



Food Security and School Nutrition in Cabo Verde

School feeding programmes have proved successful in providing educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children. They have also improved enrolment rates, household food security, nutritional status and gender equity, each of which contributes to improving the development of individuals and the whole country.

In September 2010, the Government of Cabo Verde took over responsibility for funding and managing the national school feeding programme which had been in place since 1979 under the management of WFP. The Government requested the United Nations (UN) technical support in specific areas aimed at consolidating and strengthening the gains already made in order to secure continuity of the programme. At the time, the project covered 100 percent of public elementary schools, registering a high enrolment rate of 92 percent for the 2007/2008 school year, while supporting the food security and nutrition of students and providing social protection to the most vulnerable families. Cabo Verde is one of eight pilot countries under the UN "Delivering as One" initiative, launched by the Secretary General. This ensures that participating UN agencies in the country work in complete coordination under a common programme.

In 2011 a four year United Nations Joint Programme (UNJP) under the coordination of FAO began. It brought together WFP, UNICEF, FAO and WHO to support transition of responsibility for the school feeding programme to FICASE (Cape Verdean Student Foundation), the Ministry of Education and Sports (MED), the Ministry of Rural Development (MDR) and the Ministry of Health (MOH). In July 2012, the conceptual framework of school feeding strategy in Cabo Verde, based on an integrated multisectoral approach, was amended to better meet the challenges and priorities of the Government. The work of UNJP was organized in four components:

1. **Enhancing institutional capacities of the Programme:** In order to ensure continuity and quality in the implementation of the School Feeding Programme, the institutional capacities of staff in FICASE and involved ministries needed to be enhanced. Capacity building focused on aspects such as management, logistics, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation. Technical support for policy development was also provided; for example, policy for local purchases.
2. **Supply of school canteens.** The focus of this component was the diversification of school meals by revitalizing local production for the programme from small farmers and fisherfolk. Existing local procurement initiatives were reviewed and evaluated to identify the most appropriate strategies to improve existing local initiatives and test new approaches through pilot projects. Assistance was provided to help local producers improve organization in order to meet the needs of schools and increase their production



and productivity. Procedures and standards (including safety) to be used by schools were defined and integrated into planning processes and management.

- 3. Food and Nutrition education in schools.** A revision of the curriculum was undertaken in order to include more and better integrated nutrition education. This included topics such as dietary diversity, the importance of exercise, prevention of non-communicable diseases and also an awareness of the right to food. Education methods in teacher training programmes (pre-service and in-service) were introduced, as well as training in nutrition and food hygiene for school staff (including cooks and teachers) and street vendors outside schools. This component also included the revitalization of school gardens to serve as an educational tool not only for the children but also for the community around them (parents and teachers).
- 4. Managing of school canteens.** To ensure the quality of meals this component focused on improving and standardizing the infrastructure of school canteens and their equipment. Training sessions on food hygiene, food and nutrition for cooks and the educational community were held.

Proposals for pilot projects were developed to test different ways of managing school canteens, so as to present the Government with technically and financially viable options.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Various local procurement systems for school canteens were tested through pilot projects: 34 pilot schools were covered in Santiago, São Vicente, Sto. Antão and São Nicolau. These benefitted about 10 000 students, with 9 contracted vendors delivering 15 756 kg of vegetables, 12 935 kg of fruit and 2 412 kg of fish to schools.
- A course on good hygiene practices and food handling was held to train 239 technicians of decentralized services of all municipalities, 430 school meal cooks and other representatives of the local educational community. Thirteen sessions to raise awareness were undertaken and training campaigns were delivered to 355 coordinators, managers and teachers to implement good practices. Training was also given to 43 teachers, administrators, coordinators and technicians from FICASE on the basics of agriculture as a way to ensure sustainability of education in schools.

- A review of the integration of food and nutrition education in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary schools was carried out, providing guidance for future improvements.
- Five inter and intra exchanges among the islands with 160 participants from the community took place to share successful experiences and practices. Fifty four nurseries were installed as educational models on agricultural land and in hydroponic boxes using recycled materials (bottles, tyres, boxes, etc.). A guide on educational school gardens for teachers in elementary schools was also developed and tested.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Working in partnership with FICASE, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MED), the Ministry of Rural Development (MDR) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) is proving essential to ensure continuity of the inter-sectorial work of the programme, as well as ownership of the different activities by Government agencies.
- The "Delivering as One" approach is essential to maximize impact and reduce costs. Improving coordination generates synergies and opportunities for dialogue among the various agencies. This provides the project with the comparative advantages that each agency can offer within its area of work.
- To improve farmers' access to markets, it is essential to provide capacity building to strengthen their ability to plan production. It is also necessary to promote the skills of farmer organizations in order to meet quality and quantity requirements in a sustainable manner.

