

# Evaluation Brief

*Decentralized evaluation for evidence-based decision making*

## Midterm Evaluation of McGovern-Dole Funded School Feeding Project in Guinea-Bissau (2016-2018).

### SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

In December 2015, the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), the USDA, and the WFP signed an agreement under the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme. This agreement established the allocation of USD 20 million, which was distributed over three years aimed at supporting school feedings' activities in Guinea Bissau's Country Programme. This agreement had the objectives to improve enrollment and attendance rates of primary school-aged children, and increase the use of health and dietary practices through the provision of school meals and take-home rations (THR); the training of school management committees, parent associations, headmasters, and inspectors; the construction and rehabilitation of school kitchens and storerooms; the provision of storage, food preparation equipment, tools and eating utensils; the distribution of deworming medication(s); the support of the school feeding monitoring and evaluation system. Prior to the start of the program, a baseline study was conducted in 2016. In 2018, an independent midterm evaluation was conducted.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was intended to assess the programme's performance and to document learned lessons for its current and future implementation.

### METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team (ET) used a mixed methods approach. Primary data was collected from stakeholders through structured and semi-structured interviews, and on-site observation. In parallel, a quantitative

assessment using a non-experimental method was conducted. The sample for the quantitative approach comprises a set of randomly selected 60 schools of which 30 assisted and 30 non assisted schools. The program was evaluated by assessing its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Relevance

The program is aligned with educational policies and strategies of the government of Guinea-Bissau. Its strategy is relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries (both boys and girls). School meals and THR promote school attendance and help children avoid dropping out of school. THRs decreased the burden of feeding families and contributed to higher school attendance for girls, especially during the cashew campaign. There is also a general perception among schools and the Ministry of Education (MoE) staff that the number of students in schools supported by WFP is increasing. During a minimum of nine months of the year, a large part of the students' nutritional needs are provided for by school meals and THRs. School meals and THRs help families to feed their children, which particularly benefit girls and reduce short-term hunger. Ownership and participation by men and women of local communities, including parents of school children, were promoted by the project.

#### Effectiveness

The project has been successful in implementing the school meal program in schools, and in reaching its intended targets per plan. Boys and girls equally share the benefits of the School Feeding (SF) project.

However, the project framework includes multiple outcomes without activities planned. It is not clear how and in what frequency the project is expected to contribute to its target.

### Efficiency

The migration of students to WFP assisted schools may have negatively impacted the distribution of school meals and take-home rations. Some schools reported a reduction of the portion size, which was adjusted due to the increased number of students. This rise is not always reflected in the WFP food delivery plan given to the school. School kitchens in Guinea-Bissau are very rudimentary and, in some cases, unsafe. Energy saving stoves need to be reassessed because they do not substantially improve the working conditions of the school cooks, nor do they positively contribute to their health. There were delays caused by school members having difficulties in performing their roles in implementing and reporting activities. Participants of the project have high levels of satisfaction. Results of both training in food preparation and storage practices were undermined by a high turnover of participants in school committees. The targets defined for 2017 and 2018 for the number of School Management Committees (SMCs), cooks and teachers trained were not achieved. As for the distribution of deworming medication, it was partially achieved with a rate of 64 percent of implementation.

### Impact

According to stakeholders the project has yielded positive results on children's education and the community's welfare. They particularly witnessed an increased awareness on the importance of girls' education and a greater support from school inspectors in schools not assisted by WFP. The results suggest an increased awareness of the health benefits of diet diversification among students, cooks, and the other school stakeholders. Additionally, school meals and THRs are important financial contributions to the poorest families. Although a slight increase on enrolment and attendance indicators from baseline to midline was recorded, this difference was not statistically significant.

### Sustainability

An intended result of the project was an improved policy and regulatory framework, even though no specific activity was planned to achieve this outcome. An initial step for a nationally owned SF programme in Guinea-Bissau would be the approval of the School Canteen Law. The draft of the bill was updated in 2018 with the support of the WFP. However, it was waiting to be reviewed by the Council of Ministers and receive further Parliament approval.

A successful transition to the nationally owned SF programme of Guinea-Bissau will require increasing inter-sectoral coordination and strengthening the capacity of local food producers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overall Assessment

The project's strategy is relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries. In the midterm of its development, most of the targets defined for the McGovern-Dole funded school feeding project for 2017 and 2018 are met or almost met, and some have even exceeded desired targets. School meals and THRs promote attendance and help students to avoid dropping out. THRs contribute to the attendance of female students. The delivery of school meals and take-home rations positively impacts the nutrition of students. School meals are well accepted by the students and, together with the THRs, help to decrease the burden of feeding families. However, the diversification of products and the inclusion of locally produced fresh vegetables in meals is requested by the beneficiaries.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this evaluation, the recommendations of the evaluation team are outlined below.

**R 1:** Diversify school meals and promote nutrition by sourcing locally.

**R 2:** Improve kitchen infrastructure and working standards of school cooks.

**R 3:** Expand school meals to kindergartens and assist kindergartners located in the same community.

**R 4:** Provide nutrition training to health care workers.

**R 5:** Develop a pilot monitoring project using the internet or an SMS based system and organize training for those involved.

**R 6:** Create of a thematic group in school canteens with other organizations.

**R 7:** Expand the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the project to other regions.

**R8:** Clearly state the role of the project on promoting the quality of the teaching.

**R9:** Create a multi-staffed school feeding unit.

**R10:** Closely follow-up the number of students enrolled at school to better plan food distribution.