>• Note: This activity may happen before or alongside the menu planning process below.</li> <li>• Develop school meals nutrition standards/nutrient targets specific for school children<sup>9</sup>. This is a prerequisite for menu planning. Even where this is impossible, the country is still expected to spell out the general proportion of nutrients that the school meal ration should supply. Refer to the FRESH document adapted by UNESCO, which explains how to determine optimal rations for school meals<sup>10</sup>. Generally, 30% of the daily recommended nutrient intake is used as a guide, assuming that the child receives the full complement of nutrients from the other two meals at home. However, each context demands careful examination of its nutritional needs and experiences and then responds accordingly.</li> <li>• Develop a comprehensive national school menu plan/guide which can be adapted at the sub-national level to reflect regional food variations. The menu should specify the quantities of each food per child and the nutrients to be achieved by the meal<sup>11</sup>.</li> <li>• Consider other options to include or boost micronutrient value when the meal is not diverse enough due to seasonal fluctuations through the use of fortified blends or fortified food products such as maize meal, biofortified staple crops or food supplements (iron, zinc) for vulnerable groups. Value addition and related appropriate technologies of local produce should be incorporated in strategies to increase income.</li> <li>• School menus should be openly displayed in the kitchen or other appropriate areas designated by the School Feeding management to ensure reinforcement.</li> <li>• Develop Handy Measures to be used by the caterers and cooks to translate the recommended quantities on the menu into portions for cooking and serving. This ensures that desired nutrients are achieved for the school child.</li> <li>• Capacity building on menu planning should be carried out at all levels.</li> <li>• Menu planning should be a consultative process engaging various stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Establishing farmer linkages and sources of food.</b></p> <p><b>a. Linking farmers to HGSF markets</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HGSF programme, particularly at the sub-national or district level, should communicate its food requirements (specific food and quantities) to the Ministry of Agriculture and to farmers.</li> <li>• Regular communication and meetings should be maintained between the HGSF implementing sector, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the private sector to ensure that MOA and other agriculture service providers engage with farmers and prepare them to supply food to the HGSF market.</li> <li>• Develop a database of farmers or farmer organisations that are eligible to supply food to schools so that the schools know where to go for specific products. Schools or purchasing entities may be able to create contracts with the farmers.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> Nigeria is one country that has devised its own nutrient targets for the National Home grown School Feeding Programme and can share experiences and lessons.

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO, 2004. Guidelines to develop and implement School Feeding programmes that improve education. FRESH Tools for Effective School Health. <http://www.unesco.org/education/fresh>

<sup>11</sup> Meal planning tools such as the SMP PLUS software can be used to support governments with the creation of nutritious, affordable school meals. SMP PLUS is the first digital school menu creation platform and is particularly useful for HGSF programmes: It allows meal optimization through Innovation Accelerator (IA), creating more affordable, nutritious, local and culturally acceptable meals; as well as menu management and sharing, and integration of communities into the meal creation process. The tool is available online and can be used by governments worldwide. Fifteen countries are at different stages of adoption and 19 more on the pipeline.



Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where possible, secure the services of NGOs and the private sector engaged in agriculture extension. They then work collaboratively with the Ministries of Agriculture to support farmers to meet the HGSF demand for food.</li> <li>Include programmes on value addition/food processing and related capacity building programmes to ensure that smallholder farmers and other members of the community benefit in different ways from the school food market.</li> </ul>
<p><b>b. Source of Food and production potential.</b></p> <p>Food should be procured as locally as possible before sourcing from other regions or from outside the country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritise the purchasing of locally grown food for school meals before reverting to other options.</li> <li>Consider including fresh food such as fruits and vegetables on the menu. These are also easier to provide from the local environment.</li> <li>However, to make up for lean periods when food is unavailable due to seasonal variations, countries need to explore other value addition opportunities that ensure all-year supply, such as food processing (drying or bottling food) or using cold rooms for storage where feasible.</li> <li>Assess production potential of each district selected for School Feeding (see points raised under 4 below: Procurement and Logistics). Food-insecure districts would require a different approach/model for sourcing food (see points 3, 4 and 5).</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Food Procurement Capacity</b></p> <p>Generally, in most countries, procurement is left to the government procurement entities, some of whom have not had to deal with food procurement and therefore, capacity building is necessary.</p> <p>The standard procurement procedures are often rigid and not as compatible with the characteristics and capabilities of smallholder farmers or small-scale suppliers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where possible, arrange for dedicated staff to procure food for schools at the national, district or school level.</li> <li>Capacity building on procurement should be provided at all levels.</li> <li>Explore flexible tendering systems to accommodate smallholder farmers. For example, it is possible to have an open tender system but request a mandate contract that ensures that purchasing a certain proportion of food from smallholder farmers is mandatory.</li> <li>Ensure smallholder farmers are organised and assisted in responding to food tenders as suppliers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Food Procurement and Logistics</b></p> <p><b>a. Supply chain analysis.</b></p> <p>Efficient supply chain management is necessary. Understanding the food value chain/systems environment is vital for avoiding pipeline breaks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate and carry out a supply chain analysis of key commodities in the food basket, and establish the seasonal availability of supplies and availability by agro-ecological zones. This will demonstrate the production potential of each food commodity and, in particular, the potential to meet school food demand and the availability of supplies throughout the year.</li> </ul>
<p><b>b. Food Storage.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess food storage requirements and take stock of existing facilities and their distribution. This is important to determine if there are facilities to hold supplies of food commodities such as cereals after harvest and throughout the lean months, pending distribution to schools.</li> </ul>

Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p><b>c. Procurement.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Government should assess the options and choose between opting for a fully decentralised procurement model or a combination of centralised and decentralised procurement based on the supply chain assessment of different food commodities in the food basket. Decentralisation allows for closer linkages with smallholder farmers. See Annexure 2 for further discussion and illustration of the various models.</li> <li>▪ Where possible, procure food from aggregators (these could be traders) and cooperatives to ensure quality control. Aggregating food helps meet the school food demand that individual smallholder farmers would be unable to do.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Procurement model</b> This is either centralised or decentralised or a combination of the two models with different variations, depending on context. (insourced or outsourced).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The decision on the model to adopt should be carefully thought out, looking at the trade-offs in each case while at the same time looking at ways to benefit smallholder farmer suppliers. In this case, it is necessary to have mechanisms to track the source of food to ensure that smallholder farmers are benefiting.</li> <li>▪ It is possible to use different models for different food commodities to balance issues of transparency, accountability and smallholder farmer interests.</li> <li>▪ A suggestion has been made that countries explore the possibility of developing centralised points in convenient locations across the country where food is procured from local farmers, checked for quality, cleaned, processed, prepared and distributed to schools. As discussed below, this model overcomes the challenge of intense infrastructure requirements and saves on the demand for fuel. The centres may also carry out all other processes except food preparation as raw food distribution is still cheaper and safer than cooked food. In either case, the demand for transportation and related costs for food distribution is greater, and the trade-offs should be assessed against the benefits.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Food Safety and Quality</b> It is vital to emphasise the importance of food safety and delivering wholesome food.</p>	<p>It is important to determine what systems will be implemented to ensure quality and food safety are maintained as food is procured and delivered to schools. Handling and Safety of food supplied and consumed in schools should be given priority to minimise risks, especially those posed by aflatoxin contamination, for example, which can undermine child health and cognitive development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that agriculture establishes a system to check cereal products for aflatoxins and other contaminants. Similarly, fresh foods including meat, poultry and fish products should be inspected by the relevant authority in the Health sector before or at the point of delivery to the schools.</li> <li>▪ Develop guidelines on food safety standards and food handling along the supply chain. The Guidelines will also help with monitoring food supplies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Procurement Guidelines.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop simple food procurement guidelines. The guide on procurement should indicate what commodities are centralised, at what level (national, provincial, district), and which ones can be decentralised to schools. This decision would be followed by the respective guidance on allocating funds.</li> <li>▪ Where links to smallholder farmers is an objective, the guide should indicate that purchases from smallholder farmers are prioritised for certain food commodities.</li> <li>▪ Add guiding principles on value addition across the entire supply chain so that suppliers get better value for their products.</li> </ul>

Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p><b>8. Food preparation.</b></p> <p><b>a. Timely delivery of food</b> requires an adequate number of cooks and fuel-efficient stoves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing guidelines on the number of cooks required for a given number of learners for on-site feeding is necessary.</li> <li>The number of cooks depends on enrolment. It is important to establish/determine (through consultative processes and benchmarking) the preferred ratio of cooks to learners and include this in the implementation manual. For example, the Botswana School Feeding programme gives guidance of one cook per 125 learners. In comparison, the National School Nutrition Programme in South Africa provides a general guide of one cook per 200 learners but based on this guide, individual Provinces use a sliding scale to accommodate small and big schools.</li> <li>In countries where food preparation is done by caterers operating from home, it is important to establish a guide for the basic equipment to be used for cooking and transporting food to schools while observing all food hygiene and food safety protocols.</li> </ul>
<p>The <b>availability of fuel</b> influences food or menu selection and cooking times. In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, firewood is the primary fuel used for cooking school meals. This has been raised as an issue of concern, given the impact of wood fuel on deforestation and climate change due to gas emissions. Fuel conservation and the use of alternative fuels should be a priority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage/promote the use of fuel-efficient stoves and other fuels like gas to protect forests.</li> <li>Promote forest farms at schools (reforestation) as a mitigation measure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>b. Food and Personal Hygiene in food preparation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe and maintain food and personal hygiene standards throughout the value chain.</li> <li>Develop a food and personal hygiene guide mounted in kitchens for reinforcement (it should form part of a monitoring checklist).</li> <li>Cooks should do regular medical checks at least twice a year.</li> <li>Personal hygiene should include ensuring that cooks have clean uniforms during food preparation and serving of meals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>c. Training of cooks.</b></p> <p>Training cooks is essential for better efficiencies, food safety and conservation of nutrients.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity building for cooks and caterers is necessary to ensure that timely and efficient food preparation methods are used, and food safety and nutritional quality of meals are maintained.</li> <li>Ensure all cooks are trained, including those used on a rotational basis.</li> <li>The cooks should be trained on the importance of preparing and serving food on time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>d. Feeding time.</b></p> <p>The guidance on preferred feeding time to achieve the desired result is context-based. Serving meals promptly is vital if the food is to serve the purpose of ensuring attention in class and enhancing learning. This will also depend on whether the Government programme offers one or two meals per day and whether the school day is half-day or full-day. Most Governments are currently only able to afford one meal per school day.</p> <p>Feeding time should be planned to not interfere with teaching and learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where one meal is provided within a half-day school structure, it should be served early in the morning or mid-morning. No meal should be served when the children are ready to go home as it defeats the purpose of enhancing attention and promoting learning.</li> <li>Explore efficient means of food preparation and food processing of agricultural produce to come up with easily prepared meal options. This requires engagement with the private sector and the community.</li> <li>Make provision for some easily prepared nutritious foods on the menu. For example, on the Botswana menu, one day a week, local bread (which can be made with fortified or biofortified flour) is offered with peanut butter, jam and milk). This helps when there are challenges with regular food preparation resources (fuel and staff shortages etc.) and reduces the risk of delays which result in feeding time interfering with teaching/learning time.</li> </ul>



Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p><b>e. Infrastructure for School Feeding at the school level.</b></p> <p>This includes kitchens or cooking shelters, food storage and water and sanitation facilities. The level or quality of facilities do determine to a large extent the foods and food preparation methods selected for school meals, particularly for in-sourced models of delivery.</p> <p>However, there are fewer requirements for school infrastructure in countries that use outsourced delivery models. Still, there is a higher burden on individual caterers who should have the required catering equipment. The latter model challenges monitoring separate caterers' food safety and food preparation conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools should have basic infrastructure for HGSP programmes to function. There could be a system for ensuring compliance before a school can be certified to start School Feeding. Facilities required are kitchens or covered cooking shelters, food storage facilities, feeding shelters or classrooms as a short-term alternative, potable water and WASH facilities.</li> <li>• In addition, serving utensils should preferably be provided by the school as far as possible. First, this makes it is easier to observe and maintain a standard serving measure and, secondly, it helps maintain cleanliness.</li> <li>• For outsourced models, schools are required to provide dining facilities.</li> <li>• It may be necessary to secure government and private sector support for a once-off HGSP infrastructure budget separate from the regular School Feeding budget.</li> <li>• The development of food storage facilities is especially critical for reducing transaction and transportation costs.</li> <li>• Use a PPP approach to support infrastructure development.</li> </ul>



### Complimentary School Health and Nutrition Interventions

This refers to the integrated package of school-based health and nutrition interventions. School Feeding is a significant component of that package, usually consuming the largest share of the school health and nutrition budget. A wide range of activities are covered under school health and nutrition interventions, including water, sanitation and hygiene, deworming, nutrition education, micronutrient supplementation, school gardens, height and weight measurements, eye testing and eyeglasses, dental hygiene and menstrual hygiene. Schools easily deliver these activities to improve education and health outcomes by enhancing nutrition, alleviating hunger, and preventing disease. Countries identify their own package based on need and available resources. A 2020 AU report showed that 64% of governments combine School Feeding with a package of more than four additional health and nutrition interventions (African Union, 2021).

Healthy children in healthy environments learn more effectively. The complementary school health and nutrition (SHN) interventions are intended to promote the school as a healthy environment and enhance the effectiveness of the School Feeding programme. In *Reimagining School Feeding*, Bundy, et al. (2018) acknowledge that the school is a convenient platform to offer services to school-age children. It takes advantage of existing infrastructure in schools (teachers and proxy health workers) to provide services that would otherwise be directed at the health system.

The water and sanitation component is a critical requirement in school health and has received significant attention in the past. Diseases related to inadequate water (quantity and quality), sanitation and hygiene lead to a massive burden of disease (as much as 88% of diarrhoeal disease according to WHO (2004)), and this contributes to school absenteeism. Helminthic infections also affect hundreds of millions of school-age children. They can impair children's physical development and reduce their cognitive development due to pain and discomfort, competition for nutrients (such as Vitamin A and Zinc), anaemia, and damage to tissues and organs (WHO, 2009). Inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions affect boys and girls differently and contribute to unequal learning opportunities. For girls and female teachers, lack of sanitary facilities could mean that they cannot attend school during menstruation.

The interventions in response to poor water and sanitation and the burden of helminths are to provide adequate water and hygiene facilities in schools, including good toilets (covered under WASH programmes), hygiene education and deworming. Other interventions that should be considered for inclusion are nutrition education, nutrient supplementation, and school gardens.

The critical role of nutrition education should not be overlooked either, given the growing burden of non-communicable diseases in low, middle and high-income countries. Introducing healthy eating early in a child's life teaches positive behaviour which lasts into adulthood. Nutrition education should be provided in the curriculum and reinforced as part of the school meals and school gardens programmes.

To avoid conflict, nutrition messages and consumer education to both school children and parents should be well synchronised and reinforced in the school environment. For instance, food vendors who trade within or immediately outside the school form a critical part of the school food environment. Ensure that such vendors are regulated and provide food or snacks in line with the agreed nutrition guidelines and nutrition messages given in and outside the curriculum.



**Table 5: Elements on Complimentary interventions**

<p><b>Complimentary school health activities</b></p> <p>The more common activities include deworming, WASH, nutrition education, health and hygiene education, and school gardens, and should be delivered in conjunction with School Feeding. They are all simple and cost-effective interventions that help to improve nutrition and health outcomes.</p> <p>The following interventions are equally helpful. They address frequently observed health problems or deficiencies in school children that exclude children from learning or limit access to education. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eye testing and eyeglasses to deal with poor eyesight;</li> <li>▪ Dental hygiene to address dental cavities;</li> <li>▪ Anthropometric assessments, such as height and weight measurements, to assess nutritional status;</li> <li>▪ Menstrual hygiene to support girls who lack sanitary facilities during menstruation. The lack of sanitary facilities means that menstruation leads to lost school days for girls.</li> </ul>	<p>It is vital to strengthen internal programme coordination to reflect coordinated planning and implementation of school health activities. For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide nutrition education as part of the School Feeding programme.</li> <li>▪ Provide nutrition education as part of the curriculum. This should be mandated at the highest level to ensure that it is implemented. It may be infused in other science subjects or offered separately. Nutrition education is essential for the long term sustainability of behavioural change toward healthy eating habits.</li> <li>▪ School gardens. These should be used in conjunction with school meals for delivering practical nutrition education messages. They also encourage interest in agriculture. The food from school gardens should preferably be nutrient-dense (in particular with micronutrients) and may be used to complement the fresh food requirements of the School Feeding programme.</li> <li>▪ Deworming. This is important where the prevalence of intestinal helminths exceeds 50%<sup>12</sup> to ensure that nutrients from school meals are absorbed.</li> <li>▪ Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. Schools should provide adequate access to clean water for drinking and washing hands and proper sanitation through the following:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Provide sufficient hand washing points for the relevant number of children;</li> <li>» Ensure clean water for drinking;</li> <li>» Provide an adequate number of toilets or Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines for the relevant number of children, with separate toilets for boys and girls. (Refer to the WHO guide for acceptable ratios; younger children may require age-appropriate toilet facilities).</li> <li>» Basic hygiene guidelines should be followed concerning washing hands.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Develop and coordinate services on eye tests, eyeglasses and dental hygiene, to support children who would otherwise not have access to these services. These services are usually difficult and expensive for individual families in under-resourced settings but become affordable and accessible when provided through the school.</li> <li>▪ Menstrual hygiene is often offered as part of the WASH programme, but it is important to highlight it for recognition and action. The lack of menstrual facilities such as sanitary pads and clean toilets results in girls staying home during menstruation and losing valuable school days, resulting in poor performance and dropout. Advocacy and resource mobilisation through the private sector is one way to meet the additional finances required to run this programme.</li> </ul>
--	---

### Community Participation in School Meal Programmes

This section originates from the presentation on the design of school feeding programmes that is available at [http://www.iaaf.org/bitstream/10665/44671/1/9789241548267\\_eng.pdf](http://www.iaaf.org/bitstream/10665/44671/1/9789241548267_eng.pdf)



ownership, participation (through contributions from the local community), and accountability are stronger and more likely to transition to national ownership successfully. The communities are expected to make various contributions to the programme either in cash or in-kind and participate in decision-making during the design and implementation processes of the programme.

