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# School Meal Programs Around the World

Report Based on the Global Survey of  
School Meal Programs ©



# About GCNF

## A Global Community to Nourish Children

The Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) brings together a committed community of governments, civil society, and the private sector to ensure that hunger is not a barrier to learning for any child. Together we advocate for school feeding programs as a powerful investment in every child's human capital; share innovations, challenges, and lessons learned among our peers; and provide support through forging valuable partnerships and connecting resources to meet the needs of our network members.

We achieve this through the **Global Survey of School Meal Programs** ©, by connecting leaders of school meal programs at the annual **Global Child Nutrition Forum** and regional learning exchanges, and by supporting governments and civil society to strengthen school meal policies and programs. It is the strength of our community and our growing partnerships that have helped GCNF to grow and support increased access to nutritious school meals around the world.



# The Global Survey of School Meal Programs<sup>©</sup> Report

The Global Survey of School Meal Programs © fills a void by establishing the first global database of school meal programs that gathers standardized information across all countries.

The survey is designed to capture information on:



The scope of each country's school feeding activities



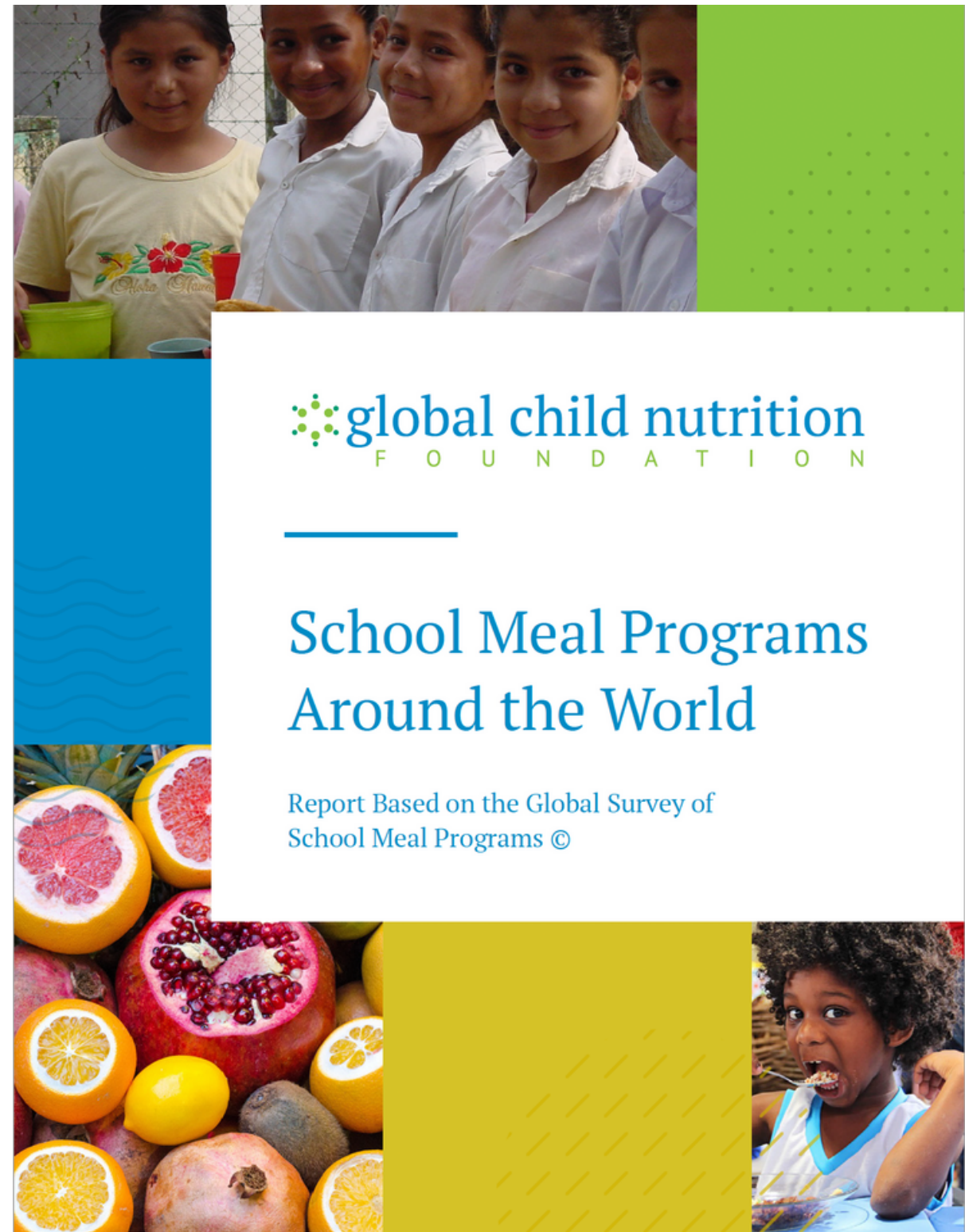
Government involvement



Nutrition, education, and gender



Agricultural and private sector engagement





