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## **Strategic priorities for action in eight school feeding landscapes (of East Africa)**

Summary report

Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

June 2026

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## Abbreviation list

AGRA – Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa  
AVSI – Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale  
AfDB – African Development Bank  
BORDA – Bremen Overseas Research and Development Association  
CAADP – Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme  
CGF – Community Feeding Group  
CAMFED – Campaign for Female Education  
CIP – International Potato Center  
CGIAR – Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research  
CLASP – Collaborative Labeling and Appliance Standards Programme  
CRS – Catholic Relief Services  
ECW – Education Cannot Wait  
ELEAP – Ethiopia Electrification Programme  
EnDev – Energising Development  
ESAFF – Eastern and Southern Africa Small-Scale Farmers Forum  
EKN – Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands  
FACE – Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress  
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
F4E – Food for Education  
F4W – Football for Water  
FNC – Food and Nutrition Council (Zimbabwe)  
GAIN – Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition  
GCNF – Global Child Nutrition Forum  
GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit  
GPE – Global Partnership for Education  
GRBA/GPRBA – Global Partnership for Results-Based Approaches (World Bank)  
HGSF – Home-Grown School Feeding  
HGSFP – Home-Grown School Feeding Programme  
HGSM – Home-Grown School Meals  
HOSO – Heads of School Organisation (Rwanda)  
IYUI – Inspirational Youth Uganda Initiative  
JICA – Japan International Cooperation Agency  
KEMRI – Kenya Medical Research Institute  
LPG – Liquefied Petroleum Gas  
MNP – Micronutrient Powder  
MSFNS – Multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Strategy (Zimbabwe)  
MSME – Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise  
MoA – Ministry of Agriculture  
MoE – Ministry of Education  
MoES – Ministry of Education and Sports  
MoEnergy – Ministry of Energy (Zambia)  
MoFNP – Ministry of Finance and National Planning (Zambia)  
MoPSE – Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Zimbabwe)  
MoHCC – Ministry of Health and Child Care (Zimbabwe)  
MoWDS – Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation (Zambia)  
NCDA – National Child Development Agency (Rwanda)

NFC – National Food and Nutrition Commission (Rwanda)  
NGGC – National Home-Grown School Feeding Coordination (Uganda)  
NMNAP – National Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (Tanzania)  
NNF – Novo Nordisk Foundation  
NSFP – National School Feeding Programme  
NSMNP – Kenya’s National School Meals and Nutrition Programme  
OBEN – Observatoire de l’Environnement et de la Nature  
ORAP – Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress  
PABRA – Pan-Africa Bean Research Alliance  
PCI – Project Concern International  
PNAS – Programme National d’Alimentation Scolaire  
PTA – Parent-Teacher Associations  
PPP – Public–Private Partnership  
RF – The Rockefeller Foundation  
SCI – Save the Children International  
SE4All – Sustainable Energy for All  
SHN – School Health and Nutrition  
SMC – School Meals Coalition  
SMP – School Meal Programme  
SMP – School Menu Planner  
SNV – Netherlands Development Organisation  
TANCO – Tanzania Nutrition Care Organization  
TAREA – Tanzania Renewable Energy Association  
TAYEP – Tanzania Young Eco Protection  
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme  
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund  
USAID – United States Agency for International Development  
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture  
WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene  
WB – World Bank  
WFP – World Food Programme  
WHO – World Health Organization  
WVI – World Vision International  
WinS – WASH in Schools Strategy (Zambia)  
ZARI – Zambia Agricultural Research Institute

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## 1. Introduction

School feeding is increasingly recognised by governments as a means for investing in human capital and providing a social safety net for people who have been marginalised or living in poverty. By offering nutritious meals at school, these programmes encourage families to send their children, especially daughters, to school. Beyond cost-effective nutrition and education benefits, school meals have the potential to drive systemic change across health, social inclusion, sustainable agriculture, local economies, clean energy, and climate resilience.

