



World Food Programme

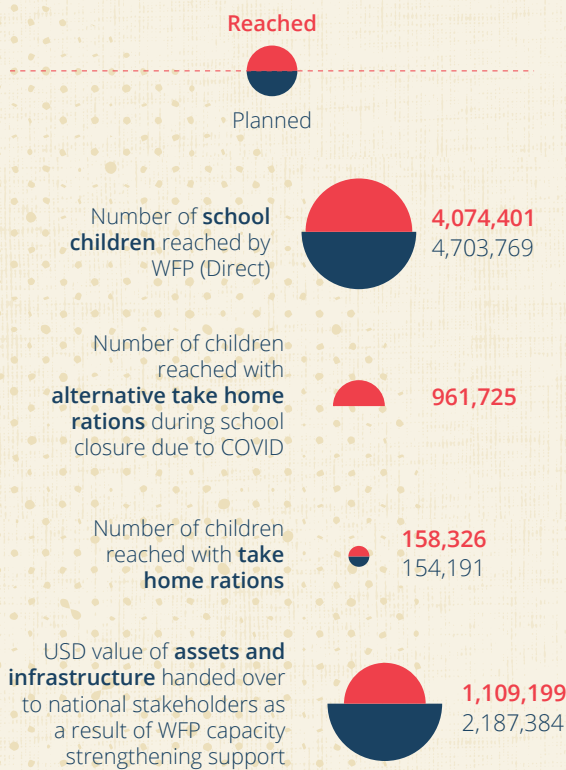
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REGIONAL BUREAU FOR **EASTERN AFRICA**

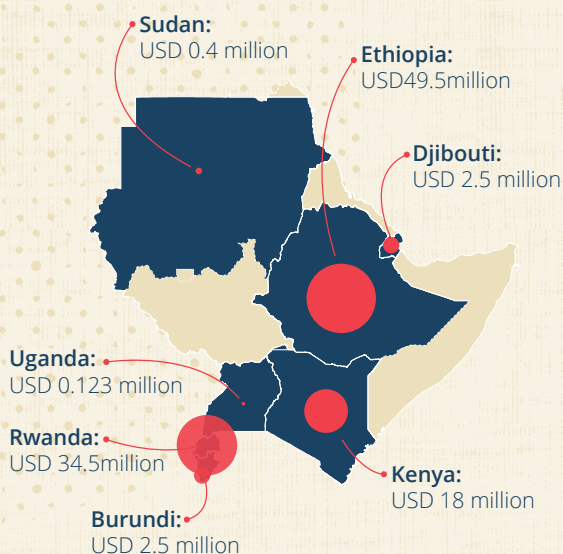
School-based Programming

2021 Regional Achievements & Outlook

MAY 2022



Cumulative Government Investment to School Feeding



Regional Overview

The contribution of school feeding programmes in advancing education, health and nutrition outcomes including stimulating local agriculture and economies is widely acknowledged across the world. In 2021, most countries in the region prioritised resumption of school feeding programs to ensure all children return to school, receive appropriate support to meet their needs and recover from the multiple consequences of COVID – 19 pandemic and other shocks as part of building better efforts.

Regional achievements

Development of the regional school feeding implementation plan

In 2020, WFP launched a ten-year school feeding strategy (2020–2030) which recognized the importance of the first 8,000 days of a child’s life and use of schools as a cost-effective platform for delivery of an integrated package of health and nutrition services through multi-sectoral and multi-actor responses.

To support roll-out of the strategy, a regional school feeding implementation plan was developed through an extensive consultative process to address the context-specific needs of the different countries and shift towards more inclusive and sustainable school feeding programmes. The plan outlines key focus areas that will be prioritised for the next five years including increasing stable investments in school feeding, enhancing advocacy efforts, deepening existing and new partnerships, improving the nutritional quality of school meals, and other key programmatic approaches such as scaling up home-grown school feeding programmes to enhance sustainability of the school feeding programmes in the region.

Government investments in school feeding

Resource mobilization for school feeding programmes is key in ensuring children access school meals which in some cases are the only meals children receive in a day. To enhance sustainable financing of school feeding programmes, WFP has been working closely with relevant partners to develop school feeding policies including advocating for increasing budgetary allocation from National Governments.

As part of the nationwide scaleup of the school feeding programme, the Government of Rwanda increased its budget allocation for school feeding from USD 8 million to USD 27 million for the 2021/22 academic year representing approximately 6.4 percent of the total national education budget.

In Kenya, more than USD 18 million was allocated to support the national school feeding programme. Similarly, the Government of Ethiopia with the ten regional states affirmed their commitment by allocating USD 56 million to school feeding for the 2021/22 academic year.

Despite the increasing Government investments in school feeding, enhanced advocacy efforts are still needed to improve budget allocation for universal coverage and mitigate the unreliable parental contributions observed in some countries.

