



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

School Meals Programme in the Philippines

Bringing hot nutritious meals to children

The Philippines is among the countries grappling with extremely high learning poverty. 9 out of 10 children aged 10 years are unable to read and understand the age-appropriate text.¹ The national learning poverty rate in the Philippines (91 percent) is much higher than the average for East Asia and Pacific region (35 percent).² Children require optimal nutrition to think, learn, and acquire skills that will fully develop their potential. However, the Philippines is still facing the “triple burden” of malnutrition—undernutrition (stunting and wasting), overnutrition (overweight and obesity), and micronutrient deficiency.

Acknowledging the importance of health and nutrition for optimizing students’ learning, the Philippines i) was the first Asian country to join the Global School Meals Coalition (GSMC) in 2021 and ii) made a commitment to deliver nutritious meals to reach all schoolchildren by 2030. At the current juncture, 97 countries around the world are members of the GSMC, sharing its commitment to ensure healthy and nutritious meals for all schoolchildren.

School meals play an important role in strengthening food systems, particularly when adopting the Home-grown School Feeding (HGSF). The HGSF is an innovative



4.8 million people

will benefit from the scale-up of the school meals programme in the Philippines by 2028.

modality of school meals which promotes nutrition and learning for schoolchildren, while linking with local smallholder farmers to procure food. The HGSF consists of daily delivery of nutritious, hot meals that include locally sourced food, including rice, meats, vegetables, etc. through onsite cooking. By i) contributing to the education of children and addressing nutrition challenges, and ii) creating market opportunities for local smallholder farmers, the HGSF is one of the most cost-effective and impactful strategies to implement the Government’s school meals programme.

Through the HGSF, WFP will support the Philippine Government in enhancing and expanding the national school meals programme to reach **3.2 million schoolchildren** and create transformative change for **1.6 million smallholder farmers and families by 2028**.

¹ Learning poverty in the Philippines is 56 percentage points higher than the average in East Asia and Pacific region. spp

² The World Bank. Philippines Learning Poverty Brief. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099000207152223103/pdf/IDU002b5536c0db4104ec3087d809906ec2eae56.pdf>

Scaling up Home-grown School Feeding

The HGFS involves multiple sectors, including education, agriculture, and health, and requires strong intersectoral coordination and partnership. WFP, in collaboration with other UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNICEF, works to scale up the HGFS to expand the school meals programme, in line with the Philippines Development Plan 2023-2028.

Currently, WFP is supporting the Government at national and subnational levels in piloting the HGFS from School Year (SY) 2024-2025. One HGFS pilot will be implemented by both the Department of Education and local government units in Luzon and another by the Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education and local government units in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). WFP support includes the following key areas³:



Policy environment

Evidence-based advocacy to assist the Government in establishing a strong policy framework to enhance the school meals programme. This entails designing or reviewing laws, policies, and strategies, as well as regulations concerning food safety and quality standards, and procurement, among others.



Sustainable financing

Developing cost-benefit analysis and studies to assist the Government in identifying the **return on investment** for different models of school meals programmes, and developing a reliable financing strategy that can guide a phased scaling-up of the programme.



Capacity strengthening for coordinated programme implementation for governments at national and sub-national levels

Assisting in setting up efficient implementation of school meals programmes, including identifying and addressing capacity gaps on infrastructure and tools, as well as human resources. In addition, WFP supports the Government with the multi-sectoral coordination of school meals programme.



Programme design and implementation

In collaboration with the Department of Education, WFP designs and pilots enhanced modalities, such as the HGFS, for better results of government investments. Optimized modalities include universal coverage of students by *geographic/school targeting*, context-adapted school menus, and procurement. Additionally, WFP contributes to designing processes for closely monitoring and assessing the results of school meals programme.



Community roles - Reaching beyond schools

HGFS entails job opportunities and stable income for farmer cooperatives, caterers, and stakeholders, contributing to the local economy. Communities should participate in i) designing the programme, in particular, the prioritization of food to be served, and ii) resourcing and monitoring the programme. Close oversight and feedback from communities are crucial for enhancing the implementation.



³ World Bank. These areas are identified by SABER–School Feeding (SABER-SF), a useful approach to assessing the school feeding policy situation and systems in any country to identify the gaps and plan

appropriate capacity development plans and/or road maps with the government and other stakeholders.

<https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/26517>

In addition to the key areas mentioned, WFP is also contributing on:



Knowledge and experience sharing (South-South and Triangular Cooperation)

This entails peer-to-peer study visits and learning exchanges, developing partnerships and multisectoral coordination on education, nutrition, and agriculture.



