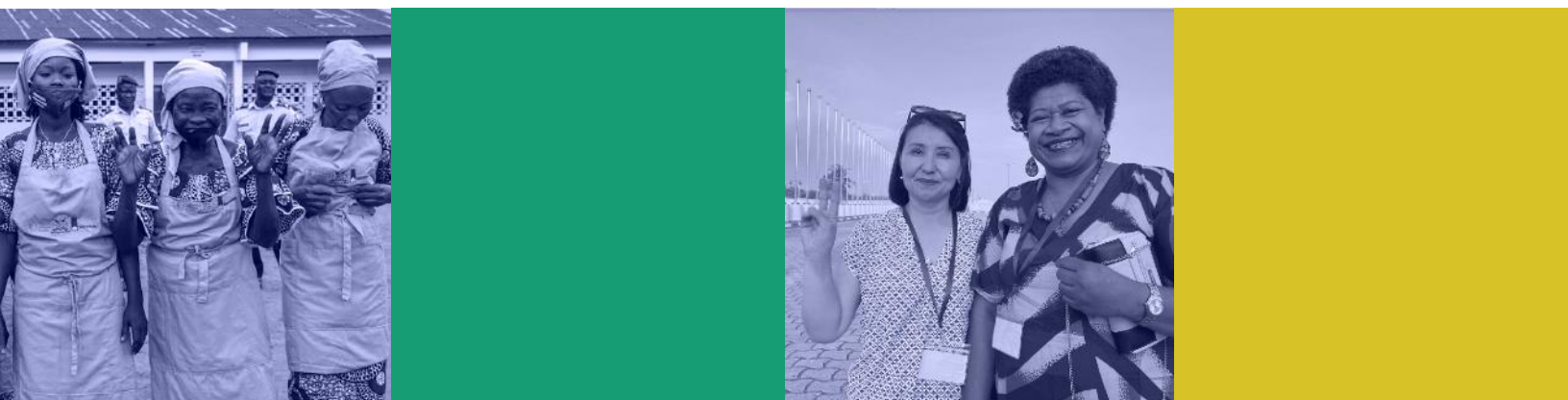
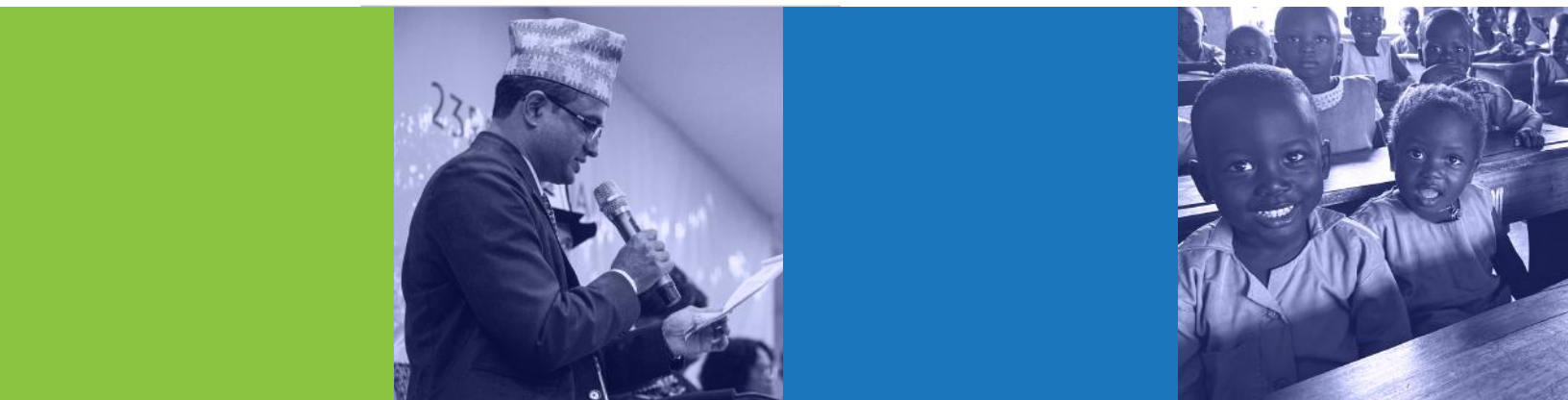




23RD ANNUAL

global child nutrition forum

COTONOU, BENIN



THEME: CONVERGENCE OF FORCES FOR RESILIENCE AND
SUSTAINABILITY OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMS WORLDWIDE

This report was made possible thanks to collaboration by the Forum organizing partners: the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF), the Government of the Republic of Benin, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), with critical support from the CRS Benin Country Office and the WFP Benin Country Office.

Funding was also provided by The Rockefeller Foundation, DSM and Corteva.

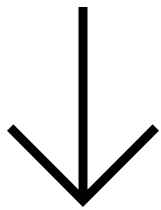
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Photos by Jennifer Lazuto unless stated otherwise.



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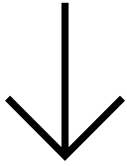











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THE FORUM

At a Glance

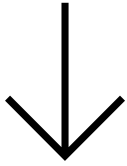


WHEN  <p>October 24-27 2022</p>	WHERE  <p>Cotonou, Benin</p>	WHO <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 244 participants• 44 governments 
ORGANIZERS <ul style="list-style-type: none">Global Child Nutrition Foundation Government of the Republic of Benin Catholic Relief Services UN World Food Programme 	ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 plenaries• 9 workshops+ live illustration!  	LIVE TRANSLATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arabic• English• French• Portuguese• Spanish• Russian 

“At first glance, school meal programs appear to be a commonplace, unremarkable thing. However, upon further examination, they are proven to be a rich, dynamic topic.”

- Ousmane Maiga, Chief of Party, CRS Benin

THE FORUM Market Place



The Forum Market Place provided participating businesses and organizations an opportunity to showcase how their activities, services and products contribute to the fight against child hunger, improve child access to primary education, and increase the promotions of small-scale farmer agricultural production. The following organizations shared their work in the Forum Market Place 2022:





Raúl Chanchavac, 29, and her son Dylan, 5, participate in the “Our Harvest” Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement project within a large McGovern-Dole Food for Education program in Guatemala. The project trains farmers like Lilian and links them to buyers as part of the country’s National School Feeding Law, which requires schools to buy at least 50% of their food from local producers.

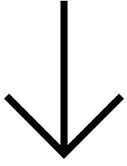
Erick Josue Hernandez for CRS



PART 1:

Introduction

Executive Summary



The 23rd annual Global Child Nutrition Forum brought together over 240 school meal program leaders from around the world for discussion, exchange, and peer-to-peer support. Returning to an in-person format for the first time since 2019, Forum participants explored school meal program linkages between health, nutrition, agriculture, and economic development, and dove deep into the effects of current international crises.

Those present recognized that now is a critical time for school meals to be a pathway to address the education and food security crises. Covid-19 cost millions of children one to two years of schooling. For many, the incentive of a school meal is the only thing bringing them back to the classroom. Due to the pandemic, the high cost of food and fuel, the war in Ukraine, and ongoing natural disasters and climate change, it is estimated that 222 million people in 53 countries will need urgent food assistance by January 2023 (FAO-WFP, September 2022). School feeding programs provide a familiar and cost-effective safety net, targeting particularly vulnerable children and supporting food-insecure households.





The 2022 Forum was a collaboration between the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF), the Government of the Republic of Benin, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the UN World Food Programme (WFP). This Forum marked a new chapter in the long-standing relationship between Benin and GCNF, celebrating some 10 years that Benin has been involved in the conference. GCNF selected Benin to host the event because of the country's impressive school feeding program and President Talon's national budget commitment to school feeding. By hosting the Forum, Benin further

attests to its commitment to excellence in school feeding. GCNF is grateful to the government and people of Benin for serving as this year's host and looks forward to a continued relationship for many years to come.