Findings from the AU report (2018) show that communities are involved in implementing nearly all School Feeding programmes in Africa, primarily in meal preparation and serving, giving in-kind or monetary contributions and procurement. In many countries, the community provides the cooks to prepare the food, which may be a paid or voluntary position depending on the availability of resources. The community may also offer other inputs such as infrastructure or small/low-cost food items such as condiments through PTAs. They may also produce and supply the vegetables.

Regarding decision-making, the parents or community may get involved by appointing representatives to the school management committee. In general, where the communities are fully engaged in the School Feeding process, they have the potential to hold the headteachers and teachers responsible for school meals accountable for food quality, the management of food funds and transparency in procurement processes. It also stimulates greater understanding and ownership by the community. For example, at the local/school level, the community can ensure that they witness and countersign food items received and used. Similarly, they can monitor the serving of food to learners. Sharing and discussing information on the different foods included in the food basket and what can be grown in the local area can give local farmers better chances of selling food to the programme.

To standardise the participation of communities in a given country, the government should define the expected roles of the community in School Feeding (these will differ from country to country) and provide guidelines on participation within the HGFSF guidelines. The guidelines should specify the nature of support required from the communities or community representatives, with minimum standards to be met for them to function efficiently.

**Table 6: Elements on Community Participation**

Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p>Community members have strong community participation and a sense of ownership in the HGFSF programme.</p> <p>Strengthen relationships between the school and the community. This requires good leadership in both the school and the community.</p>	<p>Conduct community mobilisation, advocacy and sensitisation in all school communities on the importance and benefits of HGFSF.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve local leadership such as chiefs and area members of parliament in sensitisation meetings.</li> <li>• Appoint representatives in school management committees.</li> <li>• Undertake capacity development on school leadership and community relations for PTA members.</li> <li>• Re-orientate PTA members on roles and expectations of the HGFSF programme management.</li> <li>• Sensitise the community/parents on the quality and quantity of food expected.</li> </ul>
<p>Sharing information on HGFSF issues with community members such as the selection of cooks, the numbers required and whether their work is remunerated or voluntary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• representation of all community segments in the school catchment area.</li> <li>• Standardise the number of cooks per school (guidelines to be provided in the HGFSF implementation manual), and inform the community.</li> <li>• Ensure there is an understanding among parents and community members on the menu and its acceptability within the cultural context.</li> </ul>

Elements for Consideration	Recommendations
<p>Sharing/providing nutrition information on the foods included in the food basket, menu selection and quality control, and food production requirements of the programme (covered under Design and Implementation above). This develops a sense of ownership among community members and increases the probability of local farmers supplying food to the programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve the community in selecting cooks and ensure adequate Provide information on the nutritional quality of school meals and options, such as the production of nutrient-enriched biofortified staples.</li> <li>• Engage the community in decisions on the food basket, such as selecting menu items and making choices from several alternatives considering nutritional quality, acceptance, quantities required, and what can be grown/supplied from the local area.</li> <li>• Communities/parents should monitor the School Feeding programme, such as random checks of food prepared for children for quantity and quality control.</li> </ul>

### Monitoring and Evaluation

#### The Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating programmes is not unique to School Feeding programmes and is critical in planning and implementing programmes. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in SF/HGSF programmes helps to assess the benefits across the various objectives (education, health, nutrition, agriculture and social protection) and is critical to increasing their impact. Monitoring makes it possible to detect programme challenges and address them in time. However, the M&E of School Feeding is often weak in many countries. The African Union report (2018) identified low application of M&E for School Feeding programmes in Africa, with limited usage of automated feedback systems to contribute to policymaking. Governments should therefore align with the Data and Monitoring initiative of the School Meals Coalition<sup>13</sup> to ensure that there is essential, up to date, and reliable data to understand and optimise programmes and particularly to monitor and track progress over time. It is important to have School Feeding data or indicators captured and reported at the highest level through national structures such as the EMIS system in the education sector. To ensure that regular and timely monitoring, reporting and periodic evaluations occur, it is important to ensure that HGSF programmes secure adequate resources to run the programme and make funds available specifically for M&E.

<sup>13</sup> The Data and Monitoring Initiative aims to establish a single trusted and official UN database on school meals that systematically collects, stores, curates and makes accessible, timely national data on school meals, and school health and nutrition programmes. The Initiative will be composed of members from AU, AUDA-NEPAD, and UN agencies in consultation with Member States at the AU and School Meals Coalition level.



Table 7: Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting of School Feeding Programmes

Elements to consider	Recommendations
<p><b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b> Monitoring and evaluation should form a significant step or component of the design of SF/HGSF programmes.</p> <p><b>M&amp;E Gaps</b> Several gaps have been observed in School Feeding implementation and are aligned with the gaps identified by the Data and Monitoring Initiative of the School Meals Coalition. M&amp;E gaps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of globally agreed indicators and definitions.</li> <li>▪ Lack of systematic data collection methods (insufficient data capturing, data submission delays to relevant reporting lines).</li> <li>▪ Lack of single, official, trusted global database.</li> <li>▪ Lack of resources (monitoring finances, staff, equipment, and transport) to facilitate M&amp;E processes across the various levels from school to national level.</li> </ul> <p><b>Analysis and reporting</b> of data or information collected are as crucial as the data capturing process because it informs policy direction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework covering all the components of the quality standards for School Feeding outlined above. The indicators should be identified early on and tracked throughout programme implementation. The indicators should be aligned to the programme objectives. In many situations, it is becoming necessary to revisit the programme objectives, particularly as countries move toward Home-Grown School Feeding models, and subsequently develop expected programme outcomes, indicators and outputs.</li> <li>▪ In identifying indicators, ensure that some of these form part of the core set of indicators (to include nutrition for school-age children) collected by governments for comparability of data. Indicators should have clear methodologies for calculation and reporting.</li> <li>▪ Establish an agreed set of reporting processes that the government will use to capture and report high-quality data.</li> <li>▪ Collect baseline data at the inception of programmes to measure progress on the various indicators across sectoral objectives (education, health, nutrition, and agriculture, animal production and fisheries).</li> <li>▪ Develop monitoring systems that focus on programme processes (as part of the M&amp;E framework). In other words, how well a programme is functioning.</li> <li>▪ Strengthen M&amp;E systems through the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Encourage the development of globally agreed indicators and definitions.</li> <li>» Develop appropriate monitoring tools or revise existing ones (data collection, reporting tools, monitoring checklists) based on these agreed objectives and indicators.</li> <li>» Develop electronic tools for smooth and timely transmission of data.</li> <li>» Include M&amp;E staff as part of staff requirements.</li> <li>» Capacity building on M&amp;E to be undertaken for national, sub-national (provincial/district) and school staff (to include school-level data capturing, reporting on food flows, financial flows, and on use of IT equipment.</li> <li>» Use technology, including mobile technology, to improve M&amp;E.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Establish a robust dissemination and communication strategy to allow practitioners to utilise/apply the information fully. Information that flows from schools through districts or other subnational levels to the National level should flow back after analysis. Each section of the chain (e.g. from district administration to the school) should be able to provide feedback that informs policy and future improvements or changes to the programme.</li> <li>▪ Monitoring data should be derived from other key sectors linked to HGSF implementation: agriculture, health, nutrition and social protection, particularly on outcomes and impacts of the programme. The evidence is important to support advocacy and resource mobilisation.</li> </ul>

### Main Aspects to Consider in Developing a Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation System

The following questions and processes outlined in the Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework (FAO and WFP, 2018) need to be decided for individual programmes as they identify what indicators to use (Questions such as, What information is required and why?" Are we looking for the right things? What purpose will they serve? Will the chosen indicators demonstrate achievement of intended results? These questions are best guided by the objectives of the programme. Decide which information is necessary to capture. Each objective may have one or more outcomes, and outcomes will have corresponding indicators and outputs.

- i. *What will the source of information desired be, and with what tools will it be collected?* This refers to the data collection tools and methods for getting information.
- ii. *Information flow from the starting point to quality checks, aggregation, analysis, storage, and reporting.* Data collection may be manual and paper-based, but countries need to move toward electronic and online systems to minimise errors and for timeliness and ease of reporting.
- iii. *What capacities are there to implement monitoring and reporting systems?* Is there infrastructure, skills and competencies to ensure that the M&E design is implemented? If capacities are not adequate, they should be strengthened.
- iv. *What information will be desired for programme management, and by whom?* Identify the demand for different pieces of information and by whom? Which information will be shared and with whom? This entails knowing the audience, the presenters and options for presentation formats and use of information.

### HGSF Specific Indicators and Outcomes

Table 8 only outlines examples of HGSF specific outcomes and indicators. Those related to education (such as enrolment, attendance, promotion, dropout and completion rates); nutrition and health (dietary diversity score of school meals, anthropometric measurements ( i.e height, weight, body mass index), experience with hunger, incidences of illness or other medical evaluations, WASH related indicators; and other programme components are necessary and should form part of the overall monitoring and evaluation of HGSF programmes.