# Key Findings

**School meals are an investment in human capital.**  
Countries make transformative human capital investments, ensuring children are well-nourished and ready to learn, and are able to fulfill their potential as healthy, skilled, productive adults.

**School meals can transform the food system.**  
School meal programs can be leveraged to transform food systems to increase the availability of nutritious, safe, sustainably produced, and affordable foods that prioritizes child nutrition.

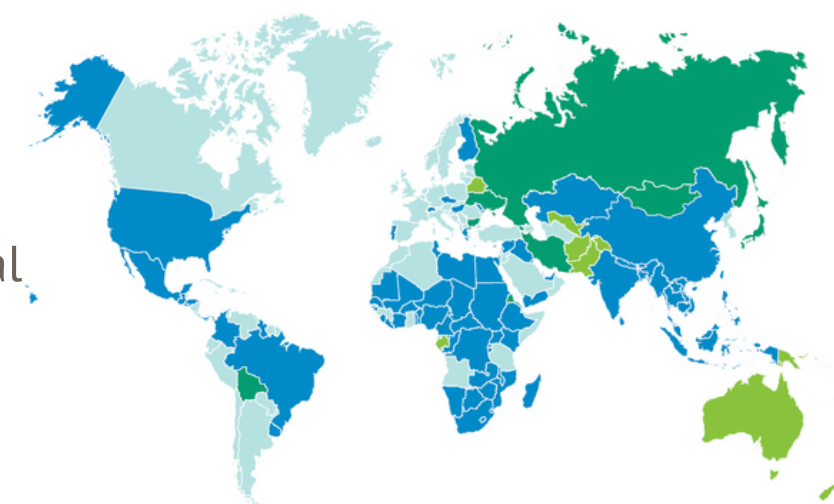
**78%**  
of the world's population make up countries surveyed

**\$45 bn**  
total expenditure reported for school feeding programs.

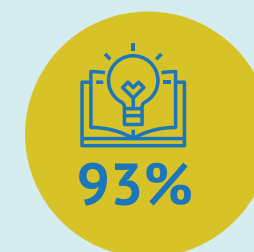


Harnessing this **buying power** could have a powerful and positive effect on both national and global food systems.

Across the 85 countries surveyed, an estimated **297.3 million children of all ages** received food through school meal programs in the previously completed school year.



## % PROGRAMS THAT CITED OBJECTIVES



Education



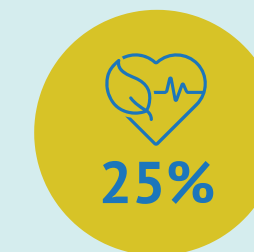
Nutrition



Social Safety Net



Agriculture



Obesity Prevention & Mitigation

**82%**

of programs purchased some or all school food domestically



***The survey showed greater school food diversity where food was purchased locally.***





# Key Findings

## School meals provide and promote nutrition.

Investing in a child's nutrition beyond the first 1,000 days to the first 8,000 days of life is critical for establishing lifelong health and full future potential. School feeding is a powerful tool to meet the nutritional needs of children and adolescents.