The results of the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs grounded many presentations and workshops in meaningful, up-to-date data. Released in September of 2022, *School Meal Programs Around the World: Results from the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs* compiled survey responses from 139 countries, building on the 2019 Global Survey database of 105 countries, to now include data for 154 countries overall. Answers from the 41-page, in-depth questionnaire contribute to a growing global database on school meal programs and is the most comprehensive database available today. This extensive knowledge helped to contextualize examples shared during Forum breakout discussions, as well as global trends shared in different plenaries. The Forum began October 24, with an opening ceremony at Benin's Palais des Congrès. Leaders from GCNF, the Government of the Republic of Benin, Catholic Relief Services, and the UN World Food Programme delivered key messages. Over the four-day conference, participants attended technical workshops that made space for interaction in smaller breakout sessions. Workshops were interspersed with plenary discussions that brought all participants in the same room with live, simultaneous translation. The highlight of every Forum is the school visits;



participants visited one of six schools outside of Cotonou to learn about the Government of Benin's National Integrated School Meal Program. [A live event page](#) hosted by the FAO School Food Global Hub gave participants and school feeding professionals who could not attend an inside look at the day to day events of the Forum.

A celebration of the 20th anniversary of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program preceded the closing ceremony, featuring remarks from the U.S. Mission in Benin and GCNF. The Executive Director of GCNF and the Benin Minister of Preschool and Primary Education spoke at the closing ceremony. Participants celebrated and danced the night away at a closing dinner, complete with cultural performances. As participants returned home, they left with new knowledge, skills, and connections to support their work at home and around the world.



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

September 11, 2022

Dear Friends

I am happy to join in welcoming you to the 23rd Annual Global Child Nutrition Forum and wish that I could be there with you.

I congratulate and thank the organizers--the Global Child Nutrition Foundation, the Government of the Republic of Benin, Catholic Relief Services, and the United Nations World Food Program for bringing together this distinguished group on the continent of Africa and for recognizing the importance of feeding children at school.

My own experience in Liberia has shown how important school meals are--first and foremost for the children themselves. No child can learn if she or he is hungry. But school meals are important for the communities and for local economies as well. They can provide jobs for women and youth. They provide a market for farmers. They help to break the vicious cycles of hunger and poverty. This is why I encouraged the promotion and purchase of locally produced food to meet national needs.

In this Africa Year of Nutrition, I encourage you all to consider in your programs all three forms of malnutrition: under nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity. It is critical that we address these three issues for the health of our countries and their future.

I send my greetings and best wishes to President Talon and his staff. School feeding is a program about which governments and politicians can be proud

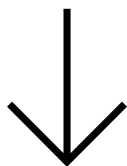
Although I can't be with you at this meeting, I hope to join you in the future and I wish you a productive conference.

With every best wish

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

ABOUT

The Organizers



The Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) is a US-based nonprofit organization working with a global network of governments, businesses, and civil society organizations to support school meal programs that help children and communities thrive. Since 1997, GCNF has hosted The Global Child Nutrition Forum, the world's longest running peer-to-peer learning exchange and technical assistance conference held to support countries in the development and implementation of school feeding programs. Begun in 2019, GCNF's Global Survey of School Meal Programs[©] produces the world's most comprehensive and standardized information on school feeding and associated activities.



Catholic Relief Services' mission is to assist impoverished and disadvantaged people overseas, working in the spirit of Catholic social teaching to promote the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person. CRS has supported school feeding programs around the world for 60 years, supporting local ownership by increasing capacity and commitment.

Graphic Facilitation

This year, the Forum added a dynamic component to increase participant engagement—a live illustrator. Sitting in on plenaries and workshops, the bilingual (French and English) illustrator captured highlights in graphic design. You'll see some of these images scattered throughout this report and on the Global Child Nutrition Foundation website.



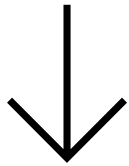
The Government of Benin began its National Integrated School Feeding Program during the 2017-2018 school year, significantly increasing the government's investment, standardizing activities across what had been multiple programs, and scaling up the number of children reached. Since then, the government has expressed a commitment to increase coverage from 31% to 75% of all primary school students from the 2022 school year onwards. The Ministry of Preschool and Primary Education and the Ministry of Development and Coordination of Government Action acted as the main facilitators for the Forum.



The World Food Programme (WFP) is the world's largest humanitarian organization saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity, for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impacts of climate change. WFP has six decades of experience supporting school feeding and health initiatives and working with more than 100 countries to set up national school feeding programmes.



SCENES FROM The Opening Ceremony



"School meals are at the heart of our work."
Karimou Salimane, Minister of Preschool and Primary Education, Government of Benin

"Every child has right to education and proper nutrition."
Scott Campbell, Regional Director for Central Africa, CRS

"Our goal is every child who goes to school this year eats a hot meal."
Abdoulaye Bio Tchane, Minister of Development and Coordination of Government Action, Government of Benin

"Benin is setting an example for Africa and the globe."
Carmen Burbano, Director of School Feeding Division, WFP

"Children need us now more than ever, and their future depends on our work."
Arlene Mitchell, Executive Director, GCNF





A girl at a school in Kandi, Benin, where volunteer parents prepare and serve warm, nutritious meals for students each school day, thanks to the McGovern Dole Food for Education program.

Michael Stulman/CRS



PART 2:

Nutrition

Detailed discussions of nutrition continued the conversation from past Forums. At the forefront of many participants' minds was the critical effect of balanced, nutritious meals for children and how that impacts long-term health. As Dr. Aliou Dia, Director of School Health in Senegal, said, "It's true, we have to fight against hunger, but what I always say is we don't have the right to leave illnesses with our grandchildren that will catch up with them tomorrow."

Plenary: Triple Burden of Malnutrition

The first Forum plenary examined school-based nutrition from multiple angles and institutions. Aptly titled the Triple Burden of Malnutrition, this session outlined the three main forms of malnutrition, namely undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity.

Arlene Mitchell, Executive Director of the Global Child Nutrition Foundation, introduced data from the [2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs](#).

Special note was given to the contribution of initiatives such as

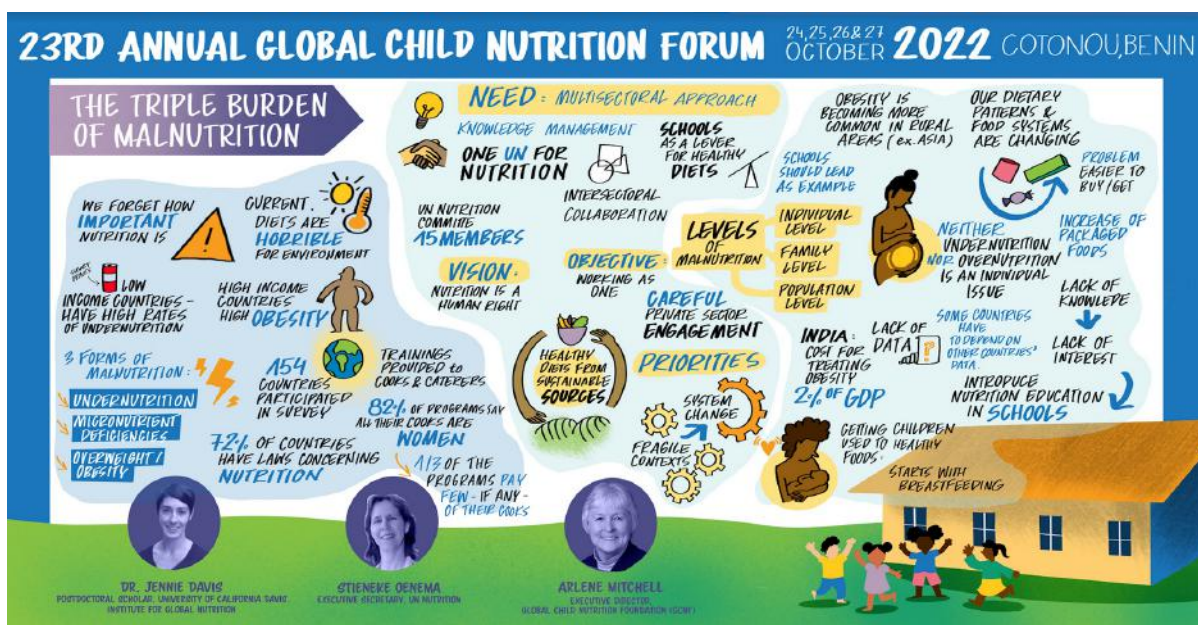
the Africa Year of Nutrition to spur action. **Stineke Oenema**, Executive Director of UN Nutrition, continued on, discussing the ambitious nutrition targets multilateral organizations, governments, and the private sector work towards through the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative. **Dr. Jennie Davis**, Postdoctoral Scholar at the University of California, Davis, Institute for Global Nutrition, closed by highlighting work by key institutions and organizations' to address malnutrition, such as CORE Group's Nutrition Working Group, which focuses on maternal nutrition for healthier mothers and children.