**Table 8: Examples of HGSF Monitoring Indicators**

Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Outputs	Output Indicators
The degree to which smallholder farmers participate in HGSF programmes.	Volume and value of food purchased from smallholder farmers for the HGSF programme by commodity.	School Feeding programmes include food from smallholder farmers in their menus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of schools that include food from smallholder farmers in their menu.</li> <li>• Quantity and share of food from smallholder farmers provided through school meals.</li> <li>• Number of boys and girls who consume food from smallholder farmers.</li> <li>• Number of schools and number of boys and girls covered by the HGSF programme.</li> <li>• Quantity of food provided through school meals.</li> </ul>
	Number of smallholder farmers (by sex) who sold food to the HGSF programme		
	Volumes and value of sales from smallholder farmers to targeted aggregators.		
Effects of participation in HGSF on smallholder farmers' production and productivity.	Number of smallholder farmers that have increased agricultural outputs, by commodity.	Schools include food from smallholder farmers in their menus.	
	Number of farmers who diversified their agricultural production.		
	Number of farmers who have increased their production (yield/HA) by commodity.		
	Number of farmers who obtained access to credit to improve production and productivity.		



Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Outputs	Output Indicators
Effects of HGSF participation on smallholder farmers' vulnerability.	Diversity of crops and animal products produced.	Smallholder farmers, including women and other role players in the food value chain, are supported to produce quality food in surplus to supply to School Feeding programmes.	Number of smallholder farmers who have received support in increasing and diversifying production
	Dietary diversity score for farmers and households.		Income received as a result of participation in supplying food to schools
	Coping strategy index for smallholder farmers		Number of value addition activities started by women and other community members in response to the school food demand.
	Share of expenditure on food by smallholder farmer households.		Number and value of inputs provided to smallholder farmers by type.
Effects of higher acceptance of HGSF.	Absenteeism of boys and girls after the introduction of HGSF.	School-aged children receive school meals.  Investments are made to avoid sources of disease and infection.	Number of girls and boys in different age groups who received school meals.
	Dietary diversity score of children receiving school meals.		Amounts of food provided by the food group.
	Absenteeism of boys and girls because of sickness.		Facilities built or improved upon.
Effects of greater dietary diversity and quality of school meals.		Schools with HGSF programmes provide adequate diverse and fresh foods.	Number of schools and children with access to improved drinking water sources.
			Number and percentage of schools covered by an HGSF programme that provide meals that meet nutrition criteria.

Source: FAO and WFP, 2018. *Home Grown School Feeding Resource framework. Technical Document. Rome*

## School Meals in the context of Emergencies and the COVID-19 Crisis

### Context

School Feeding in stable settings is more established and much easier to deliver more consistently. It is, however, much more challenging for governments to initiate School Feeding in emergency contexts. Emergencies may be orchestrated by political unrest, conflicts, wars, disease outbreaks and insecurity, or natural disasters such as floods, drought and famine. In addition, there have also been silent emergencies such as those brought about by diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which has affected vulnerable households over time and resulted in many orphaned children following the death of one or both parents.

The recent crisis brought about by the onset of COVID-19 in early 2020 is an emergency that has renewed the need to plan for School Feeding in both stable and emergency situations. Emergencies result in food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. Access to education and regular School Feeding may be destabilised, disorganised or even destroyed in conditions of insecurity, violence, recurrent or protracted crisis and poverty.

In an emergency event, it is vital to assess the extent of destruction and impacts on the population and livelihoods due to the emergency context while paying attention to political and social dynamics that could affect the (re-)initiation of School Feeding. Assess the current condition of the education system, the enrolment, gender or ethnic disparities, and the level of hunger or malnutrition among school children. It is important to note the damage to existing school facilities (learning facilities, food preparation facilities, hand washing facilities, potable water, etc.) and determine what is necessary for initiating school meals. It is also necessary to decide on the feeding modalities and the relevant delivery model. The choice of modality should broadly be based on the target population to be reached, the specific emergency context and its impacts, the available infrastructure,

and the ease of preparing food. It may be necessary to have a combination of on-site feeding and take-home rations for the more vulnerable children and snacks or easily prepared foods where facilities are limited. Other approaches, such as cash transfers, where it has not been used prior to an emergency, can facilitate the purchase of food from local markets. Fortified foods (to address nutrient gaps) may also be used where fresh foods are not available.

The HGSF model can be used in emergency contexts, particularly in climate-related disasters and chronic food insecurity, to build resilience among vulnerable households and affected communities. An integrated resilience approach, such as WFP's Sahel resilience scale-up strategy<sup>14</sup> that is implemented in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, combines School Feeding and nutrition interventions with the development of productive assets and capacity-strengthening activities for livelihood support, and in some cases (such as Mali) fosters market linkages by sourcing food from local retailers and producers/smallholder farmers to improve their livelihoods.

Funds should be raised to create a fund that can pay for school meals during emergencies. This may be configured within the School Feeding management unit budgets or be part of the national disaster and emergency response units.

### The Covid-19 crisis and impacts

Globally it is estimated that at the height of the COVID-19 crisis, 370 million children in 199 countries went without school meals due to school closures (WFP, 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 50 million children in 42 countries were sent home for an extended period without education, school meals and other school-based health interventions (African Union, 2021). Therefore, the disease has had negative impacts on education and the health and nutrition of school children. For many vulnerable children in the continent, the school meal is the only decent meal they have in the day. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a household loss of income, compromising food availability and quality of diets.

The adverse effects of school closures on education can be lifelong, particularly in low resource settings where homeschooling is not an option. Some girls may not be able to re-enter school where practices such as early marriages prevail. They are also at risk of early pregnancies and gender-based violence. At the same time, household diets have been compromised due to loss of income, lack of some foods and changing dietary practices due to lock-downs and other containment measures (UNICEF and WFP, 2020). Programmes such as deworming, oral health and nutrition checks provided through the school were also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. While immediate solutions to learning, such as online learning, were a possible option for some children, implementing School Feeding during the pandemic has been a challenge, particularly in Africa, where most School Feeding programmes primarily serve in-school meals (African Union, 2018). This highlights the urgent need to design school-based programmes that better protect the health and nutrition of children and adapt to changing situations.

With schools opening during the pandemic, the priority is to provide a safe school environment and ensure that the number of children returning to school reaches pre-COVID-19 levels. School meals are essential for getting children into school and keeping them there. The entire school food environment – including water and sanitation facilities, nutrition education and nutrition services, school meals and the modality of provision – should be re-examined and strengthened to ensure COVID-19 safety protocols are observed and health and nutrition are protected in schools in these COVID-19 times. However, as with other emergencies, it is

<sup>14</sup> WFP 2019. *Integrated Resilience in the Sahel*. WFP, RBD.



necessary to do a situation analysis to determine the extent of damage occasioned by the emergency. This will illustrate the extent to which school attendance has been affected and the impact it has had on School Feeding delivery. To ensure that meals target the most vulnerable children, it is important to create a database of vulnerable households with school children who can benefit from School Feeding programmes, particularly from take-home rations. The assessment will also inform other possible feeding modalities for different settings. Some examples are on-site prepared meals (very common with existing programmes), pre-prepared or off-site-prepared meals, take-home rations (to cater for children at home), snacks, and food coupons.

Countries are advised to refer to the recent UNICEF and WFP document on school re-opening and school-based nutrition in the context of COVID-19 for further information and guidance. It is also recommended that countries develop their own School Feeding COVID-19 protocols covering the different levels of School Feeding programme implementation. The Ghana School Feeding Programme COVID-19 protocol is an example of a context-specific guide.

## Scaling up Home Grown School Feeding: Key Take Aways

1. Governments have made efforts to scale up School Feeding programmes, but there are disparities in coverage between regions and income groups. The HGSF model is likely to play a dominant role in developing sustainable School Feeding programmes in Africa. These continental HGSF Guidelines provide a set of rubrics to work with and are paving the way for countries to scale up HGSF.
2. School Feeding programmes that stimulate local demand for food effectively stimulate the local economy. They simultaneously create a social safety net and promote education, health and nutrition. As programmes expand and become nationally-owned and part of the national policy framework, the size and stability of food demand will also increase.
3. To plan for evidence-based programmes, assessing the needs/opportunities for the HGSF programme is the first step, especially where the programme has not yet been set up. It is also an important step in the formulation of evidence-based policy and legal frameworks and the design of the programme (refer to Annexure 2).
4. School Feeding/HGSF programmes are anchored on five policy goals or standards which have been covered in these Guidelines:

### Policy Goal ONE

**Policy frameworks:** A good policy environment is conducive for HGSF to function. It enables efficient implementation and leads to quality national School Feeding programmes. A policy or strategy is crucial for ensuring budgetary commitments. AUDA-NEPAD, the AU and their development partners are committed to working with African countries to develop a policy framework to encourage investments in School Feeding.

### Policy Goal TWO

**Financial capacity:** Stable funding is necessary for the sustainability of HGSF/SF programmes. Currently, programmes focus on delivering food, albeit limited in nutrient quality and diversity, and, according to the WFP (2020) global report, there is little or no funding for capacity strengthening. Public, private and government partnerships are crucial to help fund and scale up HGSF programming. Resources are needed now more than ever to rebuild School Feeding coverage to pre-COVID-19 levels.





