

POST-2015 AGENDA: ROLE OF NUTRITION IN SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES LINKED TO LOCAL AGRICULTURE

SOUTH AFRICA FROM 29 SEPTEMBER TO 3 OCTOBER 2014

Communiqué

Since 1997, the annual Global Child Nutrition Forum has united leaders from developing countries for five days of intensive training, technical assistance, and planning, all directed toward establishing country-operated sustainable school feeding programmes. It has become the largest annual forum on school feeding.

By sharing their insights, experiences, and challenges, an informal alliance of leaders dedicated to advancing school feeding has evolved. As a result, the Forum has become a catalyst for school feeding development. The Forum is implemented by the non-profit Global Child Nutrition Foundation in conjunction with partners including experts from governments, other organisations, and the private sector also support the Forum.

With the support of the Governments of South Africa and Brazil, the sixteenth annual Forum took place in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa, from September 29 through October 3, 2014 and focused on the role of Nutrition as a core component of effective and sustainable school feeding programmes linked to local agricultural programmes.

The delegates from 38 countries agreed to this declaration and recommendations:

CONSIDERING:

The Human Right to Adequate Food (HRAF), the outcomes of Rio +20, the Secretary General's Zero Hunger Challenge, the Post-2015 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are geared to promote sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection, the Forum concluded that both nutrition and multi-sector approaches will play central roles in the realisation of the SDGs, and that sustainable school feeding linked to local agriculture and child nutrition is multi-sector programme which can deliver across several SDG goals and targets.

The decision 66/222 of the United Nations General Assembly to declare 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming in recognition of the role of family farming in school feeding and its contribution in the fight against hunger and poverty eradication in the world, the Forum recognizes the opportunity for the creation and deepening of policies linking nutrition, agriculture and education that target family farmers through school feeding.

The Rights of the Child, specifically Article 4 on the Protection of rights: Governments have a responsibility to take all available measures to make sure children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled by ensuring social services, legal, health and educational systems, as well as adequate funding which creates an environment where children can grow and reach their

potential, in this context, the Forum recognizes the role that school feeding can play to ensure the protection of children.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly specifically article 14 (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment; and 14 (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

The Forum recognizes the role of the national school feeding programmes in attaining education goals such as high rates of enrolment, retention, gender parity and improved learning outcomes and cognition in children.

The Forum applauded the efforts being made by the respective governments and development partners, private sector as well as non-government and civil society organizations towards improving the nutritional status of children in the world.

The Forum expressed satisfaction over the commitments of the international community for school feeding programmes for improving the nutritional status of children worldwide.

The Forum clearly recognised that Government-led National school feeding programmes based on local purchase and diet diversity has a series of benefits in education, health, gender, food security, nutrition, social protection, local agriculture and rural economic development.

The Forum recognised the benefits of school feeding in improving nutritional status of children particularly when linked to diet diversity, local agriculture production and small-holder farmers often referred to as home-grown school feeding.

The Forum ascertained that providing nutritious meals respecting specific needs of children in school and particularly the girl child can break the intergenerational cycle of hunger and poverty. The Forum recognised recent research that provides evidence that school feeding can address some of the challenges of malnutrition and inappropriate food habits, and lead to improve cognitive capacities beyond the first 1000 days.

The Forum praised South-South cooperation as an effective means to improve sustainable school feeding programmes with its linkages to nutrition and local agriculture production through the sharing of experiences and recognises the contribution made by the Governments of South Africa, Brazil and others who have supported the 16th annual Forum.

In the spirit of South-South cooperation, Niger's Minister of Education convened on the margins of the Forum, a high level meeting with the Ministries of Education in Western and Central Africa present, and have agreed to work together on the following commitments: to initiate High Level discussions focussing on improvement of sustainable and nationally-run school feeding programme; and to advocate within their respective governments for a gradual increase in

budgetary allocations for national school feeding linked to local agriculture and supply by small-holder farmers.

RECOMMENDATIONS and COMMITMENTS

Recognising the significance of the Zero Hunger Challenge, the Post-2015 agenda, and the SDG process, and the potential of school feeding to contribute both directly and indirectly to achieving multiple SDGs, the participants of 16th GCNF have the following recommendation and commitments:

Sustainable school feeding programmes that incorporate nutritious and diet diverse meals linked to small-holder farmer production be recognized as a key strategy for the achievement of the Zero Hunger Challenge, and the SDGs.

That governments recognise school feeding programmes as an investment and not an expenditure, as such governments adopt and include sustainable school feeding strategies into national investment, economic, agriculture, health and social development plans including social protection programmes as a way to contribute the achievement of the SDGs at the national level.

That the political commitment must be garnered at national levels for all governments to take full ownership of the school feeding programmes in their public school system, fully supported by the necessary policies, legal instruments and commitments of adequate levels of financial resources.

Recognizing the limitations of national governments facing multiple and competing demands to their limited resources, the need for firm commitments from national governments and international aid agencies and development partners, multilateral institutions such as international and regional development banks for investing more in school feeding, working towards a nutrition-focused sustainable nationally owned and managed programmes.

That local and global level leadership needs to adopt a multi-sector approach to advance home-grown school feeding while engaging in greater levels of partnerships, collaboration and collective efforts to respond to the development of school age children including those of adolescent girls.

That multi-sectoral coordination at the global, national and regional levels is required among the line agencies including government institutions, research institutions, civil society organisation and private sector.

The conference further reiterated the importance of home grown school feeding practices as a means of empowering local communities and promoting nutritional education to achieve sustainable school feeding programmes across the country.

NEXT STEPS

- The participants shall disseminate and advocate the outcomes of the XVI GCNF among the main stakeholders responsible including members of UN Open Working group on Sustainable Development Goals and the other key international forums such as the upcoming International Nutrition Forum in November 2014 in Rome.
- Use media, social media and other channels to advocate for school feeding as a nutrition intervention.
- Establishment of a mechanism of follow up to facilitate communication and further elaborate and clarify how school feeding underpins and contributes to the achievement of SDG included the Zero Hunger Challenge.
- Development of National Action Plans to implement the recommendations of the GCNF.