



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

School Feeding Programme

Context

Due to the impact of the humanitarian crises, 1.5 million children in Cameroon require humanitarian educational support. In areas of high insecurity, thousands of schools and community learning spaces have been closed. Furthermore, families lack the resources to support their children's education, and the incentives for children to participate in low-skilled jobs are higher than keeping them in schools. Consequently, educational outcomes such as enrolment, retention, completion, and transition from primary to secondary school remain low. Less than 60 percent of students transition from primary into secondary schools, and 25 percent of students do not graduate from primary school.

Significant gaps exist between the enrolment rate of boys and girls in the Adamawa and East regions. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies are among

the main challenges to access to education for girls and women in these regions.

In the Far North Region, the humanitarian situation has a severe impact on children's access to and retention in school. Insecurity, inter-community clashes and floods have led to the destruction and closure of hundreds of schools, compounded by socio-cultural norms that hinder families from prioritising education. 564,000 school-age children need educational assistance in this region ([UNICEF](#)).

As a result of the socio-political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions, thousands of schools remain closed, and 865,000 children require access to educational services. The persistent attacks by non-state armed groups on education facilities render the provision of humanitarian assistance very challenging.

WFP's Support to the Government

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. 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.

WFP complements the Government's efforts in implementing the school feeding programme, enabling children, especially girls, in crisis-affected regions to access nutritious meals. WFP has been implementing school feeding activities in Cameroon since 1978. The school feeding programme is implemented as a social safety net in collaboration with the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) under the national school feeding programme, which is aligned with the draft School Feeding Policy.

In 2019, WFP and the Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which led to the development of a National School Feeding Strategy. Cameroon joined the **School Meals Coalition** in 2021, thereby reaffirming its dedication to restore, enhance and upscale school feeding programmes. The Government has advocated for resources through numerous funding opportunities such as Education Cannot Wait and the World Bank, to reach communities, simultaneously transforming food, education, social protection, and health systems.

Furthermore, WFP has established strategic partnerships with School Meals Coalition initiatives to strengthen the national school feeding regulatory and institutional capacities while leveraging **schools as hubs of development**. In this light, nutritious school meals will be provided to every school child, investments made to improve literacy, safe school environments created and gender gaps in education closed. Schools as hubs of development vision integrates hot and cold meals provided by smallholder farmers who are linked to schools to ensure fresh food supply. The school management committees are trained to ensure ownership.

School feeding often provides the only regular and nutritious meal the children eat, and with a school year of almost nine months (165 days), this provides a lifeline for many learners. School feeding has already achieved impressive results. Reports from participating schools indicated a nine percent increase in enrolment rates from 2023 to 2024.

When combined with local food purchases, school feeding has had a force multiplier, benefiting children, their families, and the local economy. School meals are procured locally from smallholder farmers and producers. In 2024, WFP linked 70 small-scale producer cooperatives to the HGSF initiative, enabling 1,428 small producers from 26 cooperatives to sell farm products to beneficiary schools. Cooperatives supplied more than 327 tonnes of assorted food, valued at over USD 892,500. This programmatic integration provided local producers with stable market access and financial inclusion opportunities.

SCHOOL FEEDING RESULTS

School Feeding Modality	2022	2023	2024
SF in Emergencies	71,993	62,969	32,102
Female	30,181	26,446	14,125
Male	41,812	36,523	17,977
# Schools	145	95	47
Food distributed (mt)	803	600	557
HGSF	2,759	6,763	71,851
Female	1,348	3,450	32,498
Male	1,411	3,313	39,353
# Schools	6	8	107
Cash transferred (USD)	125,500	123,000	892,500
Total Learners reached	74,752	69,732	103,953



PUPILS ASSISTED

In 2024, WFP continued to implement school feeding in emergencies in 47 schools across the Far North Region. The Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme expanded significantly, reaching 71,850 pupils (43 percent girls) in 107 schools across the Adamawa, Centre, East, Far North, North, Northwest, and Southwest regions.

