



GOOD PRACTICES SERIES

# **FINANCING SCHOOL FEEDING**

Levers to enhance  
national programmes



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Over the past decade, the body of evidence on the benefits of school feeding programmes has been significantly expanded. In education, impact has been captured in several countries on the attendance and enrolment rates, as well as on students' performance. Positive effects on health and nutrition have also been showcased through indicators of anthropometric measures and micronutrient status.<sup>1</sup> Overall, school feeding is identified as a high-return investment to foster human capital development and local economies.<sup>2</sup>

This rising consensus, combined with increased exchanges among governments, has stimulated countries to develop their national school feeding programmes and led to greater government ownership over existing initiatives. The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger, in partnership with the Brazilian Government, has been directly involved in promoting these exchanges and in providing technical assistance to countries that have taken the decision to expand investments in school feeding.

One of the challenges of this process is to establish arrangements that will secure the necessary funding, while also promoting the sustainability of programmes. As a social development intervention with benefits in numerous sectors, school feeding is implemented in different countries to achieve multiple objectives, providing a considerable range of entry-points to mobilise financial support to programmes. This policy brief highlights examples of financing models from national school feeding programmes using different policy frameworks and partnership arrangements. Each one of the models portrayed in this document has a different feature in terms of financing, worth of being highlighted as an original practice to secure funding for school feeding. These countries have successfully made use of school feeding's multiple benefits as levers to raise investments in national programmes.



<sup>1</sup> African Union 2018. Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union. Addis Ababa: African Union.

<sup>2</sup> 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.



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## FINANCING THROUGH WIDER SOCIAL PROTECTION PACKAGES

In **Cambodia**, school feeding is carried out by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS), in collaboration with WFP, through a combination of meals, food and cash transfer modalities. For several years, the programme was funded by in-kind support from the Government and partners' contributions, including USDA, Japan, Australia, and donations from the private sector. The adoption of the **National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025** created the space for Homegrown School Feeding to be considered a key social assistance tool of the government. Its implementation since 2015 has allowed for a financial allocation in the national budget and implementation mechanisms to be embedded into the national systems, starting in the 2019-20 school year. In this process, the involvement of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), through the Social Protection Council, was key to ensure the budget allocation to the programme and will be key to supporting cohesion with other social assistance tools under the NSPPF. The MEF continues to play an essential role in funding, by supporting the development of a specific budget line for school feeding and the related mechanisms to execute it. More recently, the school meals programme (including its home-grown component) has been incorporated in Cambodia's five-year Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023. A National School Feeding and Nutrition Policy is under elaboration, which will further support budget commitments. It is important to highlight that, in addition to the role played by the central government, local governments (through commune investment plans) also contribute to financing the programme and supporting procurement mechanisms for local food purchase under HGSF. Communities participate in resource mobilization as well, through in-kind contributions.

**Nigeria's** National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme was introduced in 2016, re-launching a nation-wide programme that is fully funded by the national government. Operating in 31 out of Nigeria's 36 states and feeding nearly 9.5 million pupils in 56,604 public schools, it is the largest of its kind in Africa. The programme is part of a larger package – the Social Investments Programme –, launched to address poverty, hunger and unemployment in Nigeria and to ensure high-level political authority and coordination for all social protection programmes. Consequently, it is managed by the Office of the Social Investment Programme within the office of the Vice-President and in coordination with the concerned ministries (education, agriculture, health, budget and national planning, justice and women affairs). Financial resources for school feeding are transferred from the central level directly to over 101,000 cooks across the country, who are responsible for food purchase in local markets and their preparation in schools. State and local governments are involved in the implementation of the programme from the outset. While the costs of food and cooks are currently fully financed by the federal government, the private sector, development organisations and individuals are also encouraged to support the programme in participating States by donating plates, cooking utensils, school infrastructure or by financing existing or new research initiatives. In light of the success of the programme, the federal government is currently negotiating with state governments to engage them in cost sharing, which will allow further expansion of the initiative.



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## THE ROLE OF LEGAL FRAMEWORKS TO GUARANTEE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

**Guatemala's** 2017 School Feeding Law established a solid framework for financing the country's national programme. It foresees 4 Quetzales (0.5 USD) per student per day that are secured from the national government budget for the purchase of food. Local governments and school communities contribute to finance other key aspects of the programme such as school cooks and infrastructure. An Interinstitutional School Feeding Commission is responsible for the analysis of the programme and proposal of its budget, including its revisions: the law establishes that the minimum amount may be revised every two years. **In addition to determining a floor investment per beneficiary, the source of funding in the state budget is also foreseen by the legal framework.** The law establishes that the programme is financed with revenue from the national Value Added Tax for Peace (IVA Paz). The revenue from IVA Paz is redirected to a series of funds, including two which school feeding accesses. In that sense, the budget allocated for school feeding is composed by: a) 0.5% of the funds for peace; and b) 0.8% of social expenditure allocations. The same provision authorises the allocation of ordinary and extraordinary revenue to school feeding, when expressly foreseen. All resources coming from the national budget are reserved exclusively for the purchase of food. Costs related to logistics, cooks and infrastructure are financed by local governments and communities' contributions. As the programme is completely decentralised, the Family Parent Organizations are responsible for food purchase and management of the programme in schools, with funds transferred from the Ministry of Finance to each organization's bank account.