SNV contributes to strengthening these programmes by enhancing integration of the systems that make them work, by working across the agrifood, energy, and water sectors. Close collaboration with governments and a commitment to locally led solutions enable SNV's impact in school feeding. With the aim of defining the strategic entry points and opportunities for impact, the school feeding landscape was mapped in eight countries: Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Objectives of the country-level mappings:

- Gain insight into the country-level policy frameworks for school feeding.
- Learn about current initiatives and modalities, and status of integrated implementation.
- Understand the partner landscape for school feeding and its enabling systems.
- Analyse and provide recommendations for strategic entry points and opportunities for collaborative action.

The current report acts as a summary of the main findings from the individual country-level mapping. Based on the identified cross-country commonalities, the report provides overarching recommendations to further the school feeding agenda.

## 2. Findings: commonalities across 8 country landscapes

### Policy landscape

Governments have demonstrated their commitment to school feeding by developing legal and regulatory frameworks including policies, strategies, and guidelines. However, significant gaps are still in budgets, financing planning, operational mechanisms, and synergistic implementation.

- Policy frameworks are too often outdated or incomplete; revisions are needed to provide direction and momentum to the school feeding system. What began as programmes, now requires stronger institutionalisation of planning, budgeting, management, and monitoring processes, including multi-sectoral (inter-) ministerial coordination.
- Monitoring, data collection, analysis, and evidence creation tend to be the weakest link in the chain, preventing effective information-based adaptive management and context-specific (innovative) solutions.

### Sustainability objectives: Financing plan, local ownership, and parent contributions

Budget allocations have risen considerably across most countries, reflecting planned expansion with the goal of reaching universal coverage. Yet programmes are still highly dependent on external donors (20-60% of funding). Strategic programme costing and financing planning are needed to build sustainable domestic financing.

- Most per-meal allocations are not sufficient to cover nutritious menus or infrastructure investments. This leaves school meals reliant on community contributions, hiding the true costs

of school meals and limiting job-creation opportunities. A common challenge is low parent engagement, where “free education” raises expectations for free school meals.

- Community-led school feeding models enhance local ownership and can reduce pressure on national fiscal budgets, however, parent-paid models risk excluding those most in need. Depending on the vulnerabilities, local solidarity mechanisms or linkages to formal social safety nets are needed to ensure no child is left out.
- Community-led models can facilitate local procurement and rural economic multiplier effects, stimulating farmers and agricultural transformation to increase sustainable, climate-resilient production and improve food quality and safety, if farmers are provided with the necessary capacity support.

### **Nutrition objectives: Menu and meal composition and food quality**

Meal quality and nutritional value vary widely, depending on funding availability, agro-ecological context, and operational capacity. Maize and beans are common staples, with menus ranging from fortified blended porridge to meals with at least four food groups. As procurement is largely cost-driven, incorporating vegetables, fruits, and animal-sourced foods remains the largest challenge, also because of perishability. Local sourcing can undercut these issues, though variety and consistency are not always guaranteed.

- Food safety is a justified concern, as many schools lack access to safe water, handwashing facilities, adequate sanitation, proper storage, and trained food handlers.
- Food safety checks on stocks and storage are rarely performed, posing risks like aflatoxin contamination and infestation. Addressing this requires decentralised food quality testing and stronger enforcement of rules and regulations.
- Where land and water are available, school gardens play a role in menu diversification and offer opportunities for food and nutrition education.
- Nutritional improvement is not always an objective of school feeding, where school performance is the primary goal.



### **Agriculture and rural economic development objectives**

The potential of homegrown school feeding modalities to contribute to farmer livelihoods and food systems transformation is widely recognised and embedded in the [African Union Agriculture Development Plan \(CAADP\)](#). Local or regional procurement creates opportunities to: (i) strengthen the agriculture value chain with domestic market orientation; (ii) promote culturally appropriate, climate-resilient crops, adapted to local ecology; (iii) advance regenerative agricultural practices. These developments can lead to long-term productivity gains, increased domestic market demand, higher farmers' income, and stronger rural communities.