“If we can get children to be healthy when they’re younger, they’re much more likely to grow into healthy adults.”

– Dr. Jennie Davis

What we learned

- 1 in 3 children worldwide is not developing well because of malnutrition.
- It takes 8,000 days, or 21 years, for children to reach adulthood. The first 1,000 days are critical in their development for positive health outcomes throughout life; investments in nutrition over the subsequent 7,000 days are of paramount importance to support brain and body development and to avoid losing early progress.
- There are several drivers of all forms of malnutrition—maternal, child, and adolescent nutrition, food environments, poverty, lack of educational attainment, and more.
- To be effective, interventions, programs and policies must address all forms of malnutrition.

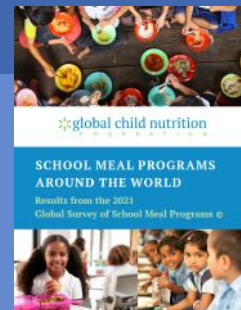


FROM THE 2021 GLOBAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

School Meal Programs, Malnutrition, and Diverse Diets

- 93% of the 183 programs reported an objective to meet nutritional and/or health goals.
- 40% of the programs reported that cooks or caterers receive training in nutrition.
- Where school food is procured matters for nutrition: Programs that rely on foreign in-kind donations have fewer food categories; those that rely on domestic markets/ production include more food categories. This suggests that domestic procurement—and engagement with farmers—creates more diverse and healthier school menus.

• Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF). 2022. *School Meal Programs Around the World: Results from the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs*. Accessed at <https://gcnf.org/global-reports/>



Workshop: The Third Form of Malnutrition

- *Dr. Jennie Davis, Postdoctoral Scholar, University of California Davis, Institute for Global Nutrition*
- *Elisabetta Ferrero, MPH in Nutrition Candidate at Harvard's Chan School, Global Child Nutrition Foundation*

Whereas the plenary session of malnutrition took a wide lens look at the three forms of malnutrition, this break out session zeroed in on its third form - obesity and overweight. Overweight and obesity are rising in every region of the world, and this workshop focused on activities countries have enacted to better understand, prevent, and mitigate the effects of obesity and overweight within their borders. A participant from Togo emphasized having accurate data to understand the national state of obesity. School meal programs can be effective interventions for providing consistent, proper nutrition, and participants underlined training of cooks and teachers in providing and promoting healthy meals as a key path forward.



Workshop: New Tools and Methods for Measuring the Quality of School Meals for Improved Diets and Nutrition

- Aulo Gelli, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute
- Winnie Bell, Senior Technical Advisor, Intake
- Gloria Folson, Research Fellow, University of Ghana
- Representatives from UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Although a range of tools are available for planning meals in school feeding programs to plan meals, few are designed to capture quality. Because school meals reach so many of the world's most vulnerable children, better insights into food quality can help guide policies and investments. Participants in this workshop were introduced to new tools for measuring meal quality and ways that nutritional guidelines and standards can be used to decide ingredients for meals. This kind of expectation comes with a burden on staff, compounded by inadequate funding and a lack of food diversity.

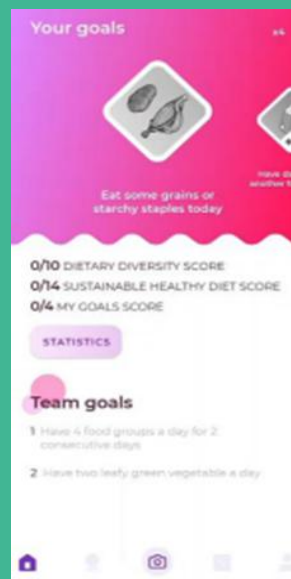
“These methodologies are complex and specific training needs to be organized for program staff to familiarize themselves with the concepts, challenges, approaches and applications within specific contexts.”

- Representative from WFP Cameroon

LIGHTNING ROUND

Developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Food Recognition Assistance and Nudging Insights (FRANI) app can recognize foods, track food-group consumption, provide diet-related statistics, and nudge users to improve food consumption.

Presented by Aulo Gelli, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI



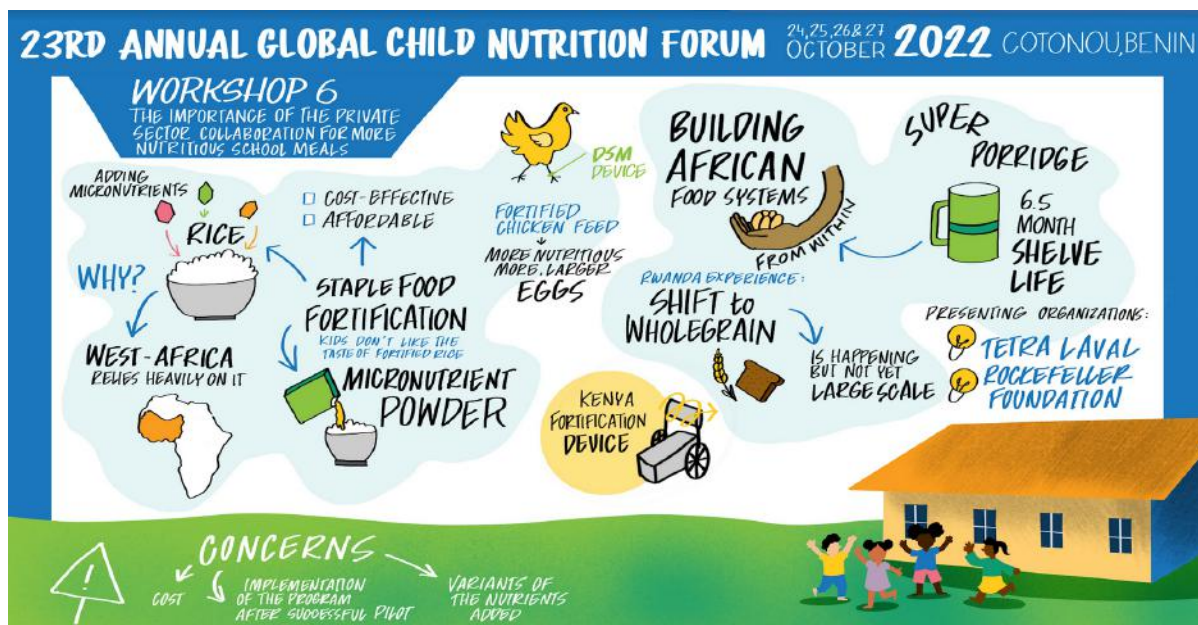
Workshop: The Importance of Private Sector Collaboration for More Nutritious School Meals

- *Yahia Hassan, Head of Strategy and Business Development, DSM Africa*
- *Eliya Jonas, Program Director, DSM Africa*
- *Mayank Goel, Director Food for Development, Middle East & Africa, Tetra Laval*
- *Betty Kibaara, Director, Food Initiative, Rockefeller Foundation*
- *Mesfin Hirbaye, Nutrition Advisor for school food programming, CRS/Ethiopia*



Nicole Jacquet/GCNF

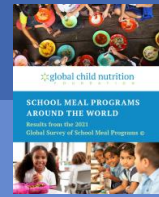
It is estimated that over half of preschool-aged children worldwide have micronutrient deficiencies. This session explored the private sector's role in providing nutritious fortified school meals and opportunities for collaboration with the private sector. Conversations focused on proven technologies to nourish school children, government experiences, and proposed private sector collaborations, with an underlying theme of impact. Presenters introduced the situation in Ethiopia, the value of using whole grains as opposed to refined grains, and presented the findings from a study implemented in Kenya, in partnership with the Government of Kenya, Tetra Pak, Naconek, Ingredion and DSM. In this pilot program, 5,000 students were given a "Super Porridge," a nutrient-dense and fortified drink. Positive results from the study have led to a planned expansion to Rwanda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Burundi.



