



**WFP EVALUATION**

# Baseline Study: USDA McGovern-Dole Grant for WFP Home-Grown School Feeding Program in Rwanda (2020 to 2025)

## CONTEXT

Rwanda ranks 160th out of 185 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index. The 2018 comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis reported that food insecurity affected 18.7 percent of Rwandan households. Especially Western and Southern provinces, where the majority of the HGSP schools are located, showed the highest prevalence of food-insecure households. Undernutrition translates into a greater probability of starting school at a later age, grade repetition, and a higher proportion of school dropouts. In 2019, the Government of Rwanda introduced a National School Feeding Policy and strategy that formed the basis for the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP); a budget to implement the programme was approved in 2020, and the NSFP began rolling out to 3.3 million students in October 2021.

## SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation covered the Home Grown School Feeding and related activities in 136 pre- and primary schools in seven districts of Rwanda: Karongi, Rutsiro, Nyamagabe, and Nyaruguru (“Group 1” schools), which were supported in the FY15 McGovern-Dole Program (“Phase I”), and Burera, Kayonza, and Gasabo (“Group 2” schools) added in FY20 (“Phase II”). As a whole, these activities are intended to improve outcomes in student learning and literacy, school enrolment and attendance, and health and dietary practices, and to strengthen the government’s capacity to implement the national school feeding programme. The programme has complementary household- and community-level interventions in support of these objectives and works with farmer cooperatives to enhance their capacity to provide nutritious food to the national school feeding programme.

The baseline study focused on the USDA McGovern-Dole Program indicators and investigated the activities and context expected to influence indicator performance.

## OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The WFP Rwanda country office (CO) commissioned the baseline study of the decentralised evaluation of the McGovern-Dole Home-Grown School Feeding programme in Rwanda (2020-2025). The main objectives of the baseline are accountability to beneficiaries and donors, and learning. The baseline was commissioned to inform Phase II implementation and support the rollout of the national school feeding programme.

The main users of the baseline study are WFP Rwanda CO, Regional Bureau Nairobi, School based-programmes Division in headquarters (HQ), Office of Evaluation in HQ, WFP Executive Board, WFP stakeholders at national, regional and corporate levels, USDA and other donors, governmental and non-governmental partners, and the targeted communities and beneficiaries.

## KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

### [Relevance]

The programme is seen to be relevant to the needs of both Group 1 and Group 2 schools as contributing to reduced dropouts, improved literacy, reduced malnutrition, and improved hygiene and sanitation. Components of the programme have been a model for Government as it expands school feeding nationally. Most district officials report good collaboration with WFP.

## [Coherence]

The evaluation supported that the programme aligns with national objectives, policies, strategies, plans, and priorities to improve the literacy of school-aged children. The programme has contributed to strengthening national capacity to design, manage, and implement school feeding programmes, particularly through its work with the National School Feeding Technical Working Group to operationalize the school feeding policy.

## [Effectiveness]

The evaluation found that the McGovern-Dole Program in Phase 1 was effective in improving attendance and reducing dropouts. However, there are some deficits that showed in the Group 1 baseline results as interruptions from COVID-19 related school closures limited the effectiveness of literacy programmes. All Group 1 and Group 2 schools were using improved water sources, established permanent handwashing stations, and contributed to improved hygiene outcomes overall.

## [Efficiency]

While the use of resources among Group 1 and Group 2 schools was generally efficient, there is room for greater efficiency in the programme. Overcrowding of WFP-supported schools compromised the ability of feeding programmes to provide enough food to each child, and resulted in reduced meal size for some students, especially when pre-primary children also receive food.<sup>1</sup> The food is described as nutritious with a mix of fortified rice (three times per week), beans and vegetables daily, and fortified maize meal two times per week.

## [Impact]

The baseline of the evaluation reported that the programme has had a positive impact on its beneficiaries. The Phase 1 results in terms of on-time attendance, improved hygiene, reduced malnutrition, and an improved teaching and learning environment, as observed at the Phase 2 baseline, provide an indication of impact pathways for Phase 2. The programme led to the creation of jobs for cooks and security guards. Some external factors such as economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and social attitudes and gender norms towards girls' education currently and may continue to dampen the programme's impact.

## [Sustainability]

An important contribution to sustainability and consistency of approach are the national School Feeding Operational Guidelines. Most programme schools are complying with those guidelines. Many of the individual NSFP readiness components have the potential to sustain. Capacity development activities, in particular, have been critical to the NSFP programme. But the ability of parents to contribute to the cost of school meals remains a challenge.

## CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS

### Overall Assessment

Overall, the baseline of the evaluation found that the programme is relevant, coherent, and effective including a positive impact on the phase 1 programme while the baseline addressed the room for greater efficiency.

### Lessons

The baseline of the evaluation aimed to inform Phase II implementation and support the rollout of the National School Feeding Programme. Based on findings and conclusions, five programmatic and one evaluation methodology lessons learned were presented in the report.

### Programmatic Lessons

**Lesson 1.** The country office should continue to support initiatives to address the ability and willingness of parents from the poorest families and families with multiple children to contribute to the cost of school meals.

**Lesson 2.** Many schools report it a challenge to pay increased water bills from newly installed handwashing stations. Although the water bills are not a programme responsibility, WFP and programme partners should advocate for the Government to consider subsidizing water bills given its facilities requirement.

**Lesson 3.** Local ownership of nutrition education and interventions is critical. To ensure that nutrition knowledge and interventions reach not only the schools but also the household level, building relationships with schools is paramount. This includes identifying key stakeholders (including parents) and the role they play in intended outcomes and providing supervision and monitoring to increase the ownership of nutrition interventions.

**Lesson 4.** Complementary funding is being used to benefit NSFP schools. In Rwanda, the USDA-funded

<sup>1</sup> The Government has addressed the issue of overcrowded schools by building 22,000 new schools in 2021, 87 Edwin Ashimwe. 2021. The New Times. Construction of new classrooms at over 95%

McGovern-Dole Program has also attracted complementary donor funding. This enables WFP to develop an approach or a capacity-strengthening package, which may then be replicated by MINEDUC with its own funds or additional donor resources.

**Lesson 5.** Supporting Government goals in the NSFP is key. In Phase II, WFP is continuing to support Government goals in the NSFP by conducting a review of local food procurement issues and challenges to document lessons and inform future strategies for the NSFP.

#### **Evaluation methodology lessons**

**Lesson 6.** The evaluation team will shift from a school census e-survey to a panel survey in future rounds.