Enhanced partnerships for school feeding

In 2021, enhanced partnerships have been the driving force to advance the quality and scale of school health and nutrition programmes in the region. Notably:

- **School meals coalition:** Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Somalia joined more than 120 Governments, UN Agencies, Civil Societies, the Private Sector, and Academia in signing up for the school meals coalition which seeks to ensure that every child can receive a healthy and nutritious meal every day in school by 2030. Notably, the Government of Rwanda submitted to the coalition its commitments to the National school feeding programme. Through the Global School Meals Coalition, WFP Rwanda has partnered with France to enhance the Home-grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme. RBN is supporting the rest of the governments in the region to sign up and outline their specific commitments to the school feeding programmes for the next ten years with the aim to restore gains made prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, increase coverage, and improve the quality and efficiency of the existing school feeding programmes.

- **The Power of Procurement for Nutrition (PP4N)** initiative with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation was established aimed at promoting healthy diets in school menus using fortified whole grain maize-meal.
- **Burundi:** Trilateral agreements between the World Bank, WFP and the Government continued to expand the energy project in 54 schools.
- **South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia** have an ongoing partnership on improving school health and nutrition services with United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).
- African Union Development Agency (AUDA)-New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)-WFP supported National Governments' participation in the commemoration of the 6th African Day of School Feeding themed 'Harnessing Africa's Traditional Knowledge and Food to Support Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes and Systems During COVID-19 Response and Beyond.'
- Mastercard: he shared-value partnership with Mastercard which explored the extent to which a traceability mechanism in the HGSF programmes was feasible ended with a No-Go-Decision. It is likely, that with additional studies planned under the smallholder agriculture unit, the Bureau may extend the same to HGSF.

Increased enrolment and attendance

The WFP school feeding programme continues to be an enabler for keeping children in school with the net effect of stimulating enrolment and retention rates for better learning outcomes in addition to encouraging parents to return children back to school following the massive school closures within the region. In 2021, the WFP led school meals programmes in the region reached more than 3.6 million learners with hot meals provided in schools and alternative take-home rations where necessary. This is a considerable increase from the 2020 and 2019 beneficiary numbers despite the prolonged school closures lasting nearly 2 years in Uganda, the conflict situation in Sudan and Ethiopia leading to the suspension of school feeding programmes in the conflict-affected areas. All the countries except for Uganda where schools were closed, reported an improvement in either the enrolment or attendance rates compared to the pre-COVID-19 period which is attributable to the adaptive interventions including the back-to-school campaigns that were put in place.



Institutional capacity strengthening

WFP has continued to strengthen Government capacity and institutions in the provision of school meals on policy and technical levels.

In **Ethiopia**, WFP also provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Education (MoE) to develop the national school feeding policy and strategy which was endorsed in 2021. School feeding is now embedded in the Government's policies, institutionalised with a directorate to lead the programme and a WFP appointed technical staff at the MoE, paving the way for the transition towards nationally-owned school feeding. WFP strengthened its collaboration with other UN Agencies, working with the FAO in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR) to establish policies on public food procurement for Government-led HGSF initiatives and diversified diets.

WFP supported Government to conduct a School Feeding System Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) analysis, which resulted in establishment of a two-year action plan focusing on the crucial capacity-building interventions based on the remaining gap identified.

WFP's capacity strengthening investments in school feeding led the Addis Ababa City Administration to institutionalize school feeding by establishing an independent agency, to manage school feeding and implement the national school feeding policy and strategy, allocating funding for this programming in their budget and establishing school feeding in all public schools.

In **Rwanda**, WFP supported the Government's school feeding efforts by directly implementing the HGSF programme and providing technical assistance, including support to develop the Comprehensive National School Feeding Policy and School Feeding Operational Guidelines for the Government's NSFP officially approved by the Government in 2021. With support from WFP, the **Somalia** Government drafted a national school feeding policy to promote the implementation of a devolved, sustainable, and effective home-grown school feeding program that ensures timely provision of nutritious and diversified school meals while improving access, retention, equity, and quality of education; improves the health and nutritional status of schoolchildren and promotes local economies through support and linkage of school feeding with local smallholder farmers' associations and traders. The policy was validated by the Ministry of Education at the Federal and Member State levels for the parliament and Cabinet Office's approval.

South to South and Triangular Cooperation

To foster Government's engagement in School Feeding, WFP organized a study visit to Benin with the First Lady of **Burundi** and line Minister to learn from Benin's good practices and success and transpose them to Burundi. The visit also paved the way for the First Lady's nomination as the ambassador for Burundi to the school meals coalition after the Country signed up in September 2021.

WFP also assisted the Government in documenting the history of the school feeding in Kenya and facilitated several virtual engagements between the Ministry of Education with the Governments of Djibouti, Nigeria, and Burundi.