FROM THE 2021 GLOBAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

School Meal Programs and the Private Sector

- Just 18% of countries have a policy related to private sector involvement even though the private sector is involved in school meal programs in 71% of the countries.
- Private sector involvement usually means hiring companies for food transportation and trade. Private food processors and private caterers are contracted in 43% and 29% of these programs, respectively.
- There is promising potential for biofortified foods to address micronutrient deficiencies. Biofortified foods are included on the menu of 18% of the programs in low-income countries but none in high-income countries.



Workshop: Nutrition-Sensitive Value Chains for Home Grown School Feeding Programmes: Experiences from Countries



Andrea Polo Galante

- Moderator: Ms. Andrea Polo Galante, PhD, Senior Technical Specialist on Nutrition Food and Nutrition Division, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- Shawel Moreda Birbirssa, Project Coordinator, FAO Ethiopia
- Ms. Alemtsehay Sergawi Hailegiorgis, Head of Food and Nutrition Office, Government of Ethiopia
- Elvis Odeke, Head of School Feeding, WFP/Ethiopia

Smallholder farmer and small-medium food enterprise relationships with public food procurement programs, like those found in home-grown school feeding programs, make localized school meal programs possible. This session highlighted the opportunities and challenges. In addition, presenters shared lessons learned from a project implemented by FAO on Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture and Social Protection in Ethiopia. Participants were divided into small groups to discuss how the nutrition-sensitive value chain approach could be used to support smallholder producers to participate in home-grown school feeding, alongside creating employment opportunities for women and youth. Recommendations from participants included creating legal frameworks that incorporate the institutionalization of school feeding, stable funding, and prevention of local market distortion. Participants also suggested ensuring food safety at harvest along with the promotion of micro-nutrient-dense foods. Coordination among partners, government, NGOs, and other institutions to avoid duplication of effort and support knowledge sharing is paramount for successful long-term implementation.

FROM THE 2021 GLOBAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

Local purchasing, farmer engagement, and employment of women and youth



- Programs are increasingly prioritizing domestic procurement of food, often in an explicit effort to invigorate local markets.
- Across regions, it is most common for programs in Latin America/Caribbean to engage with farmers or farmer organizations (83%), followed by programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (71%), while it is less common for programs in Europe/Central Asia/North America (50%), the Middle East/North Africa (45%), or South Asia/East Asia/Pacific (30%) to do so. This disparity may point to opportunities for programs in some regions to learn from the successes of other regions in terms of working productively with farmers.
- Although there is unique potential of school meal programs to empower women through employment and positions of responsibility in the community, poor pay in lower-income settings is a roadblock.



A farmer in Tanzania grows maize for the local school meal program. *Photo: GCNF*



Children receive school food prepared with vitaminized lentils, rice, peas, flour and oil cooked by trained school chefs within the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.

Ademi Mukanbetova/Mercy Corps Kyrgyzstan



PART 3:

Localization, Sustainability and Resilience

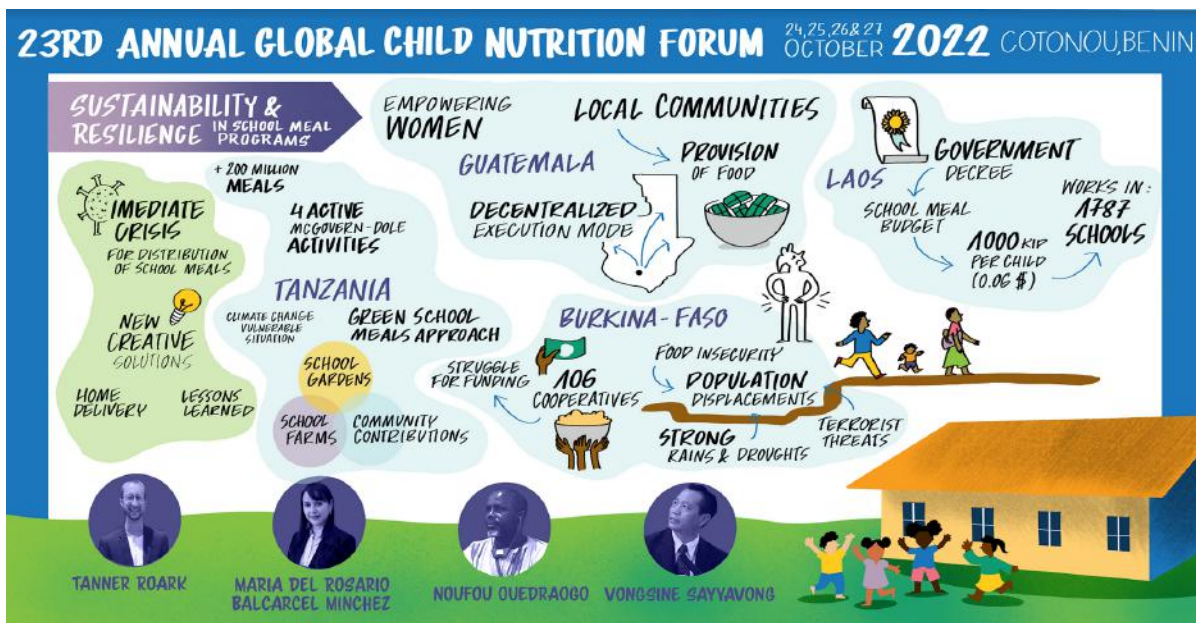
The 2022 Forum considered localization, sustainability, and resilience in school feeding as a priority, given rising food costs brought about by fuel and fertilizer crises compounded by international conflict, the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ever-growing effects of climate change.

Plenary: Sustainability and Resilience in School Meal Programs

Moderated by **Katherine Overcamp**, CRS' Country Representative in Benin, this session covered the role of school, community, private sector, and national stakeholders in designing school meal programs that are resilient social safety nets in times of crisis. **Tanner Roark** from Global Communities presented his organization's work in climate-resilient school gardens. **María del Rosario Balcarcel Minchez**, the Vice Minister of Education of the Government of Guatemala, presented on her country's agility and adaptations during COVID. **Vongsine Sayyavong**, the Head of the International Convention and Cooperation Division from the Laos Ministry of Education and Sports, presented how his government has managed to continue expanding its school meal program over the past 2-3 years. Finally, **Noufou Ouedraogo**, representing an agriculture cooperative in Burkina Faso, shared how the national school meal program provides consistent demand even in the face of inflation and conflict.

What we learned

- School gardens, community food contributions, and local/regional food procurement build school resilience.
- School gardens present an opportunity for students and community members to learn about resilient agricultural practices like building and maintaining healthy soil, sustainable water management, and agricultural diversity in seedling, seed saving, and plant propagation.
- The Government of Guatemala created the *Accompany Me to Grow* program to prevent chronic malnutrition, following children from conception to 4 years old.
- Political instability, climate change, displacement of small farmers, and lack of stable funding present major challenges to school feeding programs.
- Lao PDR noted a dedicated school budget line, training package for school feeding implementation, and community buy-in through capacity building and contributions as major supports in their program.



