

Regional Bureau for **Eastern Africa**



World Food Programme

SAVING  
LIVES  
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LIVES

# INVESTING in School Based Programmes



## Key Highlights

Government-led Home-Grown School Feeding (HGFS) is a critical platform for food systems transformation in the Eastern Africa Region.

WFP facilitated and supported the participation of member states from the region at the Global School Meals Coalition Summit in Paris.

WFP Rwanda transitioned **108 schools** to the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP).

**158,597 children** provided with take home rations in Sudan.

value of assets and infrastructure handed over to national stakeholders as a result of WFP capacity strengthening support; **USD 1,287,721**.



The first Sub-regional Network on School Meals Coalition was launched in June 2023.

In Kenya and Djibouti, WFP has successfully completed the transition of school feeding programmes to government.

**3,302,358 school children** (51 percent boys; 49 percent girls) reached through school meals programme.

**38,934 MT** of food distributed in schools.

In Ethiopia each **USD 1** invested in school meals generates **USD 5 in return**.

WFP supported schools reported higher education outcomes **attendance, retention**.

Governments in the region are increasingly recognizing school feeding as a critical investment in human capital, local economies, health, and nutrition, and are firmly leading the advancement of this agenda, despite the significant challenge of limited fiscal capacity. WFP continues to play an important role in school feeding and is well-positioned to support governments and contribute to the multiple benefits it offers.

WFP invests in both direct programmes and capacity strengthening activities, tailored to specific country contexts. The capacity strengthening efforts aim to establish long-term systems that enhance the resilience of the most vulnerable communities.

In 2023, WFP effectively reached **more than 3 million** school children with nutritious meals, employing diverse approaches to enhance school attendance and retention rates in supported institutions.

## Transitioning school feeding programmes to Government Ownership

As government interest and investment in the establishment and expansion of national school feeding programs in the region accelerate, WFP is increasingly regarded as the partner of choice for providing technical assistance and support to strengthen policies and systems. Capacity strengthening activities in school feeding vary and include development of systems and tools including policies and strategies, training of government staff at various levels and partners, secondment of staff to various government institutions, facilitation of south-south learning to identify areas of mutual learning by the hosting and visiting countries, targeted resource mobilisation to support transition processes and programme design.



In Kenya and Djibouti, WFP has successfully completed the transition of school feeding programmes to government management. In Ethiopia, the process is ongoing, with efforts focusing on enhancing the government's capacity to maintain and improve the quality of the programme and secure sustainable funding.



WFP Rwanda transitioned 108 schools to the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) in September 2023, and continues to provide technical assistance at national and district levels, with a focus on supporting the revamp of the NSFP's new procurement model, aimed at improved cost efficiencies, more nutritious meals, and strengthened market linkages for smallholder farmers to supply the school feeding market.



In Somalia, WFP in partnership with the Ministry of Education, hosted a high-level ministerial round table on school feeding in Mogadishu. The event laid a foundation for the establishment of a national home-grown school feeding programme and brought on board three key ministries to support this initiative, positioning school feeding as a national development priority.

## Home Grown School feeding, a Catalyst for Strengthened Food Systems



WFP continues to support the roll-out of Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes with increased government engagement and resourcing. The HGSP programmes have multiple benefits, as they contribute to various sectors including, health, nutrition and local agriculture outcomes.

In partnership with foundations and other donors, WFP proactively pursued the transformation of local food systems using the HGSP in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya- aimed at improving value chains through enhancing production, post-harvest loss management and adoption of healthier menus in schools. In these countries, adoption of climate tolerant and indigenous nutritious crops was promoted, as well as fortification to improve micronutrients in food supplied to schools.

Across the region, national governments are either scaling up their HGSP programmes or improving quality, focusing on improved menus, integration of clean cooking energy or strengthening linkages with smallholder farmers. Significant advancements have been made in Kenya and Rwanda, with substantial increases in both coverage and funding, with Kenya allocating USD 40 million and Rwanda USD 75 million. Countries are also investigating how HGSP can help tackle climate change issues. Kenya is leading the way by incorporating climate factors into school feeding, aiming to develop a Climate-Smart Home-Grown School Feeding program as part of its expansion strategy.

While HGSF programs are more prevalent in stable environments, such as Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, countries in volatile situations, including Sudan, South Sudan, and Burundi, are making strides towards adopting Home-Grown School Feeding models, which helps build resilience among smallholder farmers.

With the current fiscal space shrinking, WFP is supporting national governments in developing sustainable financing strategies and evidence generation to demonstrate impact and increase stakeholder interest.

## Galvanising Partnerships for School Feeding

Uganda was the latest country to join the School Meals Coalition, bringing the total number of member states to **eight out of nine** countries in the region, with five having drafted their national commitments. This underscores the importance national governments place on school meals in the region.

WFP Regional Bureau was instrumental in the creation of the East African Sub-Regional School Meals Network in Rwanda in June 2023, marking the first of its kind on a global scale. This network has a strong engagement from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda as the host operates as a community of practice, with WFP Regional Bureau serving as its secretariat.

Additionally, WFP facilitated the participation of member states in the inaugural Global School Meals Coalition Summit in Paris with high level representation from Burundi, Ethiopia (Addis Ababa municipality), Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia and South Sudan.

To advance its advocacy efforts on school feeding, WFP together with the Governments' in the region, engaged and participated in the Africa Day of School Feeding held in March 2023 in Addis Ababa. The event highlighted the increasing government investment in school feeding, contributing to education outcomes.

