



From soil to school and policy to plate, Zambia is showing the world what's possible through its home-grown approach to school feeding.

You're Invited!

In November 2026, school meal leaders from around the world are invited to Lusaka, Zambia - home to one of Africa's most [dynamic and inspiring school meal programs](#). Together, we'll learn from Zambia's journey and the global movement to ensure every child has access to a nutritious and tasty school meal.

The Global Child Nutrition Forum (the Forum) is a biennial in-person peer-to-peer learning exchange on school meal programs held in a different country each time. It equips governments and partners with the tools, knowledge, and global connections they need to strengthen and sustain nationally led school meal programs. The Forum fosters a worldwide network of dedicated professionals, complementing the School Meals Coalition's political momentum with hands-on technical expertise.

Why Zambia?

Zambia's school meal story spans decades of dedication and innovation. After early post-independence programs were paused in the 1980s, school feeding was revived in 2003 through a partnership between the Government of Zambia and the World Food Programme (WFP), to combat drought-driven school dropouts. By 2011, Zambia had taken over the program and transitioned to full national ownership with the launch of the Home-Grown School Meals (HGSM) program, connecting school meals with smallholder agriculture and community empowerment – particularly women's leadership. Alongside complementary programs—Mary's Meals, World Vision, and WFP's emergency interventions—Zambia's school feeding initiatives now reach over 4.7 million children, with an ambitious goal to serve 6.6 million learners in 2026. Zambia's national strategy prioritizes sustainable expansion, climate resilience, and dietary diversity. With its proven leadership and deep local engagement, Zambia provides the ideal setting for a global dialogue on scaling home-grown school feeding models.

Who Attends the Forum?

The Global Child Nutrition Forum is a hands-on learning platform that brings together 250–400 participants from up to 80 countries, including:

- **Government leaders**—the primary audience, representing national school meal program leaders, managers, policymakers, and technical staff.
- **Development partners**—representatives of UN agencies, donor governments, foundations, and financial institutions.
- **NGOs/CSOs**—such as CRS, Counterpart International, Global Communities, Nascent Solutions, Mary's Meals, Plan International, SNV, World Vision International, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and others.
- **Multi-stakeholder platforms**—such as the School Meals Coalition, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), the Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, the Alliance Against Hunger, and the SDG2 Advocacy Hub
- **Academia and research institutions**—specializing in nutrition, food systems, and social protection.
- **Private sector partners**—Allies in food production, processing, packaging, fortification, logistics, and other related products and services.

The Agenda

Hosted by the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) and the Government of the Republic of Zambia, the 2026 edition of the Forum will feature a high impact agenda with technical experts, leading researchers, government officials, and school meal leaders from around the world.

The Forum agenda is driven by government-identified priorities from the [Global Survey of School Meal Programs](#), input from a wide range of stakeholders, and emerging global trends.

Draft Objectives (under review)

1. **Strengthen operational capacity** for program implementation and expansion.
2. **Provide technical knowledge, tools, and connections** for translating national school meal commitments into effective implementation.
3. **Foster peer-to-peer learning and collaboration** within and between stakeholders

(governments, implementing partners, industry, researchers, and advocates).

4. **Translate global knowledge and research into actionable strategies** for durable large-scale school meal programs.

The Forum will highlight the latest research, emerging trends, and innovations in key areas such as:

- ★ **Youth Engagement and School Food Environments:** Addressing rising obesity and diet-related disease by improving school food environments, reducing reliance on ultra-processed foods, and engaging youth as agents of change.
- ★ **Crisis, displacement, and vulnerable populations:** Examining how school meals reach children affected by crisis and displacement and using evidence from fragile and displacement settings to strengthen program planning and implementation..
- ★ **Sustainable local supply and nutrition innovation:** Expanding the role of diversified, nutritious foods (including fish, heritage crops, and whole grains), through public and institutional procurement policies that emphasize local food, small- and medium-size farms and enterprises, food safety, and environmental considerations.
- ★ **Inclusive economic opportunity and job creation:** Using school meal programs to build skills, develop local enterprise, and formalize employment - particularly for women and youth - across the food value chain.

Participants will engage in technical workshops, research presentations, and site visits to Zambian schools, culminating in a **Forum Communiqué** outlining government priorities for global attention.

The Partners

In addition to the Government of Zambia, GCNF will engage implementing partners and other allied organizations to support the Forum – financially and in kind, as well as with content expertise. Contact info@gcnf.org for more information.