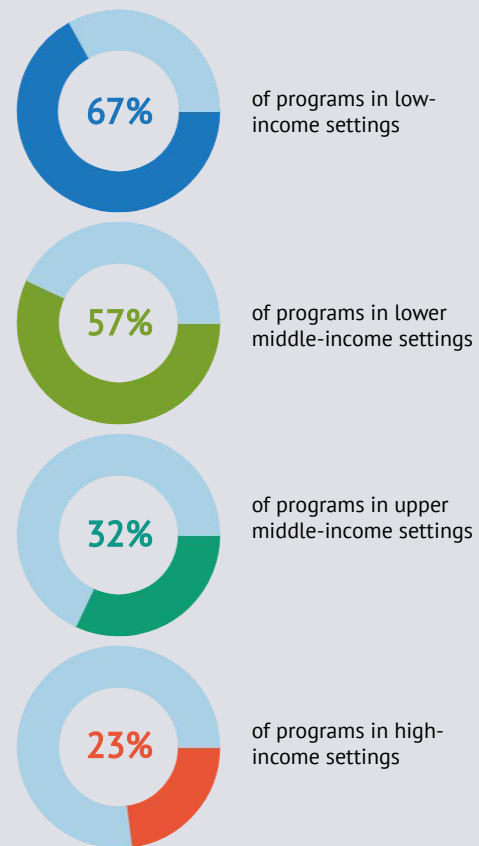
FROM THE 2021 GLOBAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

School Meal Programs, Localization, Sustainability, and Resilience

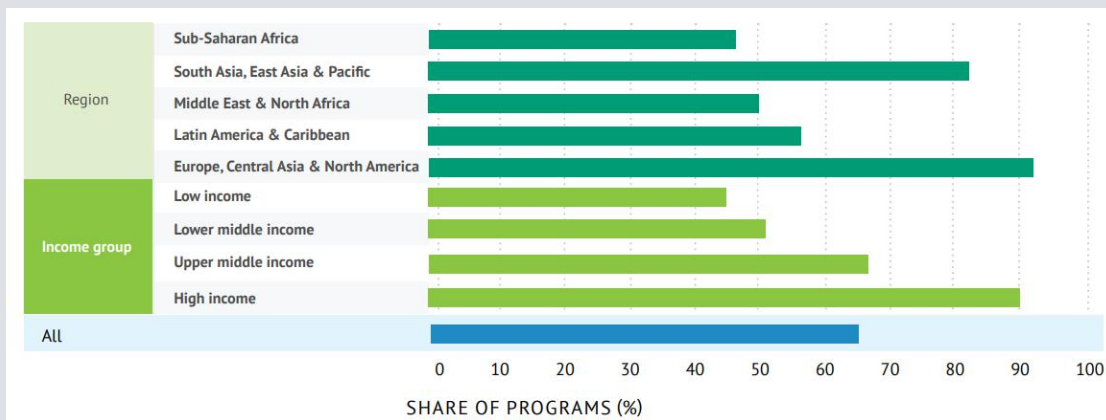


- Across the 125 countries, school feeding has a dedicated line item in 69% of the national budgets, a strong indicator of sustainability. This is most common in Latin America/Caribbean (at 96%) and least common in Europe, Central Asia, and North America (at 49%).
- When engaged with local farmers, school meal programs can strengthen the local rural economy by opening new and more inclusive markets for farm products and creating jobs along the value chains that connect farms to consumers (in this case, the schools).
- Survey results are indicative of a strong relationship between adequate funding and program success.
- Almost half of the programs, or 45.90%, reported that their country was affected by at least one other emergency in addition to COVID-19, while 16.40% of programs reported that their country was affected by at least two other emergencies.
- Despite COVID-19 and other crises, over the three school years 2017-18 to 2020-21, the aggregate number of children fed increased by 6.9% over the 104 countries that provided retrospective numbers. Strikingly, 71% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa reported increases in the numbers of children receiving school meals.

Share of programs with an increase in the number of students fed in the past three years.



Share of programs that reported adequate funding



GCNF. 2022. School Meal Programs Around the World: Results from the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs ©. Accessed at <https://gcnf.org/global-reports/>

Workshop: Home-Grown School Feeding: The Importance of Knowledge Sharing and Evidence-based Information

- *Vinicius Limongi, Programme Officer, World Food Programme Brazil*
- *Christiani Buani, Ph.D., Head of Operations, Regional Centre of Excellence against Hunger and Malnutrition*

How do we find the right approach to actively incorporate the informal sector? How do we gain acceptance from the community to mitigate the risks of failure? How do we align school feeding frameworks with on-the-ground action when working with partners? This workshop by the Center of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil focused on these key questions and more while exploring the opportunities, challenges, and lessons learned presented by a home-grown school feeding (HGSF) framework. Participants in the room emphasized the importance of South-South cooperation as a way to strengthen collaboration between countries, as well as the necessity for having a legally binding structure in place to support HGSF in-country. The workshop recognized how HGSF allows for design nuances, depending on local socio-economic, cultural, and geographic contexts. A representative from Mozambique commented on the importance of recognizing the current work and potential of the informal sector - how it can contribute to school feeding and finding the right approach to integrate the informal sector more actively.

20 YEARS OF MCGOVERN-DOLE INTERNATIONAL FOOD FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM



Karen Gustafson de Andrade, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy

This year, the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program celebrated its 20th anniversary. School meal programs have never been more critical. In its lifetime thus far, the McGovern-Dole Program has provided more than 5.5 billion school meals worldwide.

During the Forum, representatives from the United States Department of Agriculture shared information about the McGovern-Dole program in two breakout sessions.

A celebration of the 20th anniversary of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program preceded the Closing Ceremony, featuring remarks from Ms. Karen Gustafson de Andrade, Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Benin. Arlene Mitchell, Executive Director of the Global Child Nutrition Foundation also spoke, acknowledging the great history and impact of the McGovern-Dole Program.

McGovern-Dole recognizes that school meals are an effective incentive for children to attend school, and vital to getting children who could not attend, due to COVID or other factors, back to school. In Benin, many programs give preferential treatment to women when hiring cooks and service providers; they are also encouraged to take leadership positions in canteen management committees. As the largest social safety net in the world, school meal programs are critical to addressing hunger even as climate change, conflict and COVID-19 are driving up food, fuel and fertilizer costs.

Workshop: Integrating Gender into School Meals Programs

- Ronie Anago, Benin, CRS
- Dieynaba Diallo, Burundi, CRS
- Anne Sellers, Technical Director, Education, CRS
- Liliane Bigayimpunzi, Global Survey Coordinator for Africa, GCNF

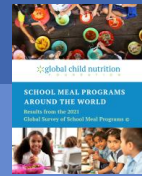
This workshop used the World Bank SABER (Systems Approach for Basic Education Reform) framework to explore ways gender can be integrated into national school meal programs. Participants gathered in small groups to share their experiences. For example, in India, midday meal programs empowered women by employing them as paid cooks. Eswatini reported disaggregating data collection by gender and providing student counseling programs with sanitary kits for girls and toiletries for boys. Chad and South Sudan shared how incentives for women's engagement in community roles were core parts of their school feeding programs. By the end of this interactive workshop, participants reported an increased understanding of how to analyze and strengthen the gender responsiveness of school meal programs as well as practical and relevant examples of gender integration from other contexts.



FROM THE 2021 GLOBAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

School Meals Programs and Gender

- Stark patterns in the availability of gender data are evident across income groups. Specifically, while gender-disaggregated student data was submitted for 87.5% of programs in low-income countries, this value was 79%, 27%, and 19% for programs in lower middle-income, upper middle-income, and high-income countries, respectively.
- 37% of all programs maintain a focus on creating jobs for women. Programs in low-income and lower middle-income countries are likely (at 54% and 53%, respectively) to create jobs with women in mind.
- 82% of programs reported that $\frac{3}{4}$ or more of their cooks are women, but 32% said that less than half of their cooks are paid, and the data showed that programs in which relatively few cooks are remunerated are more likely to have a female-dominated labor force.