Common challenges in realising this potential include:

- Aggregation capacity, local storage, and post-harvest loss reduction for a consistent supply.
- Complexities for smallholder farmers and their organisations to access (centralised) institutional procurement mechanisms. Though community-led programmes usually have a local production and procurement component.

- Competition between local demand and informal markets, and between export demand and national, urban, formal markets, impacts the affordability of key commodities.

**Procurement mechanisms** differ between the implementing modalities, with three main ways of supplying goods. Each requires specific enabling capacity and regulation for smallholder farmers:

- Central procurement of dry foods at the national or provincial/district level.
- Local procurement mechanisms for dry and perishable foods through markets or farmer cooperatives.
- Local provision of dry and perishable foods, especially vegetables, from school gardens or parent(in-kind) contributions.

Enabling local farmers, cooperatives, and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) access to institutional procurement requires both process adaptations - like timely payment arrangements and product quality assurance - and capacity-building in business skills and economic literacy.

While school gardens offer a dual benefit of supplying fresh ingredients and offering nutrition and agriculture education, there are several implementation challenges: water scarcity for irrigation, additional demands on teachers, and maintenance during school holidays. A more commercial approach to school business units for vegetable supply, income generation, and cost recovery could serve as a potential model.

## Climate and environmental objectives

### School infrastructure

Kitchen, storage, and canteen facilities are underdeveloped across most countries, with significant variation between localities. These gaps have implications for food quality, safety, spoilage, infestation, waste, climate impact, and overall sustainability of school feeding programmes. Infrastructure investments are often excluded from programming budgets and therefore come from operational funds.

Centralised kitchens offer a cost-effective alternative, particularly in urban areas. However, road conditions and the need for hot-food delivery create transport challenges, especially in most rural areas.

### Water supply and handwashing

Water is a prerequisite for food preparation. Many schools lack access to safe water, handwashing stations, adequate sanitation facilities, and trained food handlers, compromising food hygiene. In arid and semi-arid areas, limited water supply in schools exacerbates the challenge. In some cases, water fees directly affect school meals' quality. As government departments and development partners pursue innovative solutions for water efficiency, harvesting, storage, filtering, and recycling, supply continues to fall short of demand.

### Clean cooking and renewable energy

Firewood and charcoal are predominant in rural schools, contributing to *indoor air pollution*, *health impact* on cooks and children, environmental degradation, deforestation, and climate change. Fuel and biomass-efficient stoves have been introduced as a cleaner, lower-cost alternative for schools off the electricity grid. Nevertheless, renewable energy solutions (including electricity, solar energy, and biogas) offer greater long-term cost and labour savings and health benefits. However, adoption faces barriers due to hesitancy around perceived risks of new technologies, fragmented decision-making across stakeholders, and insufficient after-sales technical support. Still, many national governments are incorporating schools into their energy transition plans, recognising their significant collective emissions footprint.

### 3. Country-level landscape mapping

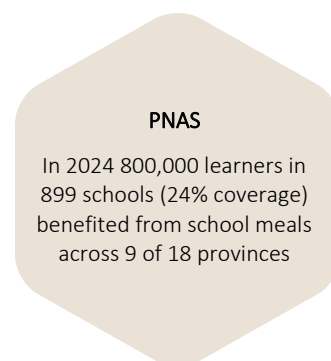
#### 3.1 BURUNDI

##### Policy and governance

The National School Feeding Programme (Programme National d’Alimentation Scolaire [-PNAS 2018–2032](#)), guided by the [2018 National School Feeding Policy](#) and reinforced by the 2024–2027 School Health and Nutrition Strategy<sup>1</sup>, is implemented through a multi-sectoral approach led by the Ministries of Education and Local Government, with coordination of operations by the National School Canteens Department. An Intersectoral Committee manages the coordination of programme activities between different players.

