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UNITED NATIONS ROME-BASED AGENCIES

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF NATIONAL HOME-GROWN SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMMES TO TRANSFORM LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT PANDEMIC RECOVERY THROUGH SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION



FINAL REPORT

THEMATIC SOLUTION FORUM N. 5

GSSD EXPO 2022 - BANGKOK, THAILAND - 12 SEPTEMBER

Thematic Solution Forum n.5 at the Global South-South Development (GSSD) Expo 2022

Joint initiative for Home-Grown School Feeding of the UN Rome Based Agencies (FAO, IFAD, WFP)

Unlocking the Potential of National Home-Grown School Meals Programmes to transform local food systems and support pandemic recovery through South- South and Triangular Cooperation

I. GENERAL CONTEXT

During this 11th edition of the Global South-South Development (GSSD) EXPO, the United Nations Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) – FAO, IFAD and WFP - convened the [Thematic Solution Session 5 of the GSSD Expo](#) at the UN Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand focused on “*Unlocking the Potential of National Home-Grown School Meals Programmes to transform local food systems and support pandemic recovery through South-South and Triangular Cooperation*”. Its main objective was to present the new [RBAs joint South-South and Triangular Cooperation \(SSTC\) initiative on Home-Grown School Feeding \(HGSF\)](#).

The overall objective of the proposed RBAs joint programme is to complement and scale-up on- going interventions in countries by identifying their progress in national HGSF programmes, outlining their particular challenges and proposing successfully implemented solutions from other countries and contexts. The programme will initially support five countries all part of the Global School Meals Coalition – The Philippines, Kenya, Rwanda, Sao Tome e Principe and Senegal - to strengthen their national home-grown school feeding initiatives.

The objectives of the event were to:

1. Provide a platform for countries from the Global South to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned in HGSF, showcase their commitment to improving national HGSF programmes and share their views on how they can benefit from SSTC in this area.
2. Identify potential partners for the RBAs joint SSTC initiative in HGSF to support national capacity strengthening in designing and implementing national sustainable HGSF programmes.

This event was also an opportunity for the RBAs to jointly celebrate for the sixth consecutive year the [UN Day for South-South Cooperation](#) (held annually on 12 September). In this spirit, IFAD’s SSTC Director moderated the event and WFP’s SSTC Director delivered the opening remarks highlighting the rationale for a joint RBAs SSTC initiative on HGSF. In his closing remarks, FAO’s SSTC Director called upon partners to join the RBAs in supporting this SSTC field initiative.

The panel was composed by senior Government representatives from 3 of the 5 countries initially identified to pilot the initiative, namely Kenya, Sao Tome and Principe, and Senegal; coupled with their respective FAO, IFAD and WFP national country representatives as well as a senior representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Representatives from the Global South voiced their views on their challenges and approaches to HGSF and how this initiative contributes to their national targets for Sustainable Development Goal n.2 and n.17.

II. SOLUTIONS/CASES PRESENTED

HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING: A GAME CHANGER FOR CHILDREN

In line with the outcome document of the UN Food Systems Summit held in September 2021, national HGSF has been recognized as an effective means to reach the most vulnerable children living in hunger. HGSF can support strengthening local value chains for the global food crisis response and generate longer-term multisectoral benefits in education, health and livelihoods of children and communities.

Given their role in coordinating the UN Food Systems Summit follow-up and expertise in facilitating SSTC for SDG 2, the RBAs can play a catalytic role in bringing together synergies, skills and innovative solutions from the Global South to scale up national HGSF programmes in selected partner countries of the [Global School Meals Coalition](#).



Kenya's national HGSF Programme started in 2009, through a WFP project that has seen a progressive hand-over to the government and has now evolved into one of the strongest in Africa. The Director of Primary Education from the Kenyan Ministry of Education outlined how the Government joined the Global School Meals Coalition, committing to seek for sustainable and innovative funding, as well as develop a national policy on school meals and increase coverage of national school meals from 1.6 million in 2018 to 6 million children by 2030. The WFP Kenya representative underlined how SSTC has played a key role in advancing this agenda.