Workshop: Nourishing Children through the Promotion of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables in Schools: Experience Sharing From Benin and the Philippines

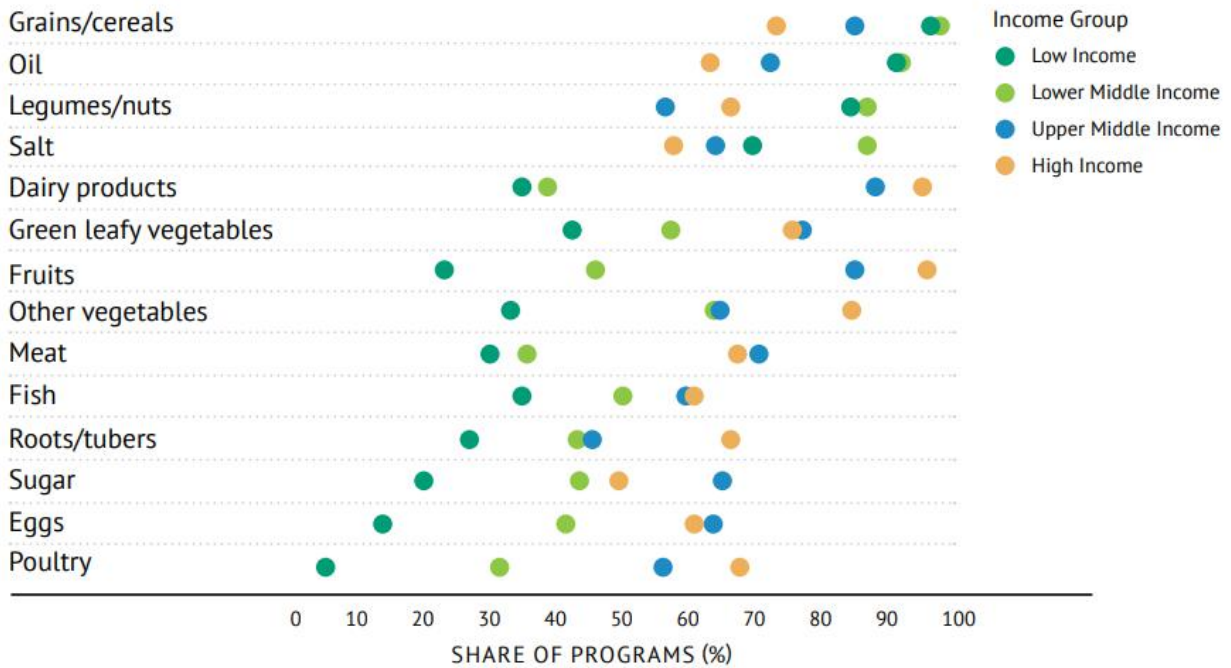
- *Malick Niango Ba, Regional Director, World Vegetable Center - West and Central Africa, based in Benin*
- *Judith Honfoga Faton, Research Assistant Agronomy - Integrated School Feeding Approach Developer, World Vegetable Center - West and Central Africa, based in Benin*
- *Irene Mitchodigni Houndo, Nutritionist - Integrated School Feeding Approach Developer, World Vegetable Center - West and Central Africa, based in Benin*
- *Rolando Talon Jr, Education Program Specialist, Philippines Department of Education*
- *Lope Santos III, Director for School Nutrition Programs, Philippines Department of Education*
- *Shiela Santos Anunciado, Program Manager, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Philippines*

It can be challenging to include a variety of fruits and vegetables into school meals, as they are perishable, costly and must be locally sourced. This session discussed opportunities to better incorporate fresh fruit and vegetables in school meals, including the role of local farmers, communities, and the potential of school gardens and nutrition education that targets both children and parents. The workshop used examples from Benin and the Philippines and heard from program implementers and schoolteachers. It also highlighted the important role of creating healthy school food environments that can address barriers to fresh fruit and vegetable consumption.



Moses Ekwueme/GCNF

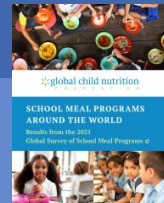
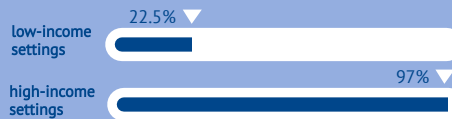
Food items served in school meals programs, by income group



FROM THE 2021 GLOBAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

Green leafy vegetables are least common in low income countries and most common in upper middle and high income countries. Grains and cereals are most common in low and lower middle income countries and less common in high and upper middle income countries.

FRUITS





Students in Cambodia enjoy their school lunch together.



PART 4:

School Meal Programs Around the World

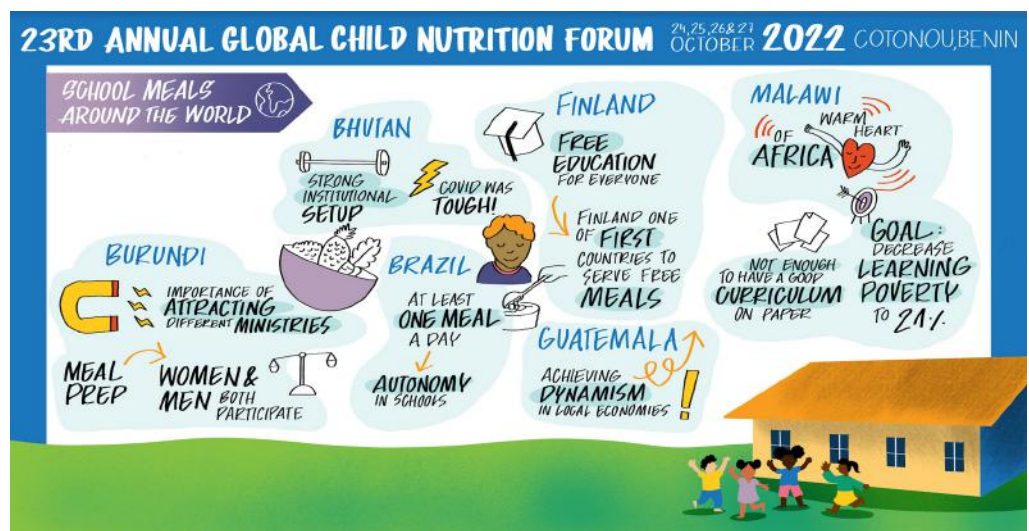
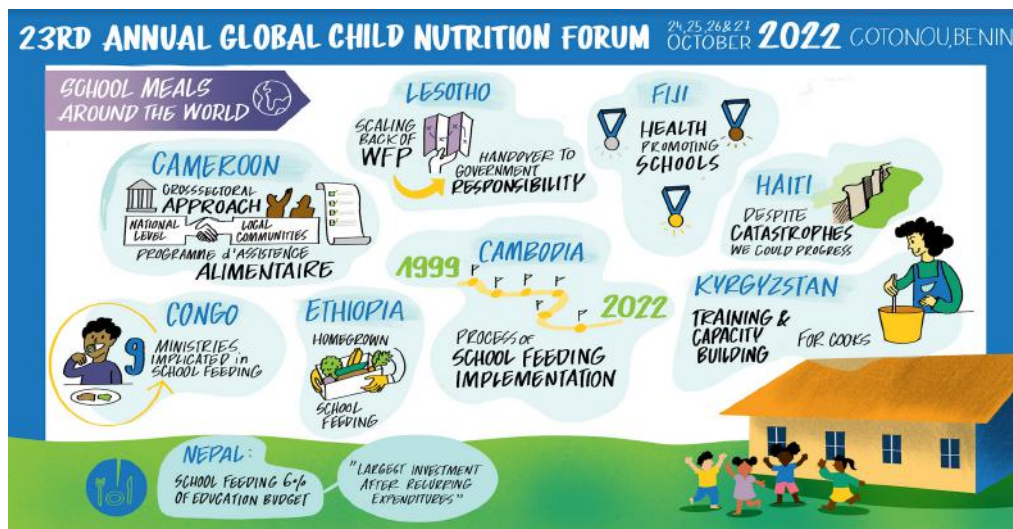
Plenary: Country Sharing

What do you know now that you wished you knew when you started working in school feeding?

What features of your school feeding program are you most proud of that you want to share with the world?

What are key factors that enabled an increased budget and investment in school feeding?

The Global Child Nutrition Forum is not complete without hearing directly from government representatives. Fifteen different representatives took to the stage and spoke on their own experiences in school feeding. Major insights were captured in live illustrations for future use and reference.