##### Modalities

- **Government-led PNAS:** Implemented in 9 provinces, with food centrally procured by WFP from local traders and cooperatives, supplemented by imports, and delivered directly to schools. The model relies on strong community participation, with parents contributing food, firewood, water, and labour.
- **Home-grown pilot (262 schools):** A voucher system enables schools to procure food locally through markets and farmer groups, facilitated by Provincial Education Departments
- **Community-led programmes:** In non-PNAS areas, NGO-supported initiatives combine food assistance, agriculture, health, and community engagement, often including local sourcing.



##### Programme status

###### Financing:

Increasing government contribution, yet ~60% donor dependent. Coverage remains limited (9/18 provinces; 800,000 children, 27% of target), with 23% of school-aged children out of school. Cross-sector funding remains insufficient.

###### Meal quality:

Parent-led preparation with limited food safety oversight presents risks. The recipe guide with 12 standard menus offers flexibility to adjust to the foods available, but due to common resource constraints, dietary diversity targets are still not met.

###### Production / procurement:

Efforts to strengthen local procurement include a government voucher system and WFP support for milk and biofortified beans. Community programmes integrate local sourcing, but scaling requires a stronger capacity of farmers and cooperatives. Food safety systems are being established.

###### School facilities:

Limited water supply and functional sanitation remain a constraint. National investments (e.g. [AfDB Ruvyironza Water Resources and Multi-Purpose Dam Project \(PRODERER\)](#)) aim to improve water access.

Promotion of energy-efficient stoves to reduce reliance on biomass and environmental impact (e.g. [OBEN/POWA institutional cookstoves initiative](#)) supports clean cooking in schools.

<sup>1</sup> Government of Burundi (2024). School Health and Nutrition Strategy 2024–2027 (validated March 2024), cited in School Meals Coalition (2025).

### Nutrition and food environment:

There are supplementary education programmes on food and nutrition, agriculture and health. Policies do not include school food environment management.

### Partner landscape

Theme	Partner
Governance	WFP
Financing	WB, WFP
Direct Implementation	Caritas, Mary's meals, World Vision
Meal quality, Nutrition	WFP
Procurement, market linkages	WFP, SNV
Agriculture	AGRA, FAO, CIP, GAIN, Global Communities, SNV
Clean cooking; Energy	OBEN - POWA; AVSI, NCA, EU, Anzana Electricity
Water	UNICEF, GPE, ECW

### Strategic priorities

- Strengthen the School Feeding **legal framework** to address governance fragmentation, budgeting, coordination, and long-term planning across ministries in Burundi.
- Strengthen **nutritious value chains** for farmer to school linkages for enhanced menu food diversity in school menus and farmer incomes.
- Expand initiatives for **clean cooking and renewable energy** in a collaborative manner to reduce environmental impact.

## 3.2 ETHIOPIA

### Policy and governance

Ethiopia's [Home-Grown School Feeding Programme \(HGSFP\)](#), launched in 2019, is guided by the [2021 School Feeding Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy](#), targeting 21 million children by 2027 and universal coverage by 2030. It is embedded within broader national frameworks, including the [School Health and Nutrition Strategy \(2012\)](#) and the [Food and Nutrition Strategy \(2021–2030\)](#), promoting decentralised, multi-sectoral implementation aligned with education, nutrition, and health objectives.

### Modalities

- **Government-led:** National HGSFP, sourcing locally produced food; reached ~7 million learners in 2023, mainly in Oromia and Addis Ababa. Includes take-home rations in selected areas.
- **WFP-supported programmes:** WFP provides emergency and humanitarian school feeding, reaching over 283,500 learners (May 2025), alongside infrastructure and capacity support
- **SNV & partners- supported programmes:** The locally sourced School Milk Programme in Tigray and Kombolcha city and other parts of Ethiopia.
- **Civil society-led:** Community supported by NGOs, churches and corporate social responsibility initiatives for to school feeding.