The National School Meals and Health Programme (PNASE) from **São Tomé e Príncipe** was adopted and its guidelines established in 2012, through a Law. Since 2015, the programme is fully implemented by the Ministry of Education. Reaching over 50,000 students, the programme is managed at the central level by an agency called PNASE Coordination. The Ministry of Education is responsible for all food purchases, and the Coordination oversees its delivery to schools and meals preparation at school level, including by hiring paid cooks. PNASE is financed by the Ministry of Education's budget, and it is partially supported by parents' contributions, as well as by additional grants from international partners. Despite these positive developments, as existing legislation does not guarantee a ring-fenced budget line, the funds allocated to PNASE fluctuate depending on the yearly available budget for the Ministry of Education. Consequently, the programme is not able to provide hot meals 180 days/year yet, as desired.





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## INCREASED INVESTMENT IN NUTRITION

School feeding in **Sri Lanka** reaches over a million children between grades 1 and 5 (around 70 percent), and 178,500 students (or 7.5 percent) in grades 6-13 in selected poor areas. Undernutrition is a serious concern in the country, as over 20% of the population is undernourished. In this context, the government decided to increase investment in school feeding to address this challenge. The national school feeding programme's main objective is to improve the nutrition levels of children, by offering cooked meals prepared by caterers in schools, complemented with a glass of milk for primary education students. The programme is managed by the Ministry of Education, through its School Nutrition and Health Services Branch, with support from WFP. For several years, the government has partially financed the programme, and since 2018 it provides all its funding. Resources are transferred from the central government to caterers through zonal education offices, who also oversee programme implementation.

The **Tunisian** Government revamped its national school feeding programme to improve education indicators, as well as to address nutritional deficiencies and the new challenge of child obesity and overweight.<sup>3</sup> Under the management of the Ministry of Education, the programme is fully funded by the national government. As the programme covers a wide range of costs – food procurement, kitchen and schools' infrastructure and payment of cooks –, the resources are allocated to different budget lines of the Ministry, according to the type of expenditure. The decentralisation of funds follows the same structure. The Office of School Services (Office des Oeuvres Scolaires - OOESCO) of the Ministry of Education is responsible for running costs of the programme such as food procurement, as well as school transport, boarding, and extra-curricular activities. Its regional antennas transfer resources to schools that undertake food purchase and overall programme implementation. Infrastructure investments are carried out by the Directorate General of Construction and Equipment of the Ministry of Education, which transfers the funds to the regional Education Commissariats.



<sup>3</sup> Development Initiatives, 2018. 2018 Global Nutrition Report: Shining a light to spur action on nutrition - Tunisia Country Profile. Bristol, UK: Development Initiatives.



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## PARTNERING UP TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL PROGRAMMES

The government of **Jordan** launched the National School Feeding Project in 1999, to target primary school pupils in schools located in poor areas. The programme was managed by the Ministry of Education and fully funded through the national central budget, issued annually by royal decree. In 2015, the programme was **reinforced by cooperation with the Jordan Armed Forces**, a support that enabled expressive growth, reaching peak coverage of 530,000 students in 2009. Given the budget constraints faced by the government, after 2009 this number was reduced. **In 2013, the government requested support from WFP in financing and recuperating coverage, leading to the current financial arrangement whereby WFP covers 50% of feeding days.** Currently 416,000 students in 32 directorates are assisted, including children attending public schools in refugee camps.

In **Mozambique**, school feeding is currently funded through an innovative arrangement. **The National School Feeding Programme (PRONAE), adopted in 2013, is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Human Development (MINEDH), with support from the World Food Programme and funding from the Russian Federation.** The funding arrangement was negotiated by WFP with the Mozambican Ministry of Finance, MINEDH and the Russian Federation to direct a Debt-for-Development Swap to finance PRONAE for 5 years, starting in 2018. This setup will enable the provision of school meals to over 300 schools by 2022 in the 10 provinces of Mozambique, while further strengthening the national capacities and policy framework to promote long-term sustainability.





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## LESSONS LEARNED

The cases above feature different entry-points for mobilising and securing resources for national school feeding programmes.

As the examples of Cambodia and Nigeria display, national programmes can gain new momentum – and corresponding funds – in contexts where governments decide to expand investment in social protection programmes. In both cases, stakeholders outside the ministries of education – the Office of the Vice-President for Nigeria and the Ministry of Finance for Cambodia – have ensured that the high-level mobilisation around these programmes is backed up by adequate resources, and that programmes are progressively expanded over the years.

Another key lever for national programmes in several countries is the adoption of school feeding laws by national parliaments, in addition to policy frameworks developed by executive branches of governments. In Guatemala, the school feeding law is very ambitious in its provisions about financing, including the amount allocated for the programme per student per day, as well as the source of this revenue within state budget. Other than this ring-fenced budget, the law foresees the possibility of revising allocations every two years, to provide for changes in the implementing environment of the programme. In São Tomé e Príncipe, in contrast, the law secures that budget is allocated to the programme but does not create a budget line nor a minimum amount to be invested, leaving the programme susceptible to yearly negotiations of the Ministry of Education with other government areas. As this case demonstrates, this opening may lead to considerable budget fluctuations and may impact the number of days in which students receive meals.

The cases of Sri Lanka and Tunisia attest that national concerns over child nutrition may be the main drivers for increased investment in national school feeding programmes, whether they are to curb micronutrient deficiencies or the rising challenge of child obesity and overweight.

In very distinct contexts, Jordan and Mozambique are examples of countries that rely on support from development partners to finance their programmes, either because of major economic crises that may affect established programmes, or as a means to kick-start a new national initiative.

In summary, the encompassing nature of school feeding programmes is an advantage in directing programme objectives and in implementing strategies to meet different national challenges. This advantage may benefit the mobilisation of resources from different sectors and through different strategies. As the exchanges promoted by the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil have demonstrated on several occasions, the multiple benefits of school feeding represent key levers for governments to boost national investments and further improve the lives of children and their families.





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