Despite the fast evaluation of the programme, Kenya still looks to learn from others such as China and Brazil to strengthen data and management information systems. At the same time, Kenya is willing to continue to share its successful experience and lessons learned so far with countries from the region.



The Government of Sao Tome e Principe has been implementing its National School Feeding and Health Program (PNASE) since 2016. Currently, it is the country's main safety net, providing hot school meals every day for more than 46,000 students. In a context where more than two-thirds of the local population is poor¹, this safety net is a key mechanism to mitigate food insecurity, malnutrition and to reduce school absenteeism. The greatest challenge, underscored by the Minister of Agriculture, is to strengthen the mechanism for local purchases for school meals programmes to allow for the gradual replacement of imports with locally produced food from family farms. The IFAD regional representative highlighted how IFAD, WFP and FAO are supporting the HGSF programme, by providing technical assistance also by brokering SSTC exchanges.

¹ Based on a poverty line of US\$ 3.2 per day



Since 2009, Senegal started a process of transition from international to local procurement for school canteens thanks to the support of FAO and WFP, through the “Purchase for Africans by Africans” programme in collaboration with Brazil. As explained by the Director of School Canteens at the Ministry of National Education, Senegal has established a decentralised model for school feeding, which enables local communities to play a significant role in the operationalization of school canteens. Despite these government’s efforts, the reach of the HGSF programme remains limited (20% of coverage), as does the effective organisation of smallholder farmers to produce and supply nutritious food to schools through the public food procurement. The FAO Representative in Senegal recalled their support since 2012 to develop a framework for public procurement of local products. With regards to SSTC, Senegal is eager to learn from southern partners on best practices to produce and supply nutritious food to schools through the public food procurement mechanisms.

III. MOVING FORWARD

According to the World Bank, school feeding is the largest safety net in the world as well as the largest and best functioning social assistance programme for children. While many countries have achieved significant progress in implementing HGSF programmes, a number of them still face challenges in effectively connecting smallholder farmers to local food value chains linked to school feeding programmes.

In order to meet a raising demand and support developing countries’ response to the unfolding global food crisis, the RBAs joined efforts to design this SSTC programme on HGSF as a concrete way to operationalize the commitments included in the 2018 Joint RBAs Roadmap towards BAPA+40 and a tangible contribution to the implementation of the [UN Strategy for SSTC](#).

As a way forward, the next steps will include: country level consultations to formulate the intervention, resource mobilisation – both technical and financial - for the implementation. Specific SSTC matches will be identified with host governments and facilitated with RBAs support. Results and lessons learned will be duly captured as part of the monitoring & evaluation of the initiative and disseminated through SSTC knowledge platforms, including South-South Galaxy.

Additional partners such as regional entities, International Financial Institutions and triangular partners are needed to help take this initiative off the ground. During its intervention, JICA’s senior adviser showcased the wealth of experience Japan has matured since the 1950s in implementing HGSF programmes at scale. JICA reiterated the relevance of SSTC in promoting HGSF, underscoring the relevance of exchanges amongst peers, who can share living experiences and technologies that can be adapted to local contexts. As a triangular partner, JICA sees great added value in supporting also South-South peer exchanges, to complement their bilateral cooperation with further knowledge, experience and technologies of developing countries to achieve development results. Finally, the RBAs SSTC Directors invited interested parties to express their willingness to contribute to this initiative in various forms, including through financial technical and human resources.

IV. MAIN MESSAGE

The world is facing a hunger crisis on an unprecedented scale, food and energy prices have never been higher, with devastating impacts on the world's most vulnerable people, countries and economies. This crisis poses significant challenges to national food systems of countries in the Global South, already struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, adapt to climate change, and address persistent and growing inequalities.

The UN RBAs - FAO, IFAD and WFP - with their shared mandate of ensuring food security for all people and role of coordinating the UN Food System Summit follow-up, have joined forces to support one of the most impactful evidence-based interventions to positively transform global food systems: national HGSF programmes.

In line with national food system transformation pathways and the goals of the Global School Meals Coalition, the RBAs will strengthen country capacities to design and implement national HGSF programmes by facilitating SSTC. These efforts build on a long-standing collaboration in SSTC between the RBAs which was consolidated in the Joint RBAs Roadmap Towards BAPA+40.