#### School Milk Programme

SNV's SMP has achieved remarkable scale, reaching 177,678 learners and fostering a sustainable culture of dairy consumption

## Programme status

### Financing:

The federal financial commitment is limited, and responsibility has been given to the states. Increasingly, the sub-national government is self-funding, paying 55% up to 65% of the total budget, with almost 90% coming from the Addis Abeba SF agency. Apart from external donors, local philanthropists and community fundraising cover the remaining budget. National coverage is about 23%, seven million out of the 21 million primary school children targeted by 2027. More than 9 million children are out of school.

### Meal quality:

School meal guidelines promote dietary diversity (at least four of six food groups). In practice, meals are less diverse and often lack essential micronutrients due to resource constraints and inflation, despite addressing basic energy needs.

### Production / procurement:

HGSF procurement prioritises small-scale suppliers, reserving 20% of contracts for them, enabling farmer groups to compete. Framework agreements are recommended to maintain a consistent year-round supply. HGSF functionality depends on the ecological zone and agricultural productivity. Scaling local procurement requires investments in diversified production, increased productivity, processing, and quality control systems. Strengthening the capacity of cooperatives and farmers' organisations is essential to ensure a reliable supply to schools.

Centrally procured foods, mainly blended flours, face logistical challenges such as transport delays and food losses, compounded by weak food safety and quality assurance systems.

### School facilities:

Many schools—especially in rural areas—lack essential infrastructure such as kitchens, safe water, storage, and sanitation facilities. Limited water access and reliance on firewood and biomass further constrain operations, while poor drinking water quality (e.g. 23.4% samples Addis Abeba found to be non-potable- [Heliyon, 2024](#)) and gaps in food handling practices raise concerns for hygiene and safety.

Global Partnership for Education supported HGSF expansion in five regions, including the construction of 344 energy-efficient kitchens. Complementary investments in energy and electrification—such as [EnDev's off-grid solutions](#) and the [World Bank's ELEAP](#) programme, which connected around 19,000 public facilities—aim to address limited and unreliable electricity access, though rural gaps remain significant.

### Nutrition and food environment:

The school meal programme has the objective to meet nutritional goals and provides micronutrient powders (MNPs) supplementation to address critical micronutrient deficiencies in basic meals.

## Partner landscape

Theme	Partner
Governance	WFP
Financing	WB, WFP, Community Development Associations
Direct Implementation	Mary's Meals, Imagine 1-day, PTA
Meal quality, Nutrition	WFP, GAIN, UNICEF, USAID
Procurement, market linkages	Mary's meals
Agriculture	FAO, SNV, SCI, China Foundation for Rural Development, Hope Enterprise Foundation, Self Help Africa
Clean cooking; Energy	EnDev (GIZ), Clean cooking alliance (UNDP/GIZ), National Biogas Programme (SNV/EU), WB Clean cooking fund, Gaia Association
Water	UNICEF, Innovation Africa

## Strategic priorities

- Within the 2021 School Feeding Policy Framework, **enhance financial planning and budget allocation** at federal, regional, and woreda levels, ensuring adequate budget for policy implementation.
- Development of **multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms**, operational guidance, and training manuals for school feeding.
- Support necessary **kitchen infrastructure** at the school or cluster level for improved storage, hygiene, and food quality and safety.

### 3.3 KENYA

#### Policy and governance

Kenya's school feeding framework is grounded in strong constitutional guarantees of children's right to nutrition (Art 43 [2010 Kenyan Constitution](#)). Kenya's National School Meals and Nutrition Programme (NSMNP), established in 2009, includes a strong home-grown component to promote local procurement and sustainability, reaching around 2.6 million learners by 2024, particularly in arid and semi-arid areas. Key policies include:

- [Kenya National Food and Nutrition Security Policy \(2011\)](#): improve children's nutrition through school meals meeting learners' needs for optimal growth.
- [Kenya School Health Policy \(2018\)](#): stipulates provision of healthy and nutritious meals in schools, and school gardening.
- [National School Meals and Nutrition Strategy \(2017-2022\)](#): It provided the framework for implementing school meals and nutrition initiatives, with modalities for the implementation, and provisions for food procurement. This outdated strategy is yet to be replaced, though the programmes continue under the Operational Plan for School Meal Programme Scale-Up (2024–2030).
- [National Healthy Diets and Physical Activity Guidelines \(2017\)](#) and Kenya School Meals Food Safety and Quality Guidelines (2019) ensure food quality with at least four food groups: staple, protein rich food, fruits, and vegetables.
- [The 2022 Kenya Kwanza Plan](#) for the current government made commitments to provide compulsory lunchtime meals in all schools from pre-school to tertiary level.