Resilience support to smallholder farmers (context-specific HGSF model)

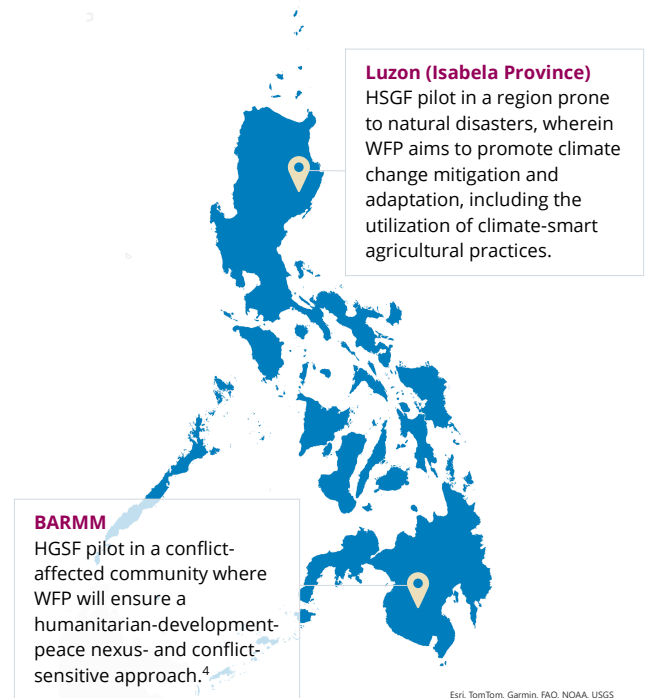
Together with key government ministries, WFP will provide technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of smallholder farmers on climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive agriculture and local procurement. Moreover, WFP will continue to support farmer cooperatives by providing training and linking with consumers, mainly social institutions such as schools, hospitals, and penitentiaries. This is for smallholder farmers to cultivate crops based on demand trends and ensure fair price negotiation without heavy reliance on the middlemen/traders. To that end, WFP launched **Farm2Go** application in 2023, which creates a digital marketplace where farmer cooperatives can interact with buyers remotely and in real-time.



Forging Partnerships with the Government on Pilot HGSF

WFP works with the National Feeding Programme Working Group, and in BARMM, with the newly established HGSF Technical Working Group.

Two locations were selected for context-specific HGSF pilots:



The HGSF pilot is a partnership between the Philippine Government (national and sub-national levels) and WFP. In both locations, the programme is funded and implemented by the Government, with WFP's support.

In consultation with the Government and based on the vulnerability of local communities, 7 local governments and 9 elementary schools in Maguindanao Province (BARMM), and 3 local governments and 3 elementary schools in Isabela Province (Luzon) were identified to pilot the HGSF. WFP provides technical assistance, by developing activities to strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders, including, *inter alia*, local governments, schools, farmers, and food suppliers.

The core objective of the HGSF project is to foster the development of a robust national HGSF system, bolstering government efforts to manage local systems. WFP is directly supporting the Government in designing the pilots. This entails i) setting standards and establishing processes for local food purchases,



⁴ The humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach supports the region in addressing immediate humanitarian needs, and promote

peace and development by improving food security, nutrition, agricultural productivity and livelihoods.

ii) developing customized school menus, and iii) providing human resources for planning implementing and monitoring the programme.

Additionally, WFP is assisting with the fortification of rice (which will be donated to the pilot schools) to enhance the Government's capabilities. At the beginning of the SY 2024-2025, schools targeted by the HGSF pilot in BARMM and Isabela, will provide daily, nutritious school meals to all schoolchildren (from kindergarten to grade 6).

Table 1. Phased HGSF Pilot Expansion

Beneficiaries	SY 2024-2025	SY 2025-2026*	Total
 Schoolchildren			
BARMM	3,000	7,000	10,000
Luzon	3,000	3,000	6,000
Total	6,000	10,000	16,000
 Smallholder farmers			
BARMM	500	4,500	5,000
Luzon	500	500	1,000
Total	1,000	5,000	6,000



16,000 schoolchildren to be reached and **6,000 smallholder farmers** to be integrated into the pilot HGSF implementation

Phase 1

During SY 2024-2025, WFP will distribute iron-fortified rice and develop activities to strengthen the capacity of schools and local governments to cover i) 6,000 learners with HGSF (3,000 in BARMM and 3,000 in Isabela) and ii) 1,000 local smallholder farmers to supply food for the school meals.

Phase 2

In 2025, the pilots will be scaled up to cover 16,000 learners (10,000 on BARMM and 6,000 on Luzon) with daily school meals and include up to 6,000 smallholder farmers as food suppliers for both HGSF pilots.

Piloting the HGSF will both test the efficacy of context-specific designs and generate evidence on the results of HGSF modality. The HGSF pilots will support the Government to fulfil their commitments with the Global School Meals Coalition and guide the expansion of this programme towards the universalization of the school meals in the Philippines.

“ A child’s education and health constitute more than their well-being, but also the future of a country.



All photos: WFP/Rein Skullerud