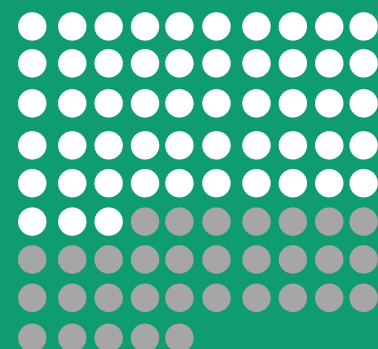
## School meals strengthen local agriculture and drive inclusive economic growth.

School meal programs provide an opportunity to expand local agricultural economies, support resilience in local supply chains, create jobs, and economically empower women and youth.

OVER  
**4,000,000**

JOBS WERE NOTED IN THE SURVEY AS BEING LINKED TO SCHOOL MEAL ACTIVITIES

THIS IS SURELY AN UNDERCOUNT, AS ONLY **53 OF 85** RESPONDING COUNTRIES PROVIDED ANY JOB-RELATED DATA



**88%** cited students' **improved nutrition** as a goal

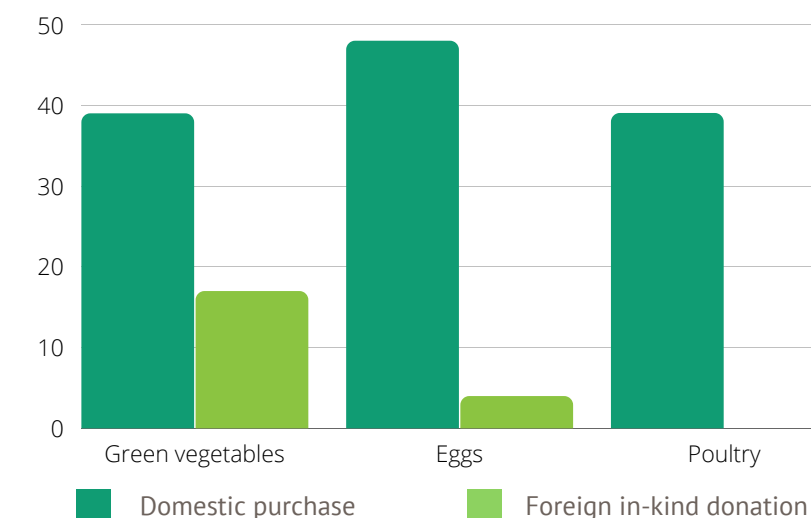
**91%** provided **nutrition education**

**66%** had nutrition laws, policies, and/or standards

**68%** served **fortified foods**

### IMPROVING NUTRITION WITH SCHOOL MENU DIVERSITY

Programs that rely on domestic purchase strengthen local agricultural development and more commonly report diverse and nutritious food items.