Policy Goal  
**THREE**

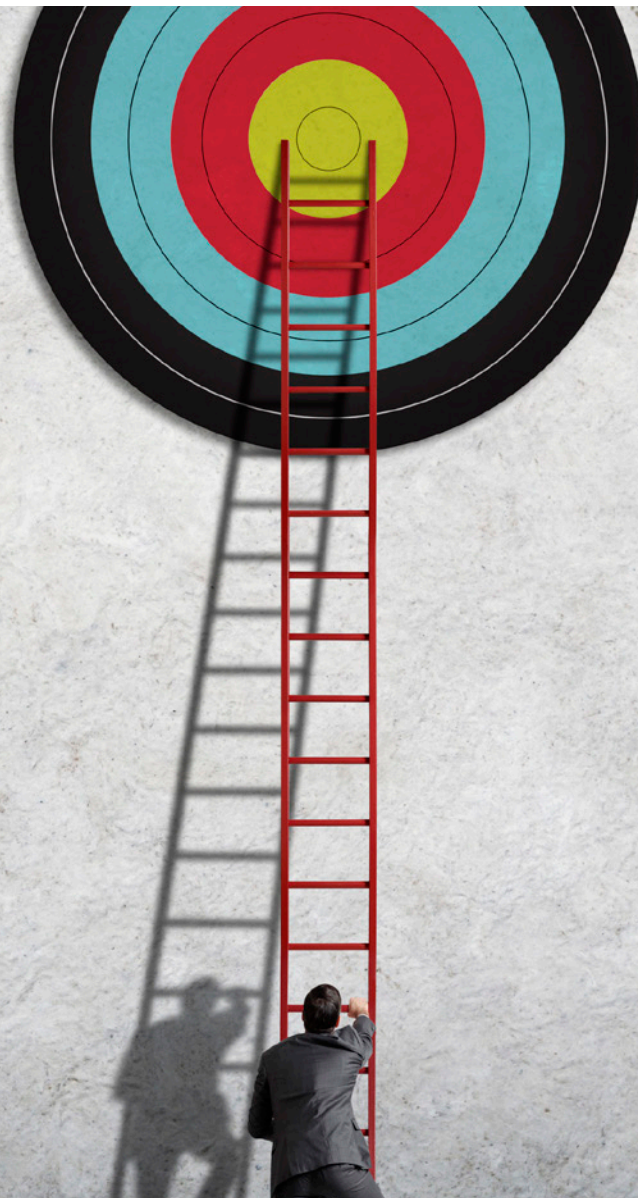
**Institutional capacity:** HGSF programmes require different actors from different sectors to pool their knowledge and expertise for planning and implementation. For this to work, however, an effective national coordination mechanism is essential. This is usually a coordinating committee expressly set up to oversee the School Feeding programme. The HGSF/SF programme management should be located in a highly-placed institutional governance structure to command respect and recognition. This will ensure support for coordination and budgetary allocations.

Policy Goal  
**FOUR**

**Design and Implementation:** A sound design and implementation arrangement are critical for the success of the School Feeding programme and provide the operational guidance it requires. All the different components are well thought out and assembled into one cohesive programme to avoid haphazard implementation. The key elements have been outlined in the Guidelines. A critical first step is to ensure that objectives are clearly defined. Next, it is important to show the benefits that HGSF will have across different sectors for different target groups (school children, women, smallholder farmers, traders, etc.). Clear objectives will also guide the monitoring and evaluation process. Countries are advised to consult widely in this process and engage the required expertise.

Policy Goal  
**FIVE**

**Community Participation:** School Feeding programmes that promote strong community ownership, participation (through contributions from the local community), and accountability are stronger and more likely to transition to national ownership successfully. It is important to set up formal mechanisms for ensuring that communities participate in School Feeding, including setting out roles and responsibilities.





## References

**African Union. 2021.** African Union Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding (2019-2020). Addis Ababa, African Union.

**African Union, 2018.** Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union. Addis Ababa, African Union.

**AU-NEPAD, 2009.** Framework for African Food Security (FAFS). Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Pillar III. Midrand, South Africa.

**Bundy, D.A.P., N. de Silva, S. Horton, D.T. Jamison, and G.C. Patton, editors.** 2017. Child and Adolescent Health and Development. Disease Control Priorities (third edition), Volume 8. Washington, DC: World Bank.

**Bundy, D. A. P., N. de Silva, S. Horton, D. T. Jamison, and G. C. Patton, 2018.** Re-Imagining School Feeding: A High-Return Investment in Human Capital and Local Economies. Washington, DC: World Bank. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO.

**Drake, L., Woolnough, A., Burbano, C. & Bundy, D., eds. 2016.** Global School Feeding Sourcebook. Lessons from 14 Countries. London, Imperial College Press

**FAO, 2019.** Legislating for adequate food and nutrition in schools: Legal brief for parliamentarians in Africa. No.3. FAO, 2019 CA352OEN/1/02.19

**FAO, 2018.** Regional Overview of National School Food and Nutrition Programmes in Africa. FAO, ABC and FNDE, 2018

**FAO and WFP, 2018.** Home Grown School Feeding resource framework: A Technical Document

**Gelli, A., Kretschmer, A., Molinas, L. & De La Mothe, M. R. 2013.** A comparison of supply chains for school food: Exploring operational trade-offs across implementation models. PCD Working Paper London: Partnership for Child Development.

**GSFP, 2021.** COVID -19 Operational Safety Guidelines for Caterers and Relevant Stakeholders of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP).

**SADC, 2021.** Regional School Meals Guidelines for SADC Member States. Draft document

**The Global School Meals Coalition** concept note, 2021

**Sumberg and Sebates-Wheeler, 2011.** Linking Agricultural Development to School Feeding in Sub-Saharan Africa: Theoretical Perspectives. Food Policy 36(3):341-349

**OECD/FAO, 2016.** OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2016-2025. 2. Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa: Prospects and challenges for the next decade.

**UNESCO, 2004.** Guidelines to develop and implement school feeding programmes that improve education. FRESH Tools for Effective School Health. <http://www.unesco.org/education/fresh>

**UNESCO, 2011.** Education for All Global Monitoring report 2011: Armed Conflict and Education. UNESCO

**UNICEF and WFP, 2020.** Multisectoral Checklist for School Re-openings and School Based Nutrition in the Context of COVID-19.

**Verguet, S., Limasalle, P., Chakrabarti, A., Husain, A., Burbano, C., Drake, L., and Bundy D.A.P (2020).** The Broader Economic Value of School Feeding Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Estimating the Multi-Sectoral Returns to Public Health, Human Capital, Social Protection, and the Local Economy. Frontiers in Public Health, 03 December 2020 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.587046>

**WFP, 2009.** WFP School Feeding Policy. Policy Issues Agenda 4. Rome, World Food Programme.

**WFP, 2020.** The State of School Feeding Worldwide. Rome, World Food Programme. Available online at [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)

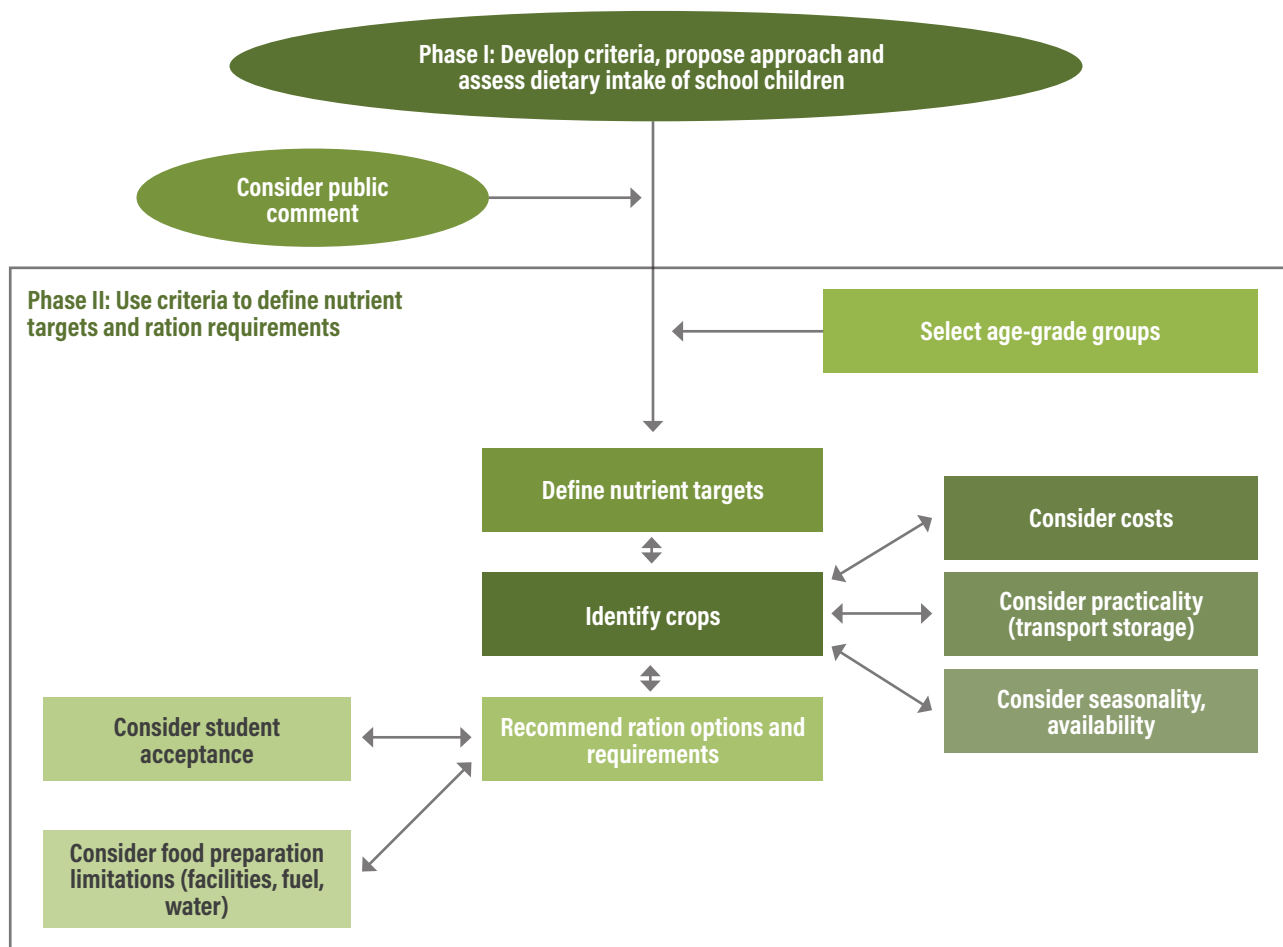
**WHO (World Health Organization), 2004.** Water, sanitation and hygiene links to health. Facts and figures. WHO, Geneva. Available at; [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/publications/facts2004/en/index.htm](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/facts2004/en/index.htm)

**WHO (World Health Organisation), 2009.** Water, sanitation and hygiene standards for schools in low-cost settings. Edited by John Adams, Jamie Bartram, Yves Chartier, Jackie Sims. WHO Press, Geneva, World Health Organisation.



