



Celebrating the 6th African Day of School Feeding: Launch of the *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020* Report

Side event on the margins of the first regular session of the Executive Board, 2021
Wednesday, 24 February 2021, 14:30–16:00
Virtual ZOOM meeting

Context

Before the pandemic, school feeding was the largest and most widespread social safety net in the world. Over 65 million children across the African continent were receiving school feeding; in 39 countries governments were financing and managing national school feeding programmes. These increasingly successful programmes were dealt a blow by the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. By April 2020, some 297 million students in Africa were excluded from educational activities, and 65 million children and adolescents missed out on school meals.

Many governments stepped up and implemented coping and mitigation measures, such as take-home rations and cash-based transfers to maintain care and support for children during school closures. These efforts showcase the value placed on these intervention as well as Africa's overall commitment towards school feeding programmes as a tool to ensure children are healthy and ready to learn.

In 2016 the African Union (AU) Heads of States and Governments highlighted the value placed on this intervention by establishing 1 March as the African Day of School Feeding. Since then this continental commemoration has been employed to reinforce political will for home-grown school feeding on the continent, promote knowledge sharing and awareness among civil society and the public.

This year's African Day of School Feeding is taking place at a turning point of the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse impact on development gains. This year's celebration sheds a light on the importance of school feeding as a safety net and provides an opportunity to learn from the crisis, particularly focusing now on the safe reopening of schools, for which school feeding programmes, as part of comprehensive school health packages, will be key to incentivizing families to send children back to schools.

The World Food Programme, along with the Rome-based agencies and sister United Nations agencies, is encouraged and intent on supporting the African Union and its Member States in recovering the development gains lost due to COVID-19, as well as advancing the home-grown school feeding and accelerating progress by leveraging robust data, sound research, evidence-based approaches and innovation.



Hence, WFP is proud to mark this year's African Day of School Feeding by launching the second ever *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020 Report*. Seven years since the first such report, we envision that this timely and opportune fountain of new information and insights will empower the stakeholder community to drive the school feeding agenda and its intended benefits more effectively and efficiently than ever before.

This side event on the margins of the first regular session of the Executive Board on 24 February 2021 will set in motion a series of celebrations, followed most immediately by an African Union -led high-level celebration on the actual African Day of School Feeding on 1 March 2021.

Objectives

With the 6th African Day of School Feeding taking place during what many hope and anticipate to be the turning point of the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse impact on development gains, this session seeks to offer research, policy as well as technical insights and solutions to recover the recently lost and accelerate future development gains. The three broad objectives of the session are:

- Launch of the second-ever *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020 Report*, availing a wealth of new data and research insights to empower stakeholders to advance the school feeding agenda; showcase partnerships, including with Member States, to build evidence and align efforts.
- As per the theme of the day, review the state of school feeding in Africa, including its particular set of gains, challenges and prospective ways forward; consider and propose the home-grown school feeding as a key driver to accelerate development gains, connecting local production and markets to school-based health, nutrition and education interventions.
- Kick off the campaign to build a global school feeding coalition that shall be formally launched at the United Nations food systems summit later in the year. The numbers in the *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020 Report* and the challenges discussed in this meeting will set the stage for the task ahead: restore access to school meals to pre-pandemic levels, and scale up access to this key safety net by the most vulnerable children, who were previously not included in school feeding programmes.



Agenda

The 90-minute session will be moderated by Ms Carmen Burbano, Director, School-Based Programmes Division, WFP

(5 minutes) Welcome

- Ms Carmen Burbano, Director, School-Based Programmes Division, WFP

(10 minutes) Opening remarks

- Mr David Beasley, Executive Director, WFP
- H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union Commission

(25 minutes) Presentation: State of school feeding worldwide, 2020

- Prof. Donald Bundy, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University of London
- Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO
- Mr Robert Jenkins, Chief, Education and Associate Director, Programme Division, UNICEF

(15 minutes) State of school feeding in Africa: perspectives from the year 2020, marked by pandemic

- Ms Bibi Giyose, Senior Advisor for Food and Nutrition Security, African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)
- H.E. Dr. Tariq Al Gurg, Chief Executive Officer, Dubai Cares

(15 minutes) Recovering and accelerating development gains following the COVID-19 pandemic: making the case for home-grown school feeding

- Mr Máximo Torero Cullen, Assistant Director-General, FAO
- Ms Jyotsna Puri, Director, Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division, IFAD

(15 minutes) Member State comments

(5 minutes) Closing remarks

- Ms Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, WFP