With a three-year funding of USD 31.3 million from Novo Nordisk Foundation, WFP is developing a regional project which will be implemented in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. This project aims to utilize Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) as a catalyst for transforming food systems.

## Evidence on Impact of School Feeding

Burundi and Ethiopia commissioned Value-For-Money studies in collaboration with Harvard University, aiming to demonstrate the impact of WFP-supported school feeding on education outcomes. In Burundi, despite a 2 percent decline in national attendance and retention rates compared to 2022, WFP supported schools exhibited an average attendance rate 2 percent higher than the national average. Also, WFP supported schools reported higher graduation rate, a 1.5 percent lower repetition rate, and a 3.6 percent lower dropout rate. It was also revealed that school meals contributed to social protection, accounting for an average of 8 percent of household consumption expenditures and up to 14 percent of household food consumption.

Ethiopia saw a 2 percent rise in school attendance, reaching 73 percent, with dropout rates in WFP-supported schools' 4 percent lower than the national average of 14 percent. Preliminary findings for the value for money studies from Ethiopia indicated that each USD 1 invested in school meals generates USD 5 in return.

Rwanda and Somalia showcased impressive 99 percent retention rates in WFP-supported schools, underscoring the success of the school meals initiative. In South Sudan, communities benefiting from WFP's onsite school meals and take-home rations witnessed a notable 31 percent increase in enrolment, surpassing the 2022 figure of 13 percent. Moreover, in refugee camps, attendance, enrolment, and retention rates reached 12, 82, and 71 percent, respectively. Uganda experienced a significant 24 percent surge in enrolment compared to the previous year.

WFP Rwanda completed the mid-term evaluation of its HGFSF programme, which highlighted positive results, particularly in terms of quality and transition strategy. Additionally, in partnership with the World Bank Development Impact Evaluation (DIME), the decentralized procurement (HGFSF) model in Burundi was evaluated, comparing it to the centralized procurement model. Preliminary results underscore the need to scale up and strengthen the local decentralized procurement model. In Burundi and Rwanda, a Development Evaluation of the WFP-Rockefeller partnership has been conducted, identifying gaps and opportunities to strengthen local food systems.

Additionally, WFP in collaboration with Ethiopia's Ministry of Education conducted a gender analysis to evaluate the impact of the school feeding program on gender gaps in the Afar, Oromia, and Amhara regions and to identify pathways for making the program more gender transformative. The findings highlighted the positive effects of school feeding on increasing girls' school enrolment, participation, confidence, motivation, and overall well-being.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

# Grace and Salwa: a story of resilience in South Sudan

Grace Martin, left, and her daughter Salwa Anthony tend to the family plot in Yambio, South Sudan. Photo: WFP/Eulalia Berlanga

In Yambio, in southwestern South Sudan – a town known for its agriculture and fertile lands – teenager Salwa and her mother, Grace Martin, are beginning their day.

Now in her final year of primary school, Salwa has big dreams for the future, but faces many challenges.

“My mother struggled a lot and even now she works very hard to pay my school fees and bring us food every day,” she says. “This makes me want to go to school and study very hard to help her in the future.”

Martin is a single mother of two. Along with raising her children and two sisters, she cares for her own mother.

“I had a lot of problems before,” says Martin. “I didn’t have enough money to pay school fees and my children were falling sick because there was not enough food in the house.”

Today, however, Martin works at a community farm, where she has a vegetable plot. She also contributes to improving access to community roads. Both activities are part of a joint project to build resilience, run by UNICEF and WFP and funded by the German Development Bank.

The initiative, which includes training in such areas as post-harvest management and business, has been rolled out in urban areas of South Sudan like Yambio.



It aims to enhance access to safe learning spaces, improve health and nutrition services, and bolster food security for communities. For Martin and her daughter, this support has been transformative, turning dreams into stepping stones for a brighter future.

“Now my children eat at least two meals every day and school fees are a priority,” Martin says.



WFP/Eulalia Berlanga

*Women at Salwa’s school dish up WFP school meals that include produce from the school’s garden.*

Eating two meals every day, along with going to school, is not something everyone can do in this East African country, where 7.1 million people are food insecure, and 1.65 million children are malnourished. South Sudan also has some of the world's lowest literacy rates.

WFP school meals ensure students eat at least one nutritious meal daily and promote attendance. This is especially important for girls like Salwa - as 40 percent of girls in South Sudan marry before the age of 18, drop out of school and miss out on higher education.



*Salwa's education includes practical agricultural skills that she can bring to use at home.*

Salwa, too, is part of the resilience-building initiative. Schools like hers where WFP provides school meals to more than 1,400 students - are not only teaching subjects like science but are also offering essential life skills and empowerment.

Gender equality and awareness about gender-based violence – for both girls and boys – are integral parts of the curriculum. They ensure a well-rounded education that prepares students for the challenges of the real world and helps build more equitable communities.

Additionally, Salwa's education includes practical agricultural skills. She contributes to the school's garden, which supplements the WFP meals with fresh fruits and vegetables.

"I use what I learn at school to take care of our vegetable garden at home," she says.

The family's now flourishing garden provides nutritious food and extra income earned from selling the surplus produce.

But Salwa doesn't want to be a farmer when she grows up.

"My favorite subject is science," she says. "I like it a lot because I want to be a doctor in the future and help people."



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