Home-grown school feeding

2021 saw the establishment of global consensus and support towards strengthened school feeding programmes, highlighting the need for nutritious and increased coverage of school meals to ensure every school child receives a nutritious meal. National Governments in the region demonstrated high level political commitment through engagement in global school feeding events, increased budgets towards HGSF, adoption of innovations such as efficient cooking stoves, reduction of aflatoxins, and the promotion of healthy diets through diversified school menus.

RBN initiated the LRFP for HGSF which seeks to enhance linkages with smallholder farmers to promote nutritious menus and scale. The project is targeting LRFP front runner countries (Uganda and Ethiopia) where WFP has seen significant procurement from smallholder farmers for redistribution in the region, and HGSF Proof of Concept countries (Rwanda and Burundi) where, working with Governments, WFP scaled up HGSF portfolios. Increased linkages with smallholder farmers and decentralised procurement spurred an immediate market for smallholder farmers around the schools.

To strengthen and harmonise HGSF approaches, the AUDA-NEPAD-WFP developed HGSF implementation guidelines with the participation of RBN and selected countries. These guidelines will improve the programming and implementation of HGSF activities in the region.

Nutrition – *sensitive school feeding*

Well-designed school feeding programmes provide a great opportunity to address some of the underlying and basic determinants of malnutrition. To help address malnutrition among school children, most countries diversified meals provided in schools by including other nutritious foods in the rations. In **Burundi**, fortified maize meal and fish were included in the rations as much as possible with some of the schools providing milk to further improve the nutritional status of children. In **Ethiopia**, haricot beans and other indigenous crops were procured from smallholder farmers which helped provide diverse school menus. In **Somalia**, kitchen gardens were established in schools to promote dietary diversity using locally available foods. This was complemented with a nutrition – SBCC campaign on the importance of hygiene and the benefits of consuming diverse and nutritious diets targeting school children and support staff.

Complementary activities in schools

In collaboration with other partners for School Health and Nutrition, complementary activities such as deworming, social behaviour change messaging on nutritious dietary intake, HIV prevention especially targeting adolescents, Gender and Disability inclusion, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and the establishment of school gardens have been embedded in the school feeding programmes in the region. Partnering with UNICEF for example, has seen the establishment of WASH facilities for supported schools in **Somalia** and the administration of anthelmintics to school going children in **South Sudan** greatly reducing the risk of preventable diseases that can be detrimental to the health and nutrition status of school age children.





Evaluations and Lessons Learned

To enhance accountability and future programming, WFP **Rwanda** conducted an end-line evaluation of the USDA McGovern–Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition programme (2016 – 2021) in all targeted districts.

The evaluation found that most endline targets were met or exceeded in nearly all activities with over 60 million meals provided to students; student absenteeism due to illness decreased from 8 percent to 1.72 percent among female students, and from 7 percent to 2.38 percent among male students; the percentage of students identified as attentive increased from 60 percent to 74.1 percent, and student reading comprehension had increased from 49 percent to 77.7 percent. The findings were used to inform the design of Phase II (2021 – 2025) of the programme and integrated into the Phase II baseline report.

Challenges

Several challenges affected the smooth implementation of school health and nutrition programmes in the region, among them Covid-19 which led to closures of schools, shifting in school terms and models of teaching. The switch to online learning disadvantaged many schoolchildren in remote areas with poor electricity connections. In **Uganda** for instance, schools closed for two years putting children at least two years behind their peers in the region.

Other challenges include climate change impacts such as drought (Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia) and conflict (Tigray) which have induced hunger, malnutrition, human displacements, disruption of learning for schoolchildren and loss of livestock. Inadequate or no resources impacted local procurement of food stuffs for schools such as in Burundi, where some schools experienced pipeline breaks and drop-out was recorded. Access in both Sudan and South Sudan remained a key bottleneck in service provision due to poor roads infrastructure especially in rainy season.

2022 Outlook

In 2022, the regional bureau will prioritise the rollout of the regional school feeding implementation plan. The COMPACT, a document serving to clarify the support that will be provided by the regional bureau and the HQ functional team to COs, will be the guiding document. The activities of the School Meals Coalition as a platform for advocacy and increased opportunity for resource mobilization will also be supported.

The regional bureau also seeks to increase its efforts in mobilizing resources from National Governments, Donors, IFIs and the Private Sector. Additionally, several cost-benefit analysis and research studies are planned, to generate evidence on the effectiveness of school health and nutrition and make the case for investment.

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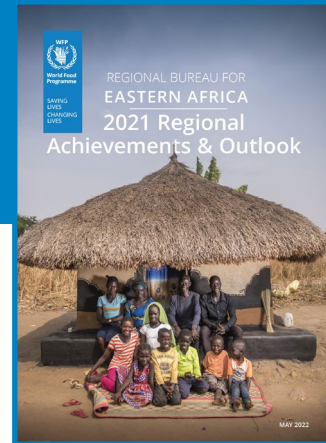
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