

GCNF in 2023



About Us

GCNF works to ensure **governments and their partners** have the knowledge, tools, and connections they need to increase coverage of high-quality **school meal programs** that contribute to national **education, agricultural, economic, social protection, health, and nutrition** goals.



Above: Time for lunch at a school in Tunis, Tunisia. In 2021, the National School Feeding Program in Tunisia purchased 100% of its food domestically.

School meal programs address the three pillars of economic development in one program: education, health and nutrition, and agriculture. Few other programs of scale link these important sectors or have comparable intergenerational benefits. Broadly speaking, findings suggest that investing in nutritious school meal programs today will have benefits in the form of billions of dollars in healthcare cost savings tomorrow.

School meal programs are present in almost every country, functioning as one of the largest safety nets in the world. In the 2020 school year, at least 330.3 million children a school meal at school. For many children in vulnerable situations, a school meal is the only nutritious meal they receive throughout the day.

Our Team

US Team

Arlene Mitchell, Executive Director
 Heidi Kessler, Deputy Director
 Ayala Wineman, Research Coordinator
 Yale Warner, Associate Program Officer
 Katherine Wankelman, Operations and Program Coordinator
 Tori Spivey, Communications Officer

Global Team

Senior Advisors & Coordinators

Liliane Bigayimpunzi, Survey Coordinator: Africa
 Rita Bhatia, Senior Advisor, Nutrition, Survey Coordinator: Asia & the Pacific
 Nicole Jacquet, Survey Coordinator: Europe & the Middle East
 Alice Martin-Daihirou, Senior Advisor, Africa
 Laurie Miller, Nonprofit Financial Advisor
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Africa

Priscilia Etuge, Survey Associate: Africa
 Ludmilla de Gois, Survey Associate: Africa
 Moses Ekwueme, Survey Associate: Africa

The Americas

Mariel Mendiola, Global Survey Team Lead: The Americas
 Gilberto Morales, Survey Associate: The Americas
 Katherine Wankelman, Survey Associate: The Americas

Asia & The Pacific

Mary Bachaspatimayum, Deputy Coordinator: Asia & the Pacific
 Melissa Pradhan, Survey Associate: Asia & the Pacific
 Zhanna Abzaltnova, Survey Associate: Asia & the Pacific

Europe & the Middle East

Majd Sheik, Survey Associate: the Middle East

Board of Directors

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 David Hong

GCNF's team members are located around the world and represent 15 nationalities!



Brazil



Burundi



Cameroon



Canada



Colombia



France



India



Kazakhstan



Mexico



Nepal



Nigeria



Palestine



Panama



United States



Zambia

Our Vision

GCNF envisions a future where school meals sustainably nourish all children and help them, their families, communities, and nations to thrive.



Our Mission

GCNF works together with government leaders and a diverse network of partners around the world to deliver sustainable and nutritious school meal programs that give every child the opportunity to learn and thrive.

Left: A student in Cambodia demonstrates handwashing practices before school lunch is served.

Highlights from 2023

DEFINING SCHOOL MEAL COVERAGE WEBINAR | MARCH

What do indicators of school feeding coverage really mean? This [1-hour webinar](#) took an in-depth look at the various ways to define “coverage” when measuring the reach of school meal programs. The answer depends on population parameters, beneficiary definition, meal frequency, and more. We explored options for constructing this key indicator, heard from a panel of experts, and engaged in open discussion.

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL MEALS DAY | MARCH

“The initiative has changed and developed over the years but has held onto some core elements including raising awareness of the importance of the nutritional quality of school meal programs worldwide, promoting the connection between healthy eating, education, and better learning, [and] connecting children around the world to foster healthy eating habits and promote wellbeing in schools.”

- *Simon Massey, Head of Engagement & Learning at Children in Scotland reflects on how the initiative has developed over the years.*

GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION | APRIL

GCNF, in partnership with the Food Future Foundation, presented the thematic session “[Adolescent Nutrition: Need for an Integrated and Sustainable Approach](#)” at the Global Dialogue on Food Systems Transformation in New Delhi, India in April. GCNF engaged Mr. Sunichi Nakada, Senior Advisor for Agriculture and Economic Development at the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to speak on the Japanese Shoku-iku (school lunch) program, an unforgettable highlight for many of the over 400 participants of the event. GCNF was also pleased to involve Ms. Ana Maria Spaniol from the Brazil Ministry of Health and Dr. Eduardo Nilsen from the University of São Paulo. Each presented the Brazilian School Health Program as an example of how food environments can support healthier lifestyles for adolescents which can pave the way for food systems transformation. Over 30 countries were represented in the event organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) as part of its role as the B20 India 2023 Secretariat.





