



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

## WFP EVALUATION

# SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

## Lessons on School Feeding in West and Central Africa

WFP works with governments and partners to ensure that all primary schoolchildren have access to nutritious meals, supporting school enrolment, attendance and retention, promoting health and child growth and contributing to human capital development. WFP also supports governments in developing national programmes that act as a safety net for the most vulnerable people.

The provision of food to children is achieved through **school feeding programmes**. These programmes provide meals, snacks or conditional household transfers in the form of cash, vouchers, or in-kind, take-home rations (THR).

Increasingly, school feeding is integrated within School Health and Nutrition (SHN) interventions that typically include complementary activities such as reproductive health education, deworming treatment, WASH activities, gender-targeted activities, use of fortified food in school feeding food baskets and micronutrient supplementation.

In addition, WFP implements **Home-Grown School Feeding** (HGSF), a model designed to provide children in schools with safe, diverse and nutritious food, sourced locally from smallholder farms, thereby supporting the local economy and communities in an integrated manner.

In 2021, WFP assisted 15.5 million children with nutritious meals, school snacks or take-home rations.

## BREADTH OF EVIDENCE

This summary of evaluation evidence brings together findings from 15 evaluations commissioned by WFP between 2014 and 2022. It offers lessons on SHN and HGSF feeding into ongoing and future programmes.

While the focus is West and Central Africa, the summary details good practices and promotes knowledge sharing at a global level.

The 15 evaluations cover SHN interventions, of which eight undertook HGSF initiatives and six THR. Two evaluations took place in Cote d'Ivoire, Benin and Guinea-Bissau.

Of the 15 evaluations, six were country strategic plan evaluations and eight were decentralised evaluations. A [summary of evaluative evidence in West and Central Africa](#) and a [strategic evaluation of the Contribution of School Feeding Activities to the Achievement of the SDGs](#) are also included. All were rated 'satisfactory' or above by WFP's external Post-Hoc Quality Assessment (PHQA).

This summary applied the approach and methods set out in WFP's technical note on summaries of evaluation evidence:

- A universe of 15 WFP independent evaluations was collected, which included all relevant evidence on School Feeding interventions in the Region.
- An independent expert systematically extracted evidence from the evaluations using an analytical framework reflecting key areas of interest identified at framing stage.
- The expert analysed and clustered evidence to surface patterns and key trends, and drafted a summary report capturing findings.
- The summary was finalised in February 2023 following consultations with stakeholders.

# 6 KEY LESSONS

## SCHOOL HEALTH AND NUTRITION (SHN)



### 1 Most evidence on outcomes of SHN relate to education indicators, while there are significant data gaps on the links between SHN interventions and complementary interventions.

- There is quite extensive evidence of positive effects of SHN interventions on enrolment, attendance, and retention, at primary level particularly. Data on learning outcomes is much more limited, which represents a missed opportunity for WFP.
- Most evaluations report significant improvements in educational policy and capacity strengthening. Evidence indicates that WFP's work to strengthen the capacity of Governments at various levels led to the articulation of activities in joint annual workplans.
- Few evaluations presented evidence of improvements in beneficiaries' nutrition resulting from SHN interventions, relating to dietary diversification, increased awareness on the benefits of dietary diversity, or even improved nutritional status and reduced short-term hunger.
- Evaluations report few complementary interventions implemented, and these focused on nutrition education and de-worming. Clearer programmatic linkages are required, with further attention to monitoring and reporting against indicators, particularly in health-related outcomes.
- Evaluations found significant data gaps regarding the effects of SHN on health.

### 2 Closer coordination of activities, particularly in health and nutrition, can trigger synergies.

Both strategic and operational linkages can be strengthened, and national education systems encouraged to enhance complementarity internally. Indicators should be developed for these complementarities, rather than interventions monitored in silos.

- Evaluations noted the absence of systematic provision of nutrition education to be a gap, with no follow up or support after training.
- Synergies with national partners were sometimes lacking. Evidence indicates that certain interventions on school infrastructure, school gardens and nutrition suffered from insufficient coordination within local education authorities. Where complementarities did occur, the two main areas identified were nutrition education and deworming.
- Only one evaluation identified an initiative on fortified foods in SHN programming: WFP supported a rice fortification workshop for government stakeholders, leading to the Government's decision to conduct a pilot project introducing fortified rice through the school feeding programme.

### 3 Gender is only weakly addressed in SHN interventions.

Much more can be done to ensure robust gender analysis at design stage and context-specific gender-sensitive approaches throughout implementation.

- Evaluations identified the lack of gender sensitivity, with interventions tending to focus on numerical targets for the equal inclusion of

women and men, and girls and boys instead of prioritizing or adequately monitoring opportunities to achieve gender-transformative results.

- In terms of the effects of SHN interventions, most evaluations found a reduction in gender disparities in attendance, mainly at primary level.

## HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING



### 4 HGSF-local production links must go beyond school and market gardens.

Monitoring data is also needed on volumes of produce generated, consumption levels in schools, and partnerships and networks formed.

- Several evaluations presented evidence of links established with market gardens but pointed to a lack of overall local production strategy.
- The contribution of HGSF to food security and nutrition is most often not monitored or reported on. Only one evaluation was able to report increased dietary diversity as a result of the HGSF programme, and more specifically relating to cash-based transfers introduced under the HGSF scheme.