Overall coordination of the Kenya Schools and Nutrition Programme follows a hierarchy from the national to the county, sub-county and school level. The Ministry of Education is the lead entity and chairs the National School Meals and Nutrition Programme Inter-Ministerial Committee.

#### Modalities

- **Government-led NSMNP/HGSMP<sup>2</sup>**: Reaches ~2.6 million learners (target 10 million), with highest coverage in arid and semi-arid counties. Provides basic food commodities (cereals, pulses, oil, salt), with centrally procured food in arid areas and cash transfers for local procurement in semi-arid regions.

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<sup>2</sup> The National School Meals and Nutrition Programme (NSMNP) established in 2009. incorporates a strong Home-Grown School Meals Programme (HGSMP).

- **Community-led programmes:** Parents and communities contribute cash, food, or labour, including initiatives such as the [Cup of Uji programme](#) reaching around 17,000 learners.
- **Public–private partnerships (PPPs):** Models such as [Food4Education](#) operate large-scale kitchens serving ~460,000 children daily through subsidised meals, working alongside county initiatives like Nairobi’s “Dishina County programme”.
- **Partner-supported programmes:** Organisations like the Rockefeller Foundation, [Mary’s Meals](#), [Hunger Project](#) support feeding in vulnerable regions, with a focus on nutrition, sustainability, and climate-smart sourcing.
- **County-led initiatives:** Over 26 counties run Early Childhood Development Education feeding programmes, each reaching approximately 20,000–45,000 children daily.



## Programme status

### Financing:

Government, in a cost-sharing arrangement between national and county government, has increased school feeding funds from USD 15 million in 2018 to USD 40 million by 2023, covering under a cost-sharing model with counties, while private sector contributions remain limited (1%). Despite ambitions for universal coverage by 2030, the programme faces a structural funding gap due to rising food prices and budget constraints, with current allocations (KES 10 per meal) insufficient to ensure nutritious diets. Coverage remains limited at around 2 millions of 8 million primary school children, within a total school-age population of about 20 million.

### Meal quality:

Guidelines promote diverse, nutritionally adequate meals (at least four food groups) covering ~30% of daily needs) using locally available and culturally acceptable foods. However, in practice, meals remain dominated by staples such as maize, rice, and beans, with limited inclusion of fruits, vegetables, animal-source foods, or fortified products, reducing overall dietary quality.

### Production / procurement:

Kenya demonstrates strong partner engagement in HGSP, supporting local procurement and food systems strengthening. In semi-arid areas, government-funded HGSP channels resources directly to schools, where meal committees procure food locally from smallholder farmers and approved suppliers. However, in arid regions, seasonal production and delivery systems of centrally procured food, in combination with weak infrastructure, post-harvest losses, and inadequate storage lead to food spoilage and inconsistent supply.

### Agriculture:

Kenya has made progress in adopting technologies such as regenerative agriculture, clean energy, and digital market systems to support food systems. Strengthening nutrition-sensitive value chains further offers opportunities to reduce malnutrition by scaling up staple food fortification (e.g. maize meal) through private sector partnerships and promoting the adoption of biofortified crops.

### School facilities:

Many schools face infrastructure gaps, including inadequate kitchens, storage, water access, and trained staff, constraining meal preparation and expansion. To address this, Kenya is prioritising universal clean cooking access by 2028, driven by the government's Operational Plan for School Meal Programme Scale-Up (2024–2030) and the [Kenya National Cooking Transition Strategy \(2024–2028\)](#). Efforts include promoting e-cooking LPG, biogas, improved biomass cookstoves, solar, and steam cooking technology, with a partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum aiming to roll out LPG systems across 11,000 schools.