Welcome and Introductions

Alice Martin-Daihirou, Senior Program Advisor for Africa, GCNF | Nurzat Esengulova, Director of Programs, Mercy Corps, Kyrgyzstan

Moderators: Dr. Beatrice Wamey, President and CEO, Nascent Solutions, Inc | Nicole Jacquet, Survey Coordinator for Europe, GCNF



Viori Uluiratu of Fiji



Prem Tripathi of Nepal



Miette née Ngambani Lekibi of the Congo and Chinmoun Oumarou of Cameroon

Country Representatives

- **Cameroon:** Mr. Chinmoun Oumarou, Secretary General, Ministry of External Relations
- **Congo:** Madam Miette née Ngambani Lekibi, Director General Basic Education, Ministry of Education
- **Ethiopia:** Mr. Abebe Tilahun Asfaw, School Health and Nutrition Senior Expert, Ministry of Education
- **Lesotho:** Madam Thuto Ntsekhe, CEO Primary, Ministry of Education and Training
- **Cambodia:** Mr. Van Thol, Deputy Director of Primary Education Department, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
- **Fiji:** Ms. Viori Uluiratu, Senior Curriculum Specialist: Agriculture Education and Enterprise Education, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts
- **Haiti:** Ms. Djina Guillet Delatour, School Feeding National Coordinator, Ministry of Education
- **Kyrgyzstan:** Mr. Bakytbek Rysbekov, Head of Preschool, School and Out of School Education, Ministry of Education Science
- **Nepal:** Mr. Prem Tripathi, Section Officer, Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
- **Bhutan:** Mr. Karma Wangchuk, Chief Programme Officer, School Health and Nutrition Division
- **Brazil:** Mrs. Solange Fernandes, National School Feeding Coordinator
- **Burundi:** Mr. Liboire Bigirimana, National Director of School Canteen and Spokesperson for the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research
- **Finland:** Ms. Marjaana Manninen, Senior Adviser for Education, Finnish National Agency for Education
- **Guatemala:** Honorable Maria del Rosairo Balcarcel Minchez, Vice Minister of Education
- **Malawi:** Honorable Agnes NyaLonje, Minister of Education, Ministry of Education

Plenary: The Benin National Integrated School Feeding Program

In order to correct disparities across geography, gender and other barriers to access, the Government of the Republic of Benin founded the National Integrated School Feeding Program, implemented through the Ministry of Preschool and Primary Education. Although other organizations operated programs in Benin in the past and the program is carried out in partnership with other organizations, the government is the primary funder.

“The government support of school feeding in Benin is extraordinarily strong.”

– Global Child Nutrition Foundation

Benin identified school feeding as an essential measure in combating the inequalities listed above in addition to fighting hunger and poverty. The school feeding program in Benin has three main principles - effective management and preparation of meals, buying local, and complementary activities. A comprehensive set of data collection measures follows the implementation of the program at various levels and in a variety of indicators. Access to drinkable water, access to rural areas during the rainy season, and low participation from some communities in school canteen activities are some of the challenges faced by Benin in carrying out the program. Benin participated in the pilot of the Global Survey of School Meal Programs, and has continued to contribute its data to the global database.

What we learned

- Benin has set an ambitious goal of achieving a 100% coverage rate in its 7,500 schools by 2023.
- Innovations from universities and research institutions have become more prevalent throughout the program.
- Supplementary activities include deworming, following the nutritional status of students, medical care for students and cooks, and the promotion of sanitation and school hygiene.
- There is a strong emphasis on bettering the productivity of small-scale farmers and the quality of their products to address the challenges currently faced in those areas.



Workshop: The School Meals Coalition: Where we are Today and How to Engage

- Carmen Burbano, Director of School-Based Programmes, UN World Food Programme

“For some countries, school meal programs are about ensuring instability and conflict do not enter the country.”

The School Meals Coalition is a government-led agenda with a substantial level of political support; a total of 73 countries are now a part of the Coalition. While school meal programs are anchored in the education sector, it is important to note that it also has legs in other sectors as well. The declaration builds on the idea of a multi-sectoral action. School meal programs require a broad approach. The coalition is operationalized through 5 initiatives that are based on previously identified bottlenecks for school meal programs.



Carmen Burbano

The School Meals Coalition is a government-led agenda with a substantial level of political support; a total of 73 countries are now a part of the Coalition. Countries are expected to make measurable and ambitious commitments in relation to school meal programs in order to be a part of the School Meals Coalition.

LIGHTNING ROUND

Nutritious School Meals In Home-Grown School Feeding Programme: The Nigeria Story

“Provides one free nutritious hot meal a day made from locally sourced agricultural produce to pupils in Primary 1-3 in public primary schools across the states of Nigeria.”

“Federal Government funds 100%, through annual budgetary allocation.”

“All foods utilized by the NHGSFP are procured locally with 90% coming from the local community.”

School Visits

At each Forum, participants have the opportunity to learn first-hand about the host country's school meal program. This year, Benin showcased its National Integrated School Feeding Program. Participants were organized into groups to tour one of six schools near Cotonou, organized by themes: partnership with the private sector, community engagement, and nutrition. Keep reading to find yourself walking through a primary school in Benin!

LEAVE THE CITY

Board the bus for a trip an hour outside Cotonou. Cross the bridges into Porto Novo and notice the women fishing from canoes, mopeds zipping by, and markets tucked into side streets. Continue on, past the road to Lomé, past the small herds of cattle, until the tires start kicking up red dirt instead of asphalt.



ARRIVE AT THE SCHOOL

You'll hear them before you see them—the group of mothers who volunteer in the kitchen and garden. Makeshift tambourines chime, hands clap, feet stomp, voices raised in welcome, voices raised in thanks in return. The children spread confetti and dance as their teacher leads them in song. You gather around the flagpole to hear from the principal and the town's mayor. Split into two groups to learn more about the school grounds.



PEER INTO THE KITCHEN

The pantry door stands inconspicuously to the left. Dried goods are neatly labeled for visitors, garlic and peppers, rice and maize, ready at hand for the cooks to add to the day's meal. On the stove sit three rotund, steel pots, bubbling away with the students' lunch. The design is part of a pilot program present in 14 different schools. Cooks use debris from palm trees as a sustainable source of energy, along with a solar-powered USB port and power socket to charge devices and provide light in the kitchen.



WALK THROUGH THE GARDEN

The principal leads your group outside and around the building. Citronella plants line your path as you enter the school garden. The citronella acts as a natural insect repellent, sweetening the air while deterring pests and keeping the garden safe. Leafy greens, vegetables, and herbs grow strong thanks to the compost pile tucked into the southeast corner of the garden.



LUNCH IS SERVED!

Return to the lunchroom where a row of sinks sits below windows overlooking the garden. Students wash their hands and take their seats on benches. The head teacher leads them in a few songs as cooks begin to dish out today's lunch—stew and rice.



MOMENTS FROM LOCAL SCHOOL VISITS





Kumba B. Kamara (12) and her cousin, Saio B. Kamara (8) with their grandmother, Waisa Kamara (50+) before school. Kumba and Kamara attend a school in northern Sierra Leone where the Government works with the McGovern Food for Education Program to provide school meals. As part of this program, CRS feeds 32,000 school children across Sierra Leone each day.

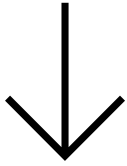
Eric Clayton/CRS



PART 5:

Conclusion

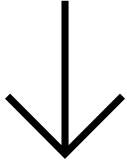
SCENES FROM The Closing Ceremony



The 23rd Annual Global Child Nutrition Forum ended the evening of October 27 at Benin's Palais des Congrès. Following an acknowledgment of the 20th anniversary of the McGovern-Dole Program, final remarks were shared by Arlene Mitchell, Executive Director of GCNF, and the Benin Minister of Preschool and Primary Education, His Excellence Mr. Karimou Salimane. In celebration of another successful Forum, participants moved upstairs for dinner, dancing, and cultural performances from local groups. Participants received a blessing from a local spirit to ensure a secure and safe journey home. Until next year!



Communique



THEME: Convergence of Forces for Resilience and Sustainability of School Feeding Programs Worldwide

Preamble

The 23rd Global Child Nutrition Forum was organized by the GCNF, the Government of the Republic of Benin, and co-hosts Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and World Food Programme (WFP).