## ANNEX 1: Menu Planning Guideline

### Proposed pathway to planning nutritious school meals



Adapted from *School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children*, NAS, 2010

(Source: Galloway, 20120)

The diagram above illustrates the different components that must be considered when planning school meals. The key menu planning considerations include:

1. Identify the age group of school children to be fed.
2. Determine nutrient targets for school children.
3. Plan the menu and recommend the ration requirements.
4. Identify the food crops to be used in the menu and consider:
  - a. Seasonality and availability: specify substitution ingredients for meals in the different seasons.
  - b. Availability: it is not always possible to get all food items/ingredients locally but ensure that at least some of the foods selected (could be fresh vegetables) can be sourced from the local community.
  - c. Acceptability of foods by school children. The meals should be locally relevant and acceptable to children but should also be balanced to include neglected, underutilised, but nutritious and affordable foods (e.g. millet, buckwheat and amaranth).  
Note: food processing/value addition helps to improve acceptability.
  - d. Food preparation limitations: storage, cooking facilities, water and fuel situation, etc.
  - e. Feasibility of meals: try to make meals simple to prepare to:
    - best achieve lower costs
    - use fewer pieces of cooking equipment
    - achieve short cooking times

## ANNEX 2: Home Grown School Feeding: Assessing the Context

Understanding the context within which HGSF is implemented is an important first step. As previously discussed, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to School Feeding programmes. Each context is different and needs a thorough assessment and analysis. Figure 2 presents some of the assessments that can be done within the five School Feeding quality standards.

- a) **Countries may use different tools to assess** various aspects of the design and implementation component. These include:
- The specific school population needs within the country (such as food security and nutrition problems, challenges relating to access to education for both the girl and boy child), and how the School Feeding programme may be used to address the needs;
  - The food production potential or supply chain analysis, the overall situation of smallholder farmers, their needs and challenges (production and market-related challenges) (see Figure 2 under Design and Implementation).

If a School Feeding programme is already in place, it is necessary to assess/review the design and implementation aspects of the programme:

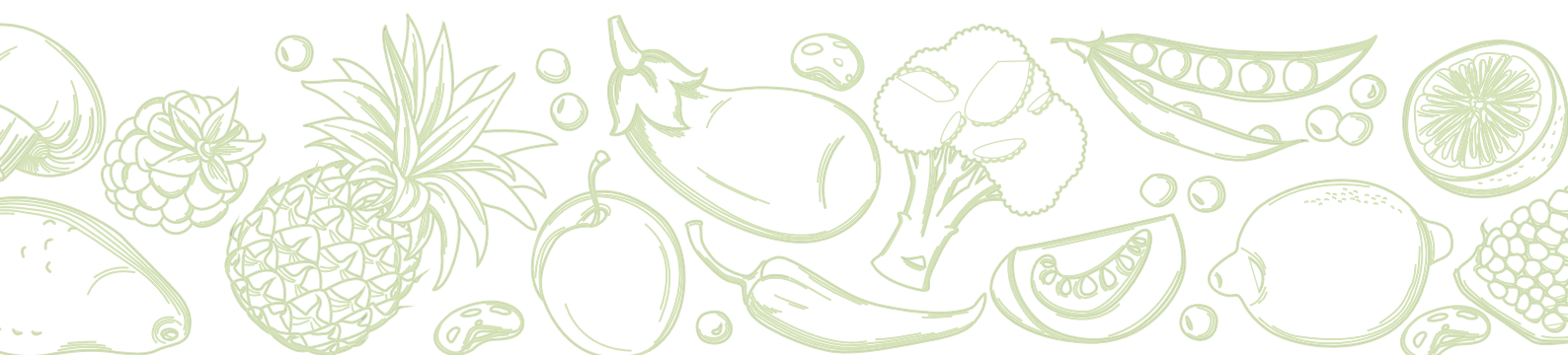
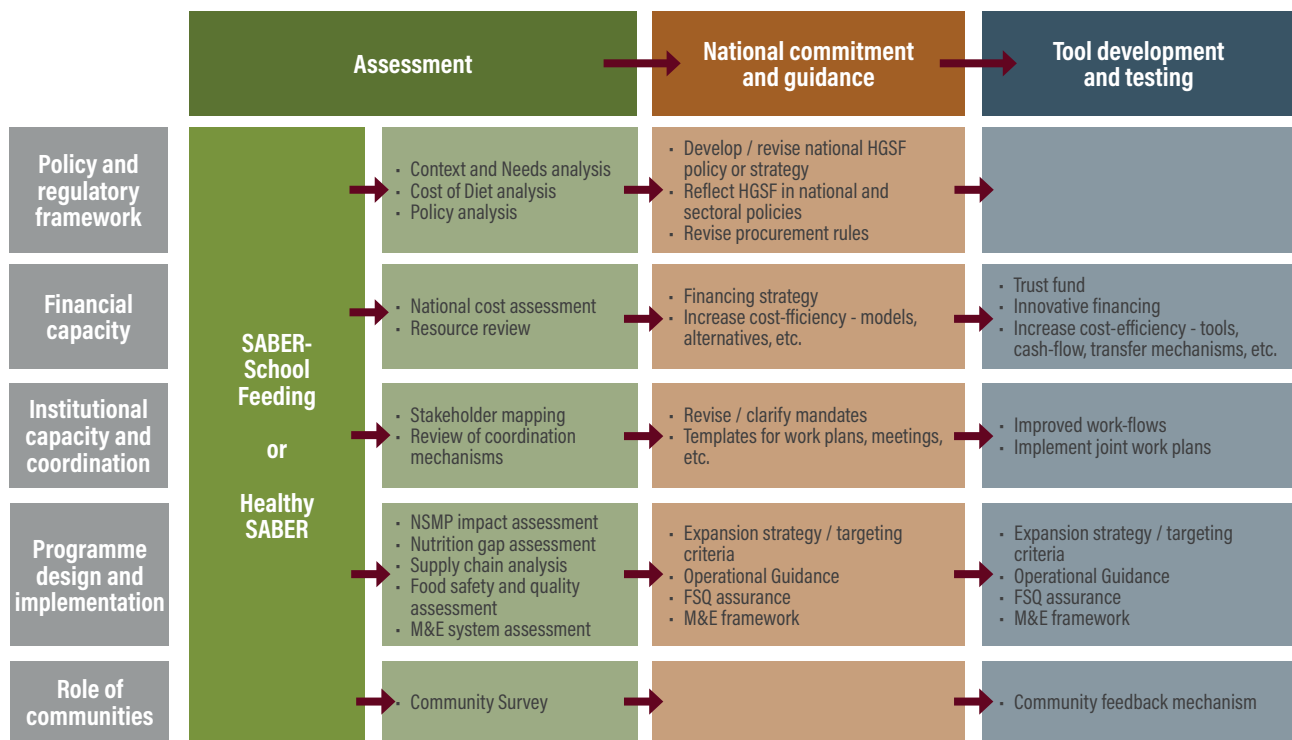
- Do the stated HGSF objectives respond to the needs and aspirations of the people?
- Targeting: is the programme is reaching the intended age group?
- Are the implementation model(s) being used appropriately, and are the trade-offs worthwhile (paying particular attention to the food source and procurement systems/methods)?
- Is the programme scalable?

Different assessments can be chosen based on need.

- b) **The institutional capacity and coordination standard** will require a stakeholder analysis or mapping (to ensure that the necessary sectors are involved) and a review of the coordination mechanisms. For the different sectors to work well, there is a need to review, develop or revise the mandates for the different role players to ensure clarity. At the same time, developing joint work plans ensures better workflows and better efficiency in the School Feeding programme institution.
- c) **Financing mechanisms.** Here the assessment focuses on reviewing available resources and the cost of School Feeding. Examine the cash flows, transfer mechanisms and the current challenges and mitigation measures.
- d) **Policy environment.** Review the existing policy and strategy documents on School Feeding and related policy documents such as those on school health and nutrition and then determine the gaps. It is important that there be at least an implementation guideline and then work toward developing a specific HGSF policy. Procurement rules should be examined and revised as necessary.
- e) **Level of Community engagement and involvement.** A community survey will help assess the extent to which the community is involved, when they are involved in discussions around school meals, and what activities they are involved in. For example, if parents know what the children are being fed (quality and quantity), if parents show concern when children are not fed on a particular day, etc., and if the community/parents are part of School Feeding meetings.