By leveraging each agency's comparative advantage, RBAs-facilitated SSTC can play a pivotal role in enabling countries of the Global South to share their knowledge and experience to strengthen national food systems to reach the most vulnerable individuals and groups.

Annex I: Agenda

IME	TOPIC	SPEAKERS
Introductory Remarks from the Moderator		
5'	Welcome and introduction from the moderator	Mr. Ron Hartman, IFAD, Director of Global Engagement, Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation
Opening Remarks		
5'	The role of the RBAs in brokering SSTC to support national HGSF programmes as a vehicle for food systems transformation in the context of the global food crisis.	Mr. David Kaatrud, WFP, Director of the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division
Panel: Voices from the field - Reaching the most vulnerable through SSTC for home-grown school feeding programmes		
10'	Country perspective from Kenya: Opportunities for SSTC to share Kenya's experience with the transition of school meals programmes to the Government with partners in the developing world.	Ms. Nerreah Anyango Olick, Director of Primary Education, Ministry of Education Kenya, and Ms. Lauren Landis, WFP Country Director in Kenya
10'	Country perspective from Sao Tome and Principe	H.E. Francisco Martins dos Ramos-Pardal, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, Sao Tome and Principe, and Ms. Ms. Emime Ndiokubwayo, IFAD representative in Cameroon and Central Africa Region (former IFAD representative of Sao Tome and Principe)
10'	Country perspective from Senegal	Mr. El Hadji Seck, Director of School Canteens at the Ministry of National Education of Senegal, and Mr. Robert Gouantoueu Guej, FAO representative in Senegal
10'	Relevance of building partnerships and supporting SSTC for accelerating HGSF to help achieve zero hunger for all.	Mr. Shunichi Nakada, Senior Advisor, Economic Development Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
Discussion (Moderator)		
18'	Questions from the floor and discussion.	Voices from the audience at the GSSD Expo
Closing remarks		
5'	Key take-aways and closing remarks.	Mr. Ye Anping, FAO, Director of the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Division
2'	Group photo	Moderator

Annex II: Speakers

 <p>MODERATOR: <i>Mr. Ron HARTMAN</i>, IFAD, Director of Global Engagement, Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation</p>	 <p><i>Ms. Emime Ndiokubwayo</i>, IFAD representative in Cameroon and Central Africa Region (former IFAD representative of Sao Tome and Principe)</p>
 <p><i>Mr. David KAATRUD</i>, WFP, Director of the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division</p>	 <p><i>Mr. El Hadji SECK</i>, Director of School Canteens at the Ministry of National Education of Senegal</p>
 <p><i>Ms. Nerreah Anyango OLICK</i>, Director of Primary Education, Ministry of Education Kenya</p>	 <p><i>Mr. Robert GOUANTOUEU GUEI</i>, FAO representative in Senegal</p>
 <p><i>Ms. Lauren LANDIS</i>, WFP Country Director in Kenya</p>	 <p><i>Mr. Shunichi NAKADA</i>, Senior Advisor, Economic Development Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)</p>
 <p><i>H.E. Francisco Martins DOS RAMOS-PARDAL</i>, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, Sao Tome and Principe</p>	 <p><i>Mr. Ye ANPING</i>, FAO, Director of the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Division</p>

Annex III: Q&A

1. What are the challenges of HGSF?

At the beginning of 2020, national school feeding programmes delivered school meals to more children than at any time in human history, making school feeding the most extensive social safety net in the world². Despite the efforts of low-income countries to strengthen their financial and policy efforts in relation to school feeding, the overall coverage of school children is still 20% (lowest coverage in Sub-Saharan Africa), compared to the 45% in lower middle-income countries or 61% of the BRICS³.

The largest school feeding programmes in the world all rely on the principle of locally sourced food. The BRICS countries, which provide 48% of the world's free or subsidized school meals daily, all use nationally sourced food. In Brazil, for example, there is a particular focus on local production through a requirement that 30% of school food originates in the immediate vicinity of the school⁴. These measures help create local jobs, shorter supply chains, and make local farmers' markets more predictable and stable. They also increase access to fresh local produce and help establish life-long dietary preferences for fresh locally available foods. Yet a majority of low-income countries continue to rely heavily on imported foods. There is a need to better understand the constraints for low-income countries, and to help them scale-up HGSF efforts as key elements of their national programmes.