Held in Cotonou, Benin in October 2022, the 23rd Global Child Nutrition Forum brought together 244 participants. Arriving from 44 countries around the world, participants ranged from officials from government and multilateral institutions to representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the business sector, academics, and researchers.

To recognize and document the voices, priorities, and needs of participants at the 2022 Global Child Nutrition Forum, GCNF implemented a participatory approach to the annual Forum Communiqué. Each day participants were provided with prompts designed to elicit information from two district groups: 1) government representatives and 2) partners including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the business sector, academics, and researchers.

Voices from Government Representatives

Most of the government representatives who responded at the Forum reported they were able to maintain or increase school feeding coverage between 2019 and 2022, a period of time that saw unprecedented emergencies and the intersection of multiple crises - including the COVID-19 pandemic, political strife, conflict, climate impacts, soaring food costs, and stalled supply chains. This response demonstrates the astounding resiliency of school feeding programs in the face of global crises.

What Worked

The government representatives articulated these elements that allowed them to maintain or expand coverage:

- Intersectoral collaboration between Ministries of Agriculture, Education, and Health
- Efficient program management systems, coordination mechanisms, and multi-sector communication
- Government initiation and support of take-home rations to offset the rising costs of food commodities during the global food crisis caused by conflict, climate change, and COVID-19
- Expansion of school-based food production initiatives to bring children back to schools who dropped out due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Active involvement of the private sector to help countries sustain healthy school meals.
- Increased involvement of donors
- Increased financial support

Additional Actions Needed

Government representatives, both those who reported increased coverage and those who reported decreased coverage, recommend these additional actions to increase the resiliency of school meal programs in the future:

- Raising awareness of the programs to activate the political will necessary for government policy and investment
- Dedicating budget lines for school meals
- Increasing funding and advocacy to implement better policies in school meals
- Educating parents on the necessity of school canteens for effective education
- Remunerating school cooks/caterers for their work in school canteens in a timely manner
- Focusing on the development of legal frameworks and capacity building so school meal programs can run independently and are sustainable through government transitions
- Regulating private sector marketing of unhealthy foods and ensuring children, families, and communities are informed consumers
- Expanding take-home ration programs
- Utilizing school feeding programs to address decreased enrollment
- Identifying solutions to the high costs of accessibility and production
- Rapid implementation of innovative solutions to crises, testing early, and scaling up to ease the challenges presented by these crises
- Supporting existing government school meal program systems, not creating new ones
- Prioritizing the collection of disaggregated data to build a comprehensive picture of how many children are being reached and through what modality
- Finding ways to provide school feeding in areas occupied by military groups
- Accelerating the integration of a school feeding element into SDG 4 (Inclusive education for all)
- Setting a global goal of a percentage of the budget that should be allocated to school feeding, such as how GPE insists on a certain increase in the education budget by 2023
- Pursuing nutrition security strategy (not just food security)
- Requesting that implementing partners buy into the government systems. Help governments streamline their systems instead of creating new ones which ultimately weaken the government systems. “Nobody in the world can replace what the government can do for its people.”

Voices from Partners

The majority of responding partner organizations reported increased investments and support in school feeding programs during the same time period. To further support the maintenance, improvement, and expansion of school feeding programs, the partners recommend:

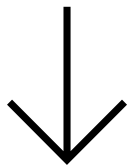
- A concerted effort toward developing policy frameworks for the implementation of school meal programs
- Raising the school feeding priority in the global agenda to increase investments
- Identifying strategies to mitigate competition between implementing partners
- Reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and address the gap between the work at the operational level and the institutional/administrative level
- Engaging better and more frequently with local players
- Enacting laws to ensure national commitments to school feeding are respected when there are changes in government administrations

- Working to address all forms of malnutrition, from stunting and wasting to micronutrient deficiencies to overweight and obesity
- Agile coordinating of partnerships with NGOs and the private sector
- Implementing climate-smart farming in agricultural production in partnership with the ministries of agriculture
- Creating waste-conscious food management systems to ensure unused food does not go to waste.
- Using cleaner sources of energy for feeding and cooking
- Continuing to focus on mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as it interacts with rising food, fertilizer, and fuel costs, through increased funding and home-grown school meals
- Clarifying strategic focus within partner organizations to ensure high alignment with local communities and other programs
- Strengthening partnerships with other organizations to mobilize children to go back to school
- Building better trust and confidence in implementing organizations through increased transparency
- Incorporating, from the beginning, strategic planning for high-quality program design that can accomplish their mission at scale
- Implementing learning exchanges between school feeding entities to be acquainted with current best practices
- Scaling up the availability and use of biofortified crops and fortified whole grains
- Establishing key performance indicators
- Involving the voices of children in identifying needs and solutions
- Asking governments to take a leading role in mobilizing communities for sustainable food production

The 23rd Global Child Nutrition Forum recognizes that school meal programs demonstrated astounding resiliency in the face of global crises. Many governments reached a higher number of children in their school feeding program in 2022 compared to 2019 and donors increased investments and maintained commitment. Let us use the information within this Communiqué to continue the significant work and to take further action in all areas as recommended by government representatives and partners.



Participant List



- Listed in alphabetical order by country and then organization
- "*" denotes a Government representative

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*Aldo Sambo, Advisor to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Education
*Her Excellency Luisa Grilo, Minister of Education, Ministry of Education
*Rosa Fernandes, Minister's Personal Assistant, Ministry of Education
*Soraya Kalonguela, National Director Pre Primary Education, Ministry of Education

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Armelle Korogone, Program and Policy Officer, WFP Benin
Bio Ozias Domagui, WASH Officer, CRS Benin
Bismarck Sossa, WFP Communications Officer, WFP Benin
Blandine Babadankpodji, Directrice des Programmes, CARITAS Benin
Caroline Schaeffer, Deputy Country Director and Head of Programme, WFP Benin
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Ella Regina Ahouandjinou, WFP Benin
Emilienne Cyuzuzo, Head of Programs, CRS
Eunice Nago, Head of School Feeding, WFP
*Felix Sonon, Ministry of Health
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Kocou Prosper Tonato, Deputy Chief Of Party (DCOP), CRS
Kounou Achille, Head of Operations, CRS Benin
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*Martin Essoun, Ministry of Preschool and Primary Education
*Martin Magbonde, Ministry of Education, Director of Tokoli Public Primary School
*Mireille Affouda, Ministry of Preschool and Primary Education
*Odette Kaba, MDC
Ousmane Maiga, Chief Of Party, CRS
Regina H. Guedou G., Executive Director, FADeC -ONG (Women Actors of Community Development-NGO)
Ronie Anago, Gender Officer, CRS Benin
*Sylvie Hounzangbe Adote, Presidency (Education unit)

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BURKINA FASO

Elisabeth Boena, Health, Nutrition and School Feeding Program Manager, CRS Burkina Faso





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 Salifou (Noufou) Ouedraogo, Cultivator
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Claude Kakule, Deputy Country Director, WFP Burundi
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*Chinmoum Oumarou, Secretary General of the Ministry of External Relations, Government of Cameroon
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 *The Honorable Kilo Asheri, Secretary of State for Basic Education, Government of Cameroon
 *Mokube Mathias Itoe, Research officer to the Prime Minister, Head of Government, Prime Minister's Cabinet
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*Elhadji Seck, Director of School Canteens, Ministry of Education
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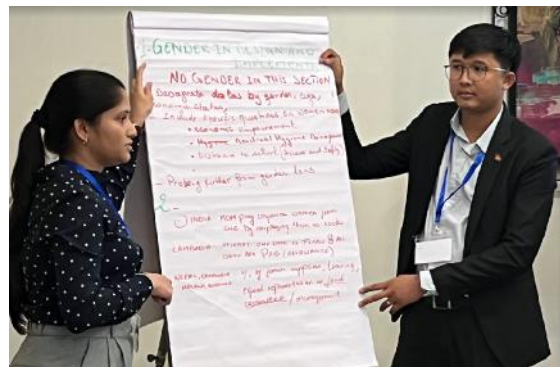
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