



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES

CHANGING LIVES

# WFP Cameroon School Feeding Programme

## Context

The March 2023 Cadre Harmonisé revealed that three million people in Cameroon are acutely food insecure. Furthermore, according to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP, March 2023), 1.4 million children in Cameroon require humanitarian educational support in 2023. Families cannot support their children's education primarily due to extreme poverty and food insecurity. Consequently, children drop out of school and are forced to engage in low-skilled jobs like domestic work, mining work, turn to survival sex or join armed groups.

The Adamawa and East regions are priority education zones in Cameroon, as significant gaps exist between the enrolment rate of boys and girls. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies are among some of the main difficulties that hamper access to education and resources for girls and women in these regions.

In the Far North, the disturbing humanitarian situation severely affects children's access to school. Climate-related conflicts and disasters have led to schools' closure, compounded by socio-cultural norms and values that hinder families from prioritising education.

In fact, successive shocks in Cameroon have pushed already vulnerable populations further into deteriorating food and nutrition insecurity, with hunger negatively impacting children's ability to enrol, attend and remain in school to acquire education. However, school meals have helped families support their children's education while protecting their food security. They help break the «cycle of hunger and poverty» by increasing the chances of children becoming healthy and productive adults.

Majority of the people in the northern regions are typically herders/pastoralist and smallholder subsistence farmers, most of whom are from disadvantaged populations, hence severely restricting their productivity. Although they provide more than 80 percent of the food consumed locally, they have limited access to markets, resulting in low processing, high post-harvest losses, limited storage and poor investment capacities. Therefore in 2023, WFP will incorporate local producers and production factories like bakeries and dairy factories in school meals programmes through technical support to improve their productivity. They will also supply fresh nutritious products to schools for school meals.

May 2023

## WFP RESPONSE

The Cameroon government with the support of the World Food Programme has been implementing School Feeding Programmes in Cameroon since the late 1970s. In 2019, WFP and the Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which led to the development of **a School Feeding Strategy** geared to facilitate the implementation of a nationally owned home-grown school feeding (HGSF) programme.

The school feeding programme is implemented under the social protection framework in collaboration with the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) which informs the national school feeding programme and aligned to the draft National School Feeding Policy. While the programme is implemented in three regions, there have been recent efforts to scale up school feeding programmes in all six crises regions of the country.

Indeed, in June 2021, following the food systems summit, the Government of Cameroon signed up to the "School Meals Coalition", joining over 60 countries and 55 partners globally. The goal of the School Meals Coalition is to encourage governments and partners to jointly ensure that they improve the quality and expand the scale of school feeding programmes in primary schools globally as a platform to reach communities, simultaneously transforming food, education, social protection and health systems. Cameroon as a member of the coalition has reiterated its dedication to restoring, improving and scaling-up school feeding programmes. The Government has also given due attention to home grown school feeding (HGSF) by advocating for resources through numerous funding opportunities such as Education Cannot Wait and the World Bank.

WFP complements the Government efforts in implementing the school feeding programme, enabling children, especially girls, in crisis-affected regions to access nutritious meals. School meals programmes has led to increased school attendance, cognition, and educational achievements. More recently when combined with local food purchases, school feeding has had a force multiplier, benefiting both children, their families and the local economy. In Cameroon, school meals, provide incentives for children to enrol and stay in schools, thus also minimizing adverse risks, such as delaying early marriage for girls or forced recruitment of boys by the non-state armed groups operating in crises affected regions of Cameroon.

In 2022, WFP provided emergency nutritious warm meals to about 72,000 schoolchildren in about 145 schools in the Far North Region and 2,800 children in six schools under the Home-grown School Feeding (HGSF) initiative in the Adamawa and East regions. Due to increased food insecurity, school meals are often the only regular and nutritious meal the children eat.