Many countries face similar challenges at implementing HGSF, to name a few:

1. **Implementation and coordination structures, whether “bottom up” or “centralized”.** Most African countries follow the first decentralized approach, focused on local ownership. Food is procured by local school or community committees, from women's groups and farmer-based organizations, with some support from district and state institutions. The Government of Kenya for example, despite having such an advance HGSF programme, would like to strengthen coordination structures at national, county and school levels.
2. **Food procurement mechanisms.** HGSF should source food as directly as possible from small-scale farmers or from farmers' associations, cooperatives or warehouses, targeting groups that could become regular partners with the programme. HGSF must offer agricultural development support to help small-scale farmers increase their production and meet the demand of the school feeding programmes. Smallholder farmers often face the challenge of accessing school markets through the public procurement schemes, for example in the Philippines and Senegal. On the other hand, it is key also to enhance the capacity of local governments to link public food procurement demands to smallholder suppliers, as it is the case for Rwanda and Sao Tome e Principe who wishes to reduce dependency on imports.
3. **Agricultural development.** One of the objectives of HGSF is also to promote agriculture development so that the demand for food by schools in food-insecure areas can be satisfied by purchasing local food produced by small-scale farmers in both food-secure and -insecure areas. Interventions in the agricultural development area address three main challenges: poor information and institutional bottlenecks, lack of access to inputs and lack of production and management skills. Diversification of local production of safe, nutritious and quality food is also a challenge faced in countries like Kenya and the Philippines.

² WFP, 2020. State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

2. What role can the RBAs play to support governments in HGSF from a policy perspective?

National government stakeholders can benefit from RBAs years of experience in supporting school feeding; their reach and knowledge of the poorest and hardest-to-reach populations; and their trajectory of working with more than 100 countries on sustainable national school feeding programmes. RBAs can leverage on their mutual strengths and experience to support national stakeholders at the policy level, from the perspective of the single agencies' experience as well as through joint initiatives or frameworks of which they are part.

FAO is committed to raising levels of nutrition, reducing rural poverty and enabling inclusive food systems. It recognizes the school setting as an opportune platform for a holistic approach that can support complementary actions and positive outcomes in these areas. Capitalizing on its breadth and depth of technical competence, normative guidance products and global assessments and building on lessons learned from ongoing projects, FAO is strategically positioned to support governments in delivering integrated action in school food and nutrition at policy and programmatic level, through advocacy, guideline setting, capacity development and technical support delivered also by brokering SSTC exchanges. For example, FAO is providing policy support on food procurement for home-grown school feeding initiatives in Ethiopia and Senegal. More in the FAO School Food and Nutrition Framework.

In line with the strategic move from food aid to food assistance, WFP is working towards high- quality and sustainable school feeding programmes that are owned and funded by national governments. At the centre of the WFP School Feeding Policy is an intention to shift ownership of school feeding to national governments. In line with this policy, WFP seeks to support national governments with a view to achieving: 1. Improved quality of school feeding by increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation; 2. Improved coverage, especially of girls; 3. Sustainability by aiming to mainstream school feeding into national policies, establish stable funding and budgeting, and build partnerships for coordination and community ownership. Much of this effort is delivered also through WFP-facilitated SSTC, for example with support from the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil.

While IFAD is not directly involved in the development of school feeding programs, its objective of strengthening short circuits, improving the living and production conditions of small farmers and transforming food systems is aligned with school feeding, which allows for multisectoral and cross-cutting action. For example, in Guatemala, IFAD partnered with WFP and FAO to finance and implement a food production chain that allowed local farmers to provide fruits and vegetables for school meals. Even when the COVID-19 epidemic closed schools, the scheme continued to function because of the strong infrastructure in place.

In terms of existing joint efforts to provide guidance on HGSF, the RBAs and partners have developed the Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework, intended as a guidance tool for the design, implementation and monitoring of home-grown school feeding programmes.

Furthermore, through the membership in the Global School Meals Coalition, led by France and Finland, the RBAs can leverage this important international platform for joint advocacy and resource mobilization.

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