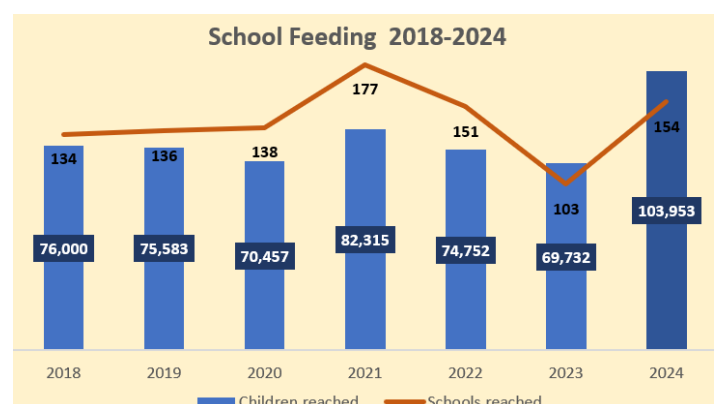
Meals varied according to local eating habits and the type of foodstuff available. Each plate of food contained approximately 630 Kcal, representing a third of the learner's daily nutritional intake, and often constituted the only meal learners consumed daily.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP supported households with **take-home rations** to encourage school attendance. In 2022, WFP resumed the distribution of daily **on-site** school meals while piloting the HGSF initiative in the East and Adamawa regions.

The initiative expanded significantly in 2024 due to funding from the Government of Cameroon through the World Bank funding mechanism to

finance the emergency project for the fight against food insecurity (PULCCA).

As an unintended consequence, the school feeding initiative 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 Civil Status Office, the local councils, and the prosecutor's office collaborate to issue birth certificates, allowing learners to sit for their examinations. However, the overarching short-term impact of the school meals initiative has been an increase in enrolment, school retention and attendance rates.



HGSF PROGRAMME OUTLOOK

In the wake of Ukraine/Russia crisis and subsequent rising food prices, it is preferable for the Government to scale up school meals programmes to serve as a safety net to support the most vulnerable. Decentralised line ministries and local partners have created multi-sectoral management committees that work with WFP to implement the initiative.

In developing a national school feeding approach, WFP, upon the request of MINEDUB facilitated a **Systems Approach for Better Education Results for School Feeding (SABER-SF) analysis** in September 2023. This second SABER-SF exercise (the first was in 2016) demonstrated Government's interest to develop, strengthen and sustain school feeding programmes. The report indicated that progress has been made in three of the five categories analysed. Several consultations have taken place to discuss ways of addressing the gaps identified and enhance national capacities.

In 2023, **WFP participated in the PASZEP** (*Projet d'Appui à la Scolarisation dans les Zones d'Education Prioritaires*) analysis led by MINEDUB. The results of this analysis are being exploited to define WFP's support to the Government.

In this regard, WFP and MINEDUB jointly developed a **Memorandum of Understanding** that establishes WFP's contribution to guarantee access to equitable, quality, and inclusive basic education for all school-age children through the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of school feeding programmes. The collaboration will also support Government's vision of **reaching 1 million children by 2025 with school meals**.

Other efforts include WFP's assistance in capacity strengthening of technical competencies and school feeding management committees in the target schools.

It is estimated that **school meals account for about 10 percent of household expenditure** for each child who participates, providing a substantial resource transfer and protective safety net to the poorest households. Therefore, by expanding school feeding in Cameroon, the schools serve as an investment for future generations, enabling every child, especially girls, to access education, while receiving nutritionally adequate school meals. Similarly, communities will increase their participation in food systems value chain support. Furthermore, through its strategic partnerships, WFP will generate evidence to help strengthen the foundations of a national programme.

Finally, WFP is facilitating capacity strengthening through exchange learning opportunities, such as the South-South and Triangular Cooperation learning missions, to ensure the sustainability of the programme and facilitate government takeover.

RESOURCE OUTLOOK

The funding requirement to provide daily school meals to learners is USD 4.6 million, with a shortfall of USD 3 million (65 percent of the total needs) from July to December 2025.

Photo page 1: WFP/Marvis Asah
Photo page 2: WFP/Marvis Asah

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