### Nutrition and food environment:

School feeding under the NSMNP explicitly aims to meet nutrition goals, supported by established dietary guidelines that exclude processed foods from school menus. Measures also restrict the marketing of food and beverages within school environments and to school-aged children, promoting healthier food choices.

## Partner landscape

Theme	Partner
Governance	WFP, GCNF, Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI)
Financing	RF, EU,
Direct Implementation	F4E, Mary's meals,
Meal quality, Nutrition	RF, Nutrition International, GAIN (fortification), UNICEF
Procurement, market linkages	WFP, RF, F4E, GAIN
Agriculture	FAO, AGRA, SNV
Clean cooking; Energy	F4E, SE4All, University of Nairobi (Biomass efficiency), CLASP/Ecobora
Water	UNICEF, Impact Water, WaterAid, F4W

## Strategic priorities

- Accelerate the process for finalisation and adoption of a **comprehensive national policy** to strengthen institutional coherence, coordination, and accountability.
- Strengthen the implementation of the **menu guidance** for diversified nutritious meals including the integration of (bio) fortified foods to enhance nutritional impact.
- Strengthen food production, aggregation, local procurement and delivery systems to **address supply chain inefficiencies**, particularly in arid counties where transport, storage, and procurement challenges contribute to food spoilage and inconsistent supply.

## 3.4 RWANDA

### Policy and governance

Rwanda's school feeding programme is anchored in [Vision 2050](#) and a strong policy framework, including the [National Comprehensive School Feeding Policy \(2019\)](#), [School Feeding Strategy \(2023–2032\)](#), and [Operational Guidelines \(2023\)](#). It aims to achieve universal coverage across all education levels, improving education, health, and nutrition outcomes through a multi-sectoral approach that promotes local food sourcing and school garden.


### Modalities

- **The National Child Development Agency (NCDA)** under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, implements a school milk programme providing pre-primary and Grade 1 learners with one cup of milk twice a week in 19 of the 30 districts of Rwanda. Targeting areas with higher levels of malnutrition and dairy development opportunity.
- **The National School Feeding Programme (NSFP)**, led by the Ministry of Education, provides school meals to 3.8 million learners (Government of Rwanda, 2023) in public and government-aided schools, including lunches for secondary students and full meals for boarding schools.
- **The Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP)** supported by WFP, is implemented in seven vulnerable districts with high levels of malnutrition and poverty. It promotes local procurement while strengthening the capacity of farmers and agri-food actors to supply schools with quality-assured, locally sourced food. (WFP, 2024; MINEDUC, 2021).

### Programme status

#### Financing:

Rwanda's school feeding programmes are largely government-funded under a cost-sharing model, with the state covering up to 90% of costs in pre-primary, primary, and boarding secondary schools, while parents contribute the remainder; in non-boarding secondary schools, this ratio is reversed. The programme budget has increased significantly, reaching USD 66.2 million in 2025 (up 20% since 2022/23), but current per-meal allocations per learner (56 RWF) remain insufficient, covering only about half of actual costs.



A substantial financial gap remains, estimated at a cumulative USD 672 million over 8 years, requiring an average annual external support of USD 84 million.

#### Meal quality:

School meals show limited dietary diversity and nutritional quality, with insufficient inclusion of fruits, vegetables, and animal-source foods, though introduction of fortified whole grains does boost micronutrient intake. In addition, weak food handling practices, and lack of cold chain for perishables, contribute to food safety concerns — particularly risks of aflatoxin contamination in cereals — and food waste.

#### Production / procurement:

A strong government commitment to HGSF and investment in agriculture and agro-processing are creating a favourable environment for school feeding. While programmes are designed to strengthen local value chains, for efficiency purposes, non-perishable commodities such as grains, beans, and cooking oil are often procured in bulk at the district level. A strong export focus in the agriculture sector may pose risks to local supply, as farmer organisations face