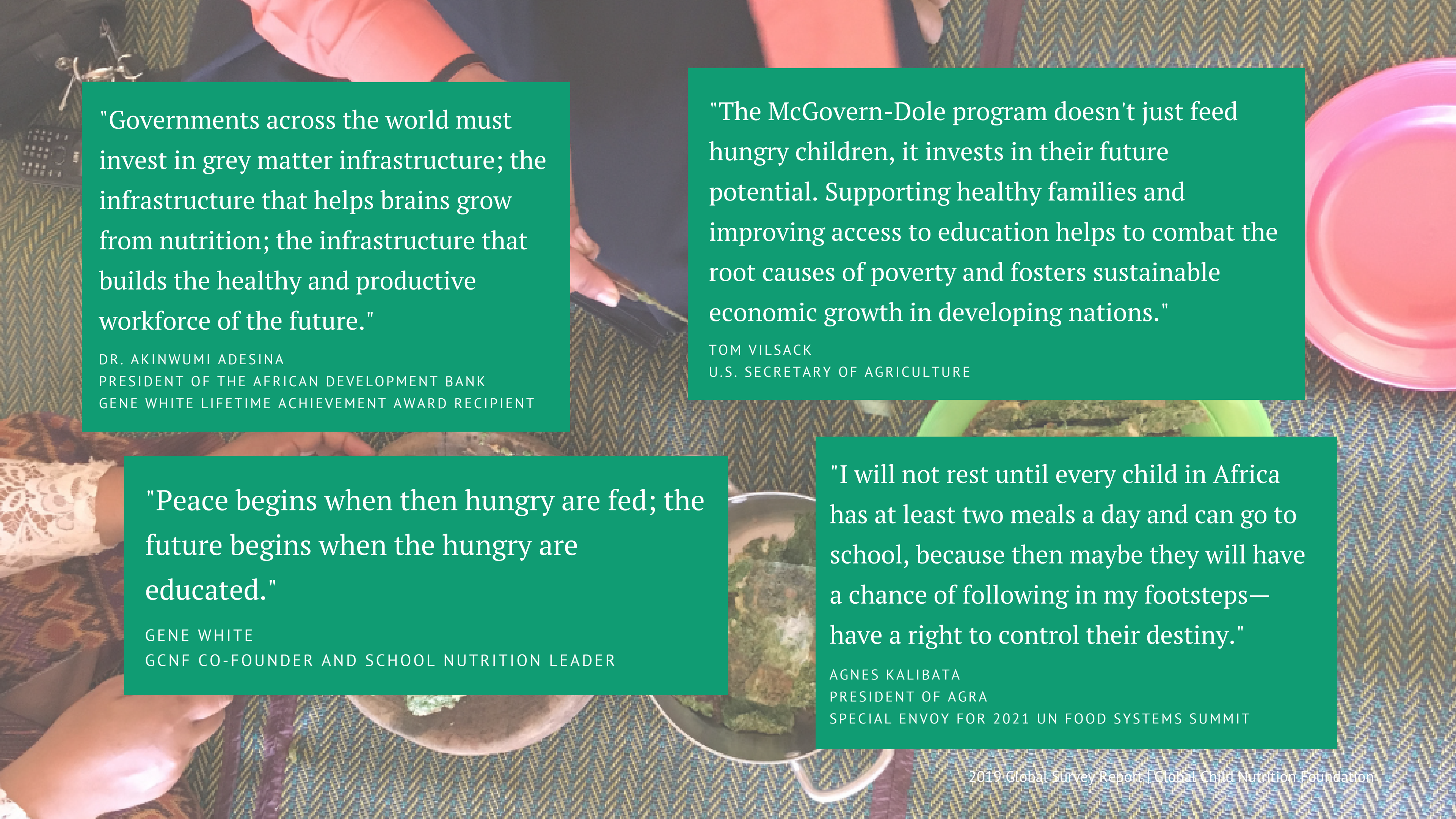
**78%** of programs reported 75% or more of food preparers are women



**31%** of programs reported that very few or no cooks received payment







"Governments across the world must invest in grey matter infrastructure; the infrastructure that helps brains grow from nutrition; the infrastructure that builds the healthy and productive workforce of the future."

DR. AKINWUMI ADESINA  
PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK  
GENE WHITE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT

"The McGovern-Dole program doesn't just feed hungry children, it invests in their future potential. Supporting healthy families and improving access to education helps to combat the root causes of poverty and fosters sustainable economic growth in developing nations."

TOM VILSACK  
U.S. SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

"Peace begins when the hungry are fed; the future begins when the hungry are educated."

GENE WHITE  
GCNF CO-FOUNDER AND SCHOOL NUTRITION LEADER

"I will not rest until every child in Africa has at least two meals a day and can go to school, because then maybe they will have a chance of following in my footsteps—have a right to control their destiny."

AGNES KALIBATA  
PRESIDENT OF AGRA  
SPECIAL ENVOY FOR 2021 UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT





**Reach out to us and discuss how  
we can advocate together!**

 **global child nutrition**  
F O U N D A T I O N

[info@gcnf.org](mailto:info@gcnf.org) | [survey.gcnf.org](https://survey.gcnf.org)







## **Global Child Nutrition Foundation**

*P.O. Box 99435*

*Seattle, WA 98139-0435, USA*

*(US) 206.258.6749*

*info@gcnf.org*

**[survey.gcnf.org](https://survey.gcnf.org)**