



Home-grown school feeding

The challenge

The ongoing global food crisis is making it difficult for families to access adequate food daily. As a result, 733 million people are going hungry every day,¹ including 73 million children. Hunger negatively impacts children's education, which is crucial to escape poverty and malnutrition.²

Fortunately, there is a proven solution: school feeding. School feeding encourages families to send their children – especially their daughters – to school and, once at school, the meals help ensure that children are well-nourished and ready to learn.³ Governments recognise school meal programmes as a cost-effective way to provide nutritious meals to schoolchildren and enhance education.⁴ More importantly, the benefits extend beyond education, positively affecting health, inclusivity, agriculture, and local economies, with an economic return of US\$ 3 to US\$ 9 for every dollar invested.⁵

Despite the benefits, only 18% of schoolchildren in low-income countries are enrolled in national school feeding programmes.⁶ Many countries have established policies and guidelines, but they are yet to be fully rolled out.

SNV and school feeding

Since 2015, SNV has been implementing scalable parent-led school dairy programmes in Uganda and Ethiopia by increasing access to milk and yoghurt.

By 2023 the programme in Uganda reached nearly a million schoolchildren and created a new market for 20,000 farmers.^{7,8} In Ethiopia, we rolled out a tailored subsidy approach to address widespread concerns about the quality and affordability of milk. By July 2024, 81,400 public school students were enrolled in the school milk programme.⁹

¹ Concern Worldwide, 'World hunger facts: What you need to know in 2024 (and 2025)', *CONCERN Worldwide website*, 2024, <https://www.concern.org.uk/news/world-hunger-facts-figures> (accessed 13 September 2024).

² WFP, 'State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022', *reliefweb*, March 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/state-school-feeding-worldwide-2022> (accessed 20 September 2024)

³ WFP, 'State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022', 2023

⁴ The School Meals Coalition is celebrating over 100 member countries and more than 140 partners taking action for positive impact worldwide.

⁵ NFP Connects, 'School Milk in East Africa', *NFP Connects website*, 2023, <https://www.nfpconnects.com/conversations/school-feeding-in-east-africa> (accessed 20 September 2024).

⁶ WFP, 2023

⁷ NFP Connects, 'School Milk in East Africa', 2023.

⁸ *School milk programmes - A leap in Uganda's education through nutrition enhancement: The TIDE project video*, Kampala, SNV, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICkRdq3N3IA> (accessed 15 September 2024).

⁹ NFP Connects, 2023.

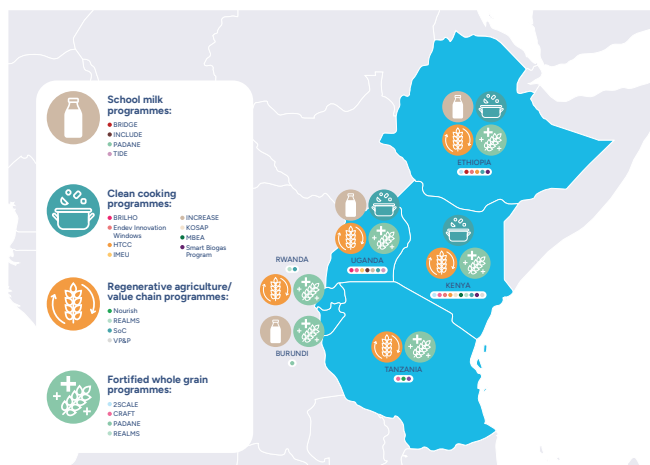


Figure 1 SNV's school feeding related programming in East Africa

Building on our experience with smallholder farmers in dairy, horticulture, cereals, and pulses, SNV sees a need to expand and enhance national school feeding programmes while supporting initiatives that parents and communities are already taking to ensure their children's nutrition at school.¹⁰ Financing school feeding remains a major challenge, but community and sub-national resource mobilisation for school feeding offer an opportunity for governments and donors to strategically leverage these in blended financing models.¹¹ Subsidies should ensure no child is left behind. In addition, locally sourced school foods could improve diet diversity and benefit farmers with increased market demand for their produce.¹²

Anecdote from Rwanda

In 2019, Rwanda's government approved the National Comprehensive School Feeding Policy to achieve universal coverage of all students. The rapid scale up has been successful, but challenges remain – such as the affordability of diverse, nutrient-rich foods; procurement from traders instead of local farmers; and the environmental impact of cooking methods. To improve meal quality, fortified wholegrain, maize and bio-fortified crops have been introduced. The programme aims to switch to clean cooking to enhance fuel efficiency and reduce pollution and costs. Procurement system innovation is also needed.

Call to action

Governments have set their ambitions and share practices in regional school meal coalitions. The connection to use locally grown and procured commodities for diverse, nutritious school meals, cooked with renewable energy is clear. Blending government-led, community-led, and humanitarian models under national policies is essential.

Regional collaboration between practitioners, researchers, governments and funders, can bring together the best models and overcome national limitations. This approach will:

- strengthen innovation and adaptation of proven national models;
- lead on action research and evidence creation; and
- foster regional collaboration and knowledge exchange.

A regional partner movement would attract diverse financing to ensure all learners receive nutritious meals. Be it, such a regional movement needs a push and coordination to scale nationally proven solutions in new contexts. SNV aims to engage and support with such a regional movement in East Africa.

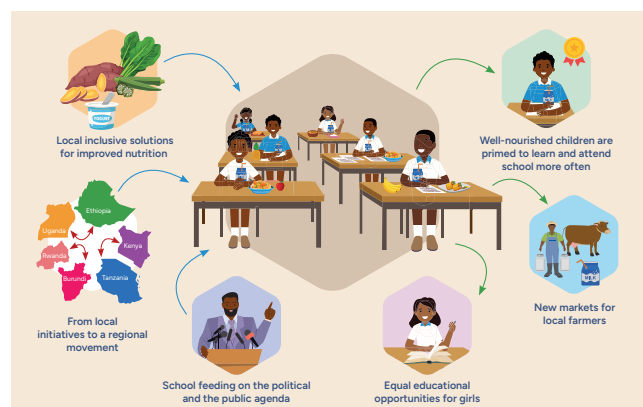


Figure 2 SNV's school feeding ambition in East Africa

Join us in our mission to strengthen access nutritious meals to 10 million learners in East Africa by 2030.

¹⁰ P. Debons, N. Westerik, M. Streng, M. Beun, D. Moges, and F. Kizito, *School Milk Programme Learning Paper*, Wageningen, Wageningen University and Research, 2023, <https://edepot.wur.nl/651625> (accessed 10 September 2024)

¹¹ P. Debons et al., *School Milk Programme Learning Paper*, 2023

¹² NFP Connects, 2023.

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SNV is a mission-driven global development partner working in more than 20 countries across Africa and Asia. Building on 60 years of experience and together with our team of over 1,600 people, we strengthen capacities and catalyse partnerships that transform the agri-food, energy, and water systems, which enable sustainable and more equitable lives for all.

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