Figure 2: Assessments for HGSF Programmes in the context of Five Quality Standards



## ANNEX 3: Home Grown School Feeding Procurement Models<sup>15</sup>

The type of procurement model used determines the extent to which farmers can be linked to the Home-Grown School Feeding programme. Procurement can be centralised or decentralised, but there are variations to the models in these two extremes. At the same time, procurement authorities can purchase food directly from farmers, farmers' organisations or intermediary traders. In an HGSF programme model, the ideal is to establish more direct relationships between farmers and their organisations and enable them to get better value for their food produce by reducing the intermediaries.

**Centralised models:** Here the procurement is predominantly handled centrally at the national/government level, and almost all commodities are purchased centrally.



### Advantages:

1. They have more standardised procedures, which makes quality control and monitoring easier.
2. It is easier to establish more stringent financial controls to monitor them.
3. They allow for purchases in bulk, which is cheaper due to economies of scale.
4. Programme implementation is more standardised as the menu plan is the same.
5. Centralised purchasing reduces the costs of developing human and institutional capacities because the people handling the procurement processes are fewer and centrally located.



### Disadvantages:

1. It is less likely to have a direct relationship with smallholder farmers.
2. They require storage and distribution facilities.
3. They require more sophisticated and often rigid tendering and procurement procedures, which may not be favourable for small producers.

**Decentralised models.** The procurement is decentralised to the provincial, district or school level. In the most decentralised model, food moves directly from the farm to the school. However, in a decentralised approach, it is important that payments to farmers/farmers' organisations or caterers (in third party models) can be made quickly as they operate with small financial margins. Farmers need to use the funds for inputs and labour in the next production cycle.



### Advantages:

1. A decentralised model is easier to adapt to local conditions and provides an opportunity for links with local smallholder producers, and generally benefits the local community more.
2. There may be more significant challenges with financial controls, and they require monitoring at many levels.
3. It is easier to supply fresh food to schools.
4. It is easier to provide more diverse meals and to accommodate local preferences.
5. Transportation costs are potentially lower; fewer storage facilities may be required as food is purchased more regularly.
6. Information flow is more direct, and delays can be avoided.

<sup>15</sup> This section has been adapted from the Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework by FAO and WFP, 2018.



### Disadvantages:

1. Many small purchases encourage inefficiencies in the system and more administrative work. However, this can be justified where the overall benefits outweigh this disadvantage.
2. Quality control is much more difficult due to the increased number of suppliers to deal with to achieve the desired quantities of food.

**Mixed models.** These combine the advantages of both centralised and decentralised approaches. For instance, some countries may choose to purchase certain types of products (e.g. cereals) centrally at the national or regional levels and then purchase fresh foods (e.g. vegetables) at the school level (a more decentralised level). Botswana started out using a highly centralised model to buy all food products, but currently uses a mixed model where fresh fruits and vegetables in season are purchased directly by schools, while bread and peanut butter are decentralised to Local Government Authorities where the district administration makes the purchase (Botswana case study, in Drake, et al., 2016).

Third-party models. Here the procurement is delegated to a third party by contracting catering services to buy, prepare and serve the meals. Ghana and Nigeria use this model (see Ghana example below). To ensure links to smallholder farmers, procurement authorities can establish contracts that require that a certain percentage of the food used to be purchased from smallholder farmers.



### Advantages:

1. This model provides an opportunity to support smallholder farmers. Caterers may purchase directly from farmers or farmer organisations or indirectly through traders who, in turn, buy from the farmers. The use of traders requires that a mechanism is developed to track the origins of food to ensure that it is purchased from smallholder farmers.
2. Like the farmers, the caterers are often women and are substantial beneficiaries of the HGSP programme. This has a potentially greater impact on household incomes.



### Disadvantage:

The caterer model requires additional measures to monitor food quality and food preparation conditions. This may require more resources for monitoring.





Figure 3: Types of HGSF Operating Models and Procurement Options

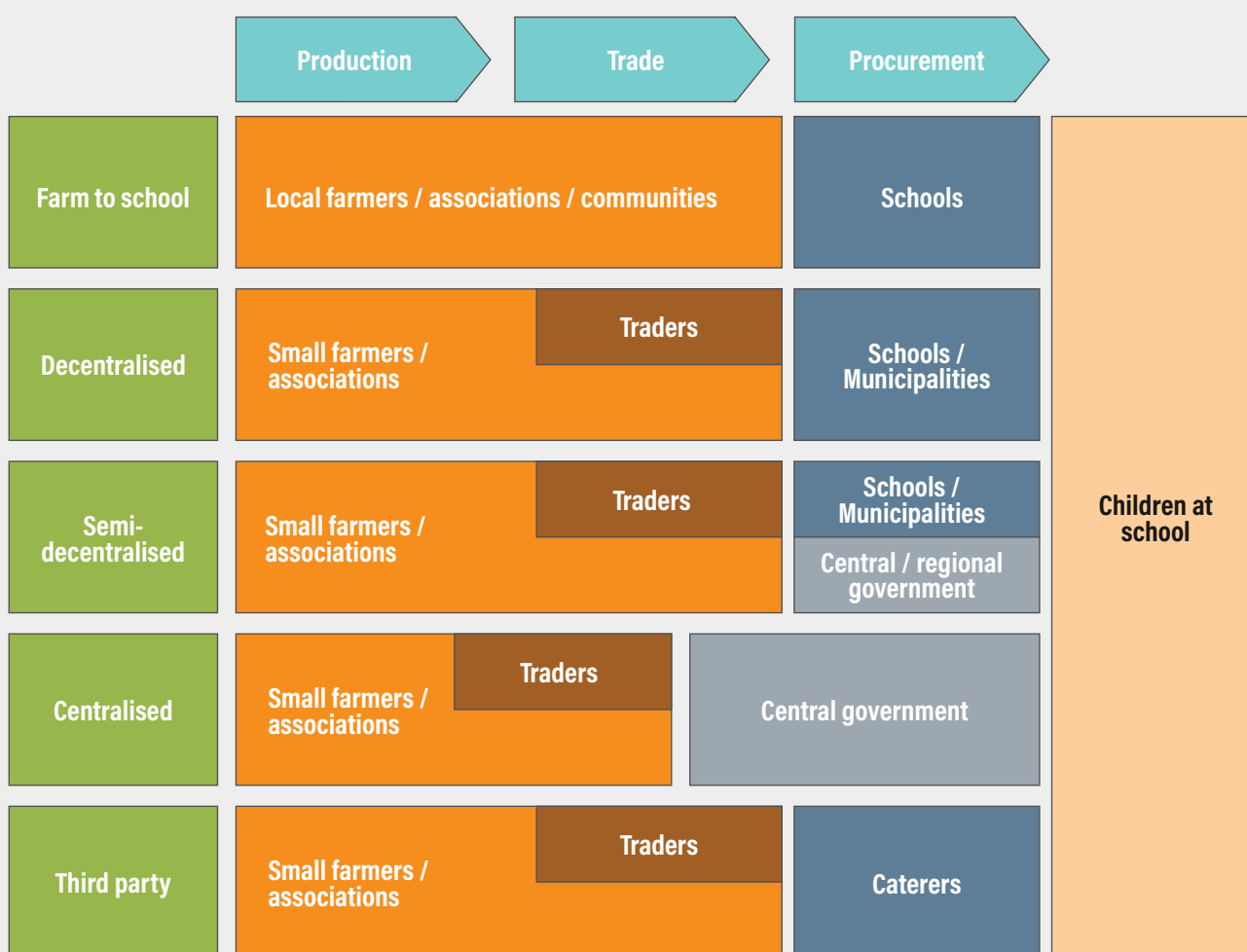
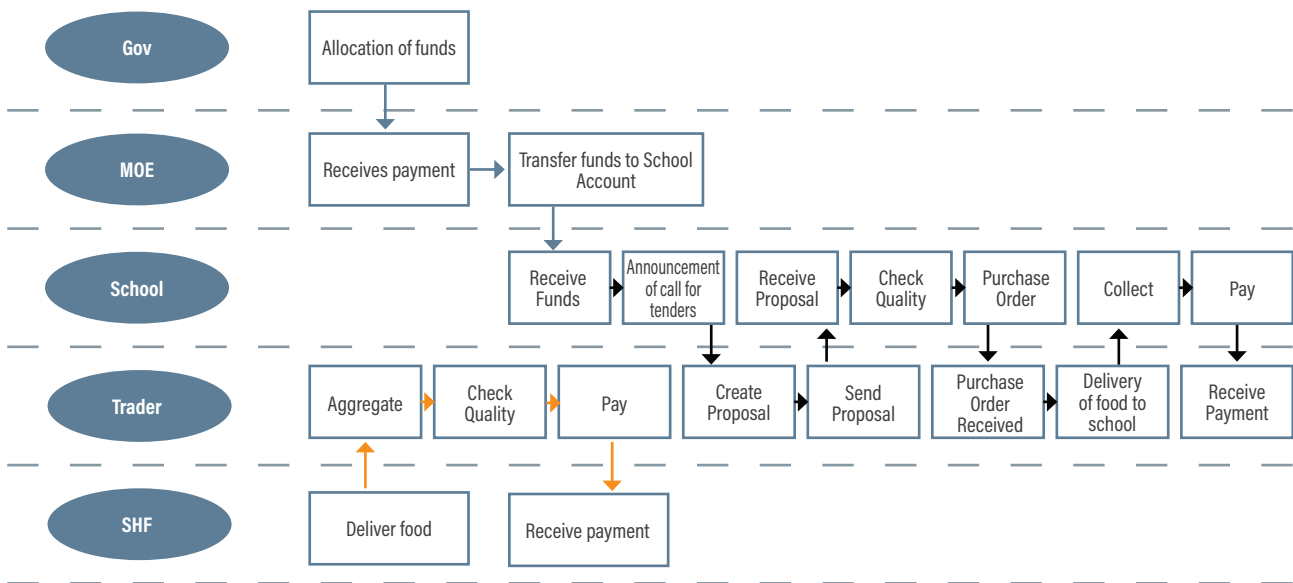


Diagram copied from the Home Grown School Feeding Resource Framework: Technical Document (FAO and WFP, 2018).