### 5 HGSF are well aligned with national priorities but capacity strengthening is a must for future sustainability.

- Where school meals were sourced locally from smallholders farmers, the model mainly relied on connections with market gardens but not on a local production strategy.
- Progress in introducing HGSF approaches remains slow, with a majority of small scale or pilot initiatives and limited attention to food security and nutrition outcomes.
- Main positives are the alignment with national Government visions for HGSF, and notable efforts to build capacities. Notwithstanding, evaluations raised questions around medium and long-term sustainability.

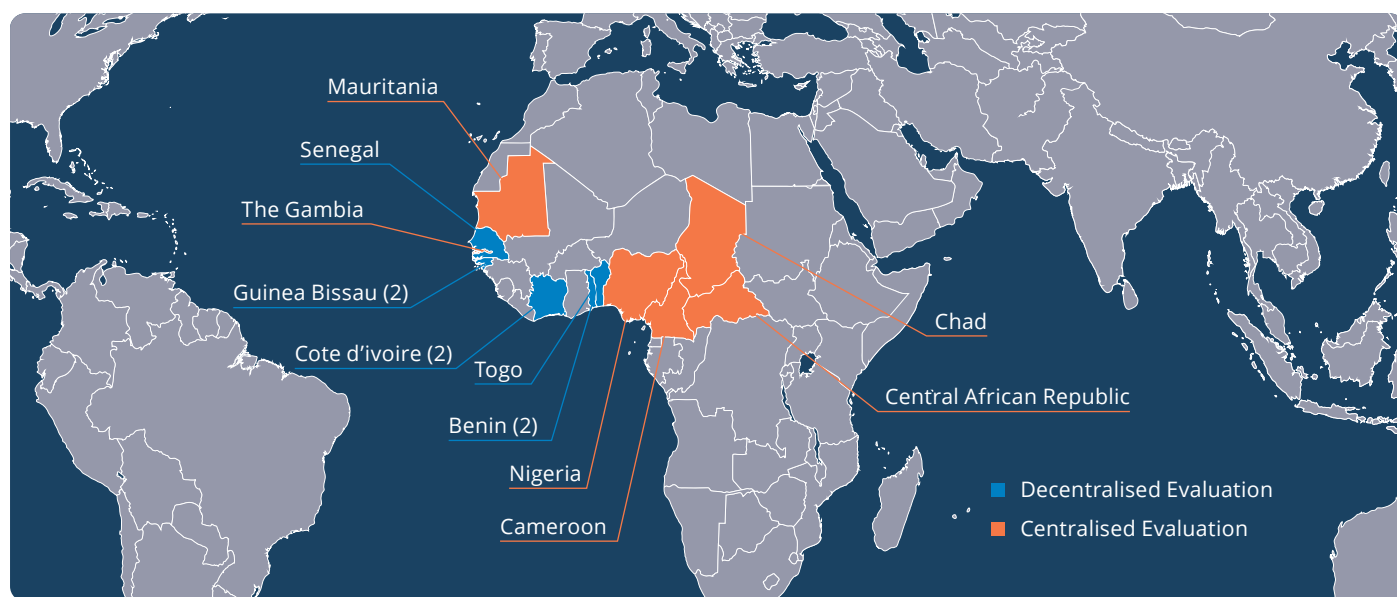
## TAKE-HOME RATIONS



### 6 Take Home Rations (THR) bring more girls to school and reduce drop-out rates.

- Qualitative data showed that THR were correlated to an increase in enrolment, maintaining school attendance, lower dropout rates and a narrowing of the gender gap in the target schools. And where THR were distributed during school closures (along with awareness sessions on the COVID-19 pandemic), enrolment, attendance and retention rates were all in excess of 100 percent.
- In the set of evaluations reviewed during COVID-19 times, THR were largely implemented as substitutes for school feeding rather than as standalone interventions with a defined purpose.
- Evaluations emphasized that implications of implementing a THR programme on gender equity should be considered from the start, particularly as it relates to the risk of disincentivizing boys' attendance.

- [WFP/Government of Benin midterm Joint Evaluation of the Integrated National School Feeding Programme \(PNASI\). August 2017- May 2019](#)
- [WFP/Government of Benin Final Joint Evaluation of the Integrated National School Feeding Programme \(PNASI\). 2017-2021](#)
- [Final evaluation of the first phase of “support for the integrated sustainability program for school canteens in Cote d’Ivoire \(2015-2021\)](#)
- [Mid-Term Evaluation of “Support for the Integrated School Feeding Program” Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program in Cote d’Ivoire](#)
- [Final Evaluation of McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Guinea-Bissau 2016-2019](#)
- [Midterm Evaluation of McGovern-Dole Funded School Feeding Project in Guinea-Bissau \(January 2016 - June 2018\)](#)
- [Evaluation décentralisée de la modalité transfert monétaire utilisée dans le programme de cantines scolaires appuyé par le PAM au Sénégal](#)
- [Évaluation des activités de renforcement des capacités institutionnelles dans le domaine de l’alimentation scolaire au Togo 2016 – 2018](#)
- [Strategic evaluation of the contribution of school feeding activities to the achievement of the SDG](#)
- [Cameroon WFP Country Strategic Plan Evaluation 2018-2020](#)
- [The Gambia WFP Country Strategic Plan Evaluation 2019–2021](#)
- [Central African Republic Country Strategic Plan Evaluation 2018-2022](#)
- [Chad Country Strategic Plan Evaluation 2019-2023](#)
- [Mauritania Country Strategic Plan Evaluation 2019-2022](#)
- [Nigeria Country Strategic Plan Evaluation 2019-2022](#)



*The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers.*

## WFP EVALUATION

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