The Home-grown School Feeding project that was piloted in the Adamawa and East regions in 2022 provides benefits to children and entire community. School meals are procured locally from smallholder farmers, and traders. Consequently, the scale and profit margins of local smallholder farmers, breeders and milk and bread producers have increased. The pilot leverages on the potentials in the individual regions, for example in the Adamawa Region, lunch snacks consisting of **yoghurt, eggs, milk, butter, sugar and nutritious bread made from cassava flour** produced by local farmers/bakers, are provided to primary school pupils.

In the first quarter of 2023, WFP provided daily hot meals to about 51,400 learners in ninety-five schools in the Far North Region under the school meals initiative and 918 learners in five schools under the HGSF programme in the Adamawa Region

“ My Children know they will eat while they learn, so they leave the house in the morning without worrying about not having breakfast, and I don't have to worry about what they'll eat on school day ”

Ms. **HOUMA Fadimatou**, *Mother of two girls assisted through school feeding*

“ In the past, at this time of the school year, I had far fewer pupils because of the transhumance activities. Now, thanks to the project, the attendance rate has improved, and my students come to school. ”

Mr **ISSA Timothé**, *Director of Ngodi-Mafalgaou, Government Primary School, Adamawa Region Cameroon.*

## Highlights (2018-2022)



## Pupils Assisted

	2022	Q1 2023
<b>FN - School Meals</b>	<b>71,993</b>	<b>51,381</b>
Female	30,181	20,776
Male	41,812	30,605
# Schools	145	95
<b>East and AD - HGSF</b>	<b>2,759</b>	<b>918</b>
Female	1,348	462
Male	1,411	456
# Schools	6	5
<b>Cash transferred to Local producers (USD)</b>	<b>33,784</b>	<b>17,437</b>

In the wake of Ukraine/Russia crisis and subsequent rising food prices, it is preferable for government to scale up school meals programmes. School feeding in Cameroon could be scaled up to serve as a safety net to support the most vulnerable. It is estimated that school meals programmes supply about 10 percent of household expenditure for each child who participates, providing a substantial resource transfer and protective safety net to the poorest households.

As an unintended consequence, the pilot phase has highlighted the problem of the lack of birth certificates for nearly 46 percent of pupils in the targeted schools. With the support of WFP, the National Civil Status Office, the local council and the prosecutor's office have been collaborating to issue birth certificates to these pupils, allowing them to sit for their examinations. However, the overarching short-term impact of the school meals initiative has been the increase in enrolment and high school retention and attendance rates.

## HGSF Programme Outlook

The Governor of Adamawa Region has created a multi-sectoral management committee for school health and nutrition, which is a strong sign of government engagement and commitment.

Home-Grown School Feeding is an investment for future generations, enabling every child, especially girls, to ensure education and nutrition outcomes of school meals are achieved. WFP is collaborating with the Government to unlock the potential for HGSF which will likely become the biggest safety net in Cameroon. WFP plans to upscale the HGSF to reach 141,000 schoolchildren by September 2023.

However, WFP is facing financial constraints that put the continuity of the programme in Cameroon at risk. Therefore, it is important that the government and other stakeholders continue to support the HGSF initiative.

## South-South and Triangular Cooperation

WFP and the Government are collaborating under the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) framework to build national capacities to implement food security initiatives. In 2022, several SSTC missions were carried out under the auspices of the HGSF programme, including a benchmarking mission to Ghana, a learning exchange at the Global Child Nutrition Forum in Benin for improving nutritional outcomes in the school feeding programme and two scoping missions to Egypt aimed at capacity building in agriculture, education, economic planning and development, governance, and cooperation as well as climate change and adaptation towards food security. Twenty-two government officials from the Prime Minister's Office and six ministries participated in these missions. For 2023, four missions are scheduled to Kenya, Senegal, China and Brazil.

“ My Children were eager to go to class knowing food was coming... Parents ask me if I planned this school feeding project, I tell them it's all thanks to WFP and the Government ”

Mr **NANA Hamboy**, PTA President of *Ngodi primary school and village chief of Ngodi Mafalngaou, Adamawa Region*

WFP has been able to implement its interventions thanks to the support of, and in collaboration with partners including the Government of Cameroon, donors, other UN agencies, and cooperating partners.



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