GCNF staff participated in the Global Dialogue on Food Systems Transformation in April 2023. Clockwise from top: A successful panel discussion on adolescent nutrition featuring Arlene Mitchell, second from left, and Mr. Sunichi Nakada, far right; Heidi Kessler speaks in a special session; Mary Bachaspatimayum and Tori Spivey representing GCNF.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NUTRITION CONFERENCE | JULY

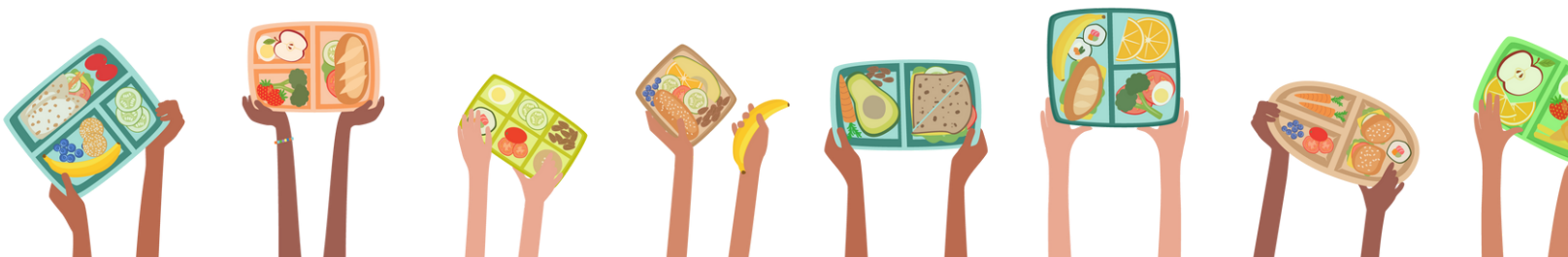
GCNF presented at the American Society of Nutrition conference, giving insights on nutrition from the results of the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Program. Major conclusions include how disparities in school meal coverage across regions and income levels indicate that coverage is lowest precisely where needs are likely to be greatest. At the same time, programs seem to be growing fastest in low-income countries. Although programs in lower income settings tend to serve less diverse meals, the survey documents a promising shift in the direction of local procurement and farmer engagement—practices which are correlated with healthier school menus. The potential for school meal programs to be employed to combat obesity is less recognized in settings where concerns of undernutrition remain salient, even as rates of obesity are rising.

SOCIETY FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOR CONFERENCE | JULY

Arlene Mitchell presented at the yearly conference for the Society of Nutrition Education and Behavior on the topic, “Global Survey of School Meal Programs: Highlights & Insights for Universal School Meals & Nutrition Education.” The presentation covered the major insights from the global survey, including the intricacies of defining school meal program coverage. The inclusion or exclusion of factors like primary and/or secondary students, private or public schools, enrolled students or total school-aged children have immense impact on calculated coverage rate. Focusing on primary school age children, school meal programs were estimated to reach 88% of primary school age children in Latin America and the Caribbean, significantly higher than in other regions.

REGIONAL MEETING IN BRAZIL | AUGUST

Heidi Kessler, Deputy Director, represented GCNF at one of the first of many school feeding regional meetings held around the world. The event was co-hosted by the World Food Programme and the Inter-American Development Bank. Around 200 participants from over 20 countries participated in the event. During the launch of the *State of School Feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Heidi had the opportunity to share how data from the Global Survey forms the foundation of global understanding on school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean and the report itself.





Soyez les
premiers chez
Nous, à
L'EPP KOUAEDDO

Avec le gouvernement
et le Programme Alimentaire
Mondial, Nous mangeons
sain et varié.

Avec les Pays-Bas,
votre état nutritionnel
est suivi.

Students sit down to eat lunch in Benin. Benin's National Integrated School Meal Program set an ambitious goal of achieving a 100% school feeding coverage rate in its 7,500 schools by the end of 2023.

CONGRESS ON HIDDEN HUNGER | SEPTEMBER

GCNF was proud to present at the 5th International Congress on Hidden Hunger at Stuttgart University in September. Representing GCNF was the Survey Coordinator for Europe and the Middle East, Nicole Jacquet. During the poster session, she presented on school meal programs and farmer engagement based on the results of the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs. The analysis concluded that school meal programs are increasingly prioritizing domestic procurement of food, often in an explicit effort to invigorate local/rural economies. In fact, A majority (59%) of programs reported direct engagement with farmers, a practice that was considerably more common in the Latin America/Caribbean region (at 83%) and Sub-Saharan Africa region (at 71%).

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS) REGIONAL MEETING | OCTOBER

The regional conference of ECOWAS Member States on Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) took place on October 3rd and 4th in Dakar, Senegal. Ludmilla de Gois, Survey Associate: Africa represented GCNF at the meeting sharing more on school meal programs in the ECOWAS region. Entitled "Investing in Homegrown School Feeding to Strengthen Human Capital, Women's Economic Empowerment, and Contribute to Economic Development," the conference convened ECOWAS member states, stakeholders, and researchers to share knowledge and best practices on HGSF and its impact on economic growth, food system strengthening, and women's empowerment. Presentations showed the importance of HGSF, while panel discussions on best practices and technical workshops brought to the table topics which the countries had previously identified as challenging: school feeding financing, data/tools and systems, coordination and governance, gender, and nutrition & food systems.

MICRONUTRIENT FORUM | OCTOBER

Nicole also represented GCNF in The Hague during the 6th Micronutrient Forum which took a thematic focus on *Nutrition for Resilience*. By bringing together over 2,000 stakeholders from multiple sectors and disciplines, the Forum aimed at establishing an agenda on the interdependence of nutrition and resilience to accelerate progress towards global nutrition and development goals. GCNF presented a poster on the delivery of fortified and biofortified foods in multi-sectoral school meal programs. **Did you know?** 80%, 72%, 42%, and 21% of programs in lower-, lower-middle, upper-middle, and higher-income countries served fortified foods in the 2020 school year..





Nutrition education activities complement the Armenia school meal program. A July 2023 event celebrated the Government of Armenia's assuming full responsibility for school feeding operations that had previously been managed by the World Food Programme (WFP).

SCHOOL MEALS COALITION FIRST GLOBAL SUMMIT | OCTOBER

GCNF was pleased to participate in the first School Meals Coalition Global Summit in Paris in October. During the event, Heidi Kessler announced the upcoming launch of the 2024 Global Survey School of School Meal Programs. Participants heard directly from governments, sharing commitments like the following; H.E. Ville Tavio, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade **Finland** announced a new website to help other countries learn from their program; Mr. Dilshod Safarzoda, Deputy Minister of Education of **Tajikistan**, announced the country is increasing the state budget for school feeding and will increase coverage of primary school students to reach 50% by 2027; Mrs. Hilda Khouri, Director of Counselling of the Ministry of Education of **Lebanon** announced **Lebanon's** commitment that by 2030, they plan to reach 100% of children with a school meal.

THE 2024 GLOBAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS DATA COLLECTION LAUNCHES | NOVEMBER

In the face of the ever-growing global food crisis, school meal programs provide safe, nutritious meals, benefitting children, and often their communities. To continue to deepen global understanding of the impact and potential of these programs, the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) is pleased to announce the launch of [the third round of data collection for the Global Survey of School Meal Programs](#). GCNF has expanded sections exploring menu diversity, the impact of crises, and approaches to combating climate change. The 2024 Global Survey will ask government-appointed Global Survey Focal Points to report data from the 2022 school year, resulting in the most up-to-date information available on school meal programs worldwide.

“Participating countries have already seen the importance of creating knowledge together on school feeding issues,” says Liliane Bigayimpunzi, Survey Coordinator for Africa. “I hope that the [government] Focal Points are passionate about this process because it really allows them to promote their efforts in school feeding.”





At a girls school in India, students wait in line with reusable containers to be served their mid-day meal. By using these containers, students are able to take home any leftover food to other members of their household.

GCNF in the media

- [World Food Programme State of School Feeding](#)
- [UNESCO Ready to learn and thrive: school health and nutrition around the world](#)
- [GPE School meals support education: Examples of programs in Mongolia, Guatemala and Chad](#)
- [Center for Global Development Not My Problem: Breaking Down Sectoral Silos in School Meals](#)
- [Civil Eats How Do School Meals in the US Stack Up Against Other Countries?](#)
- [Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center The Global Child Nutrition Foundation Enriches Children's Well-being](#)
- [The Lancet, Universal free school meals: the future of school meal programmes?](#)
- [Tasting Table, What school lunches look like around the world](#)
- [Five facts about the benefits of school meal programmes](#)

Papers & Presentations

- [School Meal Programs Around the World: Results from the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs](#) | Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health
- [School meal programs and farmer engagement](#) | 5th International Congress on Hidden Hunger
- [Nutrition Insights from the 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs](#) | American Society for Nutrition
- Global Survey of School Meal Programs | Baltic School Meals Group
- The Potential of School Meal Programs to Tackle Rising Overweight and Obesity Rates Among Schoolchildren in Africa | Africa Food Environment Research Network (FERN)
- [School Meals and Food Systems](#) | [Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition](#)
- School Meals Around the World | Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
- [Changes in school feeding operations during the COVID-19 pandemic: evidence from 139 countries](#) | Food Security





GCNF is grateful to our primary donors in 2023



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...and the many individual donors who support us each year!

Looking Ahead

In closing, GCNF extends profound gratitude to our cherished community of partners, donors, volunteers, and dedicated team members. Your unwavering commitment has been the cornerstone of our mission to support children worldwide to access nourishing meals, unlocking their potential for a brighter future. We celebrate the impact of our collective efforts in tackling childhood malnutrition and supporting governments and communities globally. Together, we remain resolute in our pursuit of a reality where no child faces hunger, building a world where every child's potential is nourished and realized.