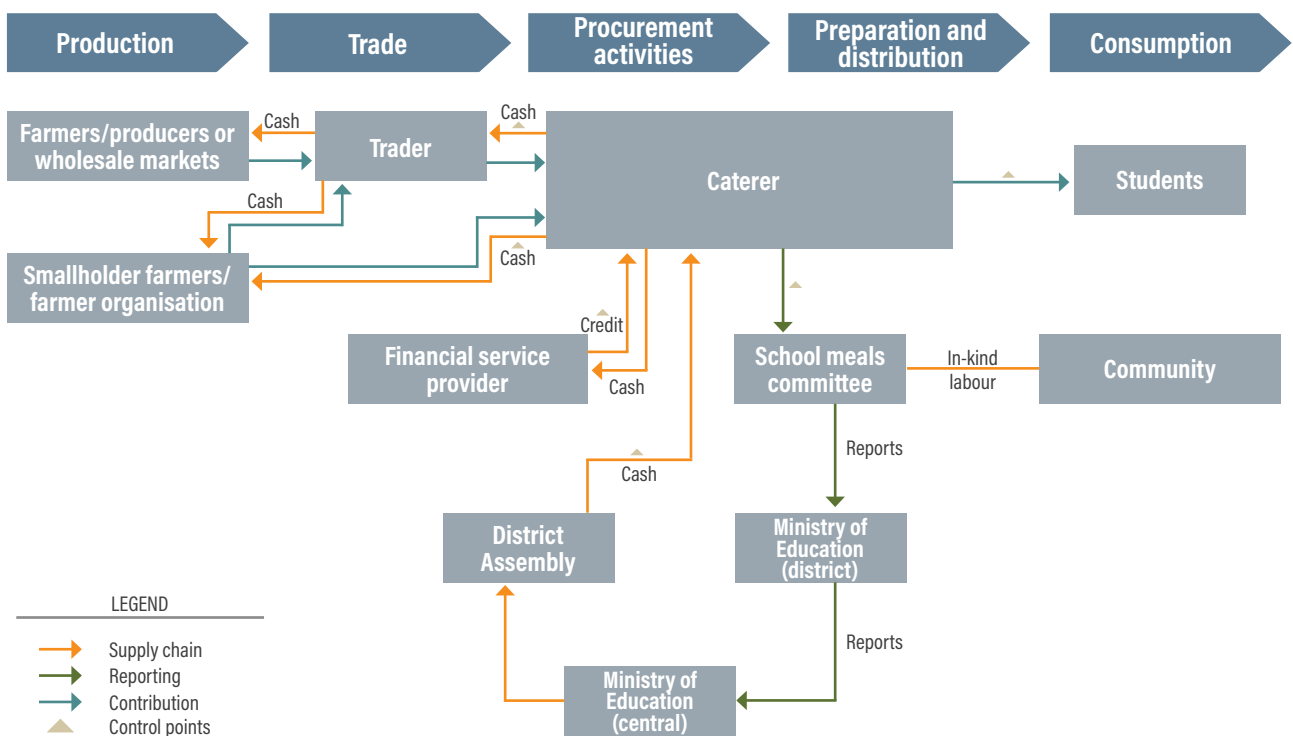
The diagram above represents the various models operating in different countries and illustrates the pathways through which food moves. From farmers and farmers' organisations, it either goes directly to schools as the procuring entity; or through traders to the procuring authorities in central government (in fully centralised models); or to schools or municipalities in semi decentralised and decentralised models. In some situations, caterers purchase food directly from farmers or traders (third party model), prepare and deliver it to schools. In considering which HGSF procurement/operating model to use, it is necessary to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each model and weigh the cost implications on the programme (the type of procurement model used affects the cost of the programme). The choice of model to adopt will depend on the context and what is feasible, considering the trade-offs. Ultimately, it is important to look at ways to benefit smallholder farmer suppliers. As mentioned in the document, different models can be used for different commodities to balance transparency, accountability and smallholder farmers' interests.

### Country Examples Of Different HGSF Operating Models

1. Decentralised Model in Kenya with funds transferred to schools and purchases made at that level.

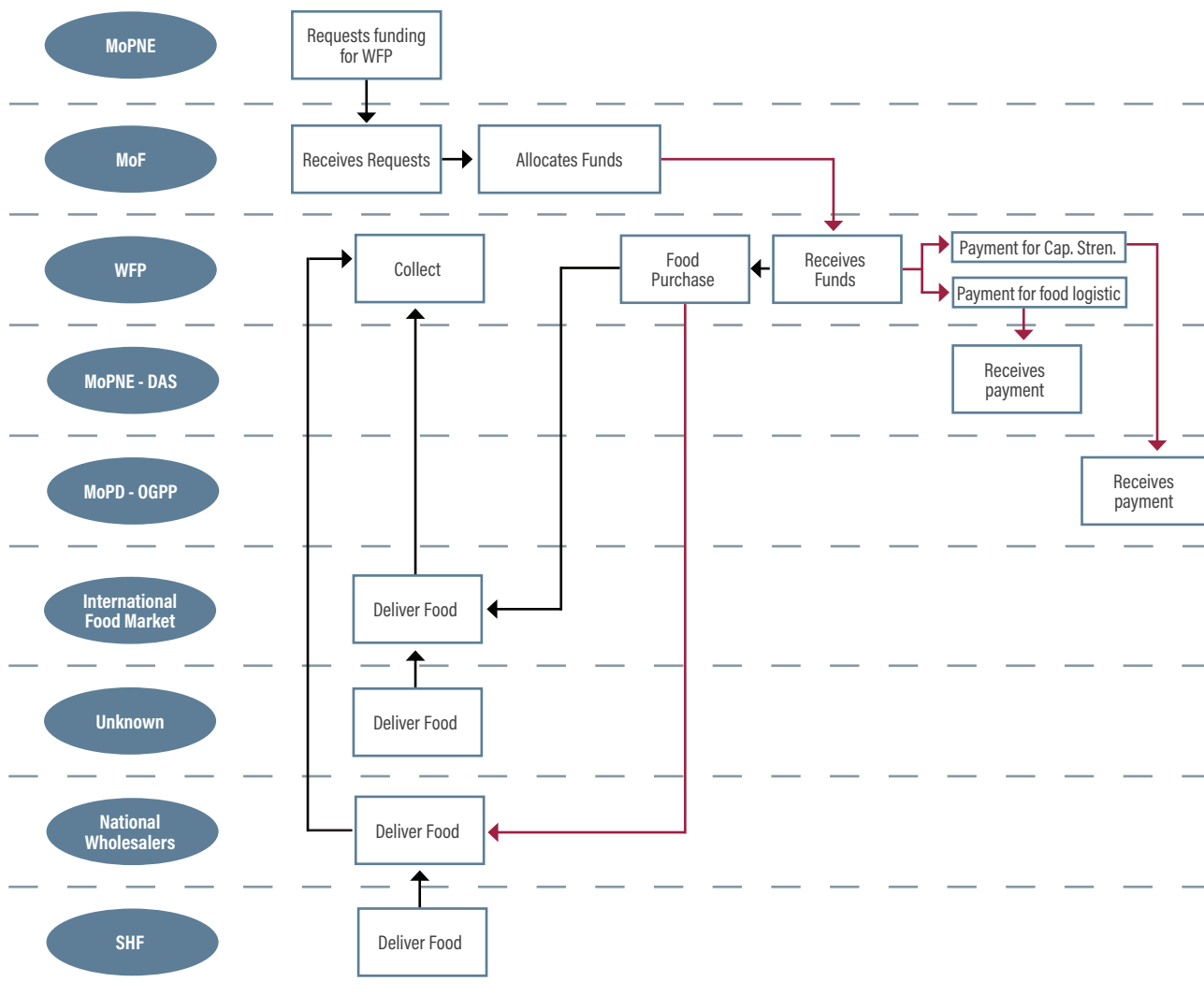


2. A Decentralised Third Party model in Ghana.



Source: authors' eLaboration

3. A more centralized model in Benin with funding channeled to WFP for implementation.



Acronyms:

- SHF- Small-holder farmer
- MoPNE - Ministry of Primary and Pre-primary Education
- MoF - Ministry of Finance
- MoPNE - DAS- Ministry of Education, Direction of school feeding
- MoPD- OGPP - Ministry of Planning and Development, Office of Management of WFP Programme
- SHF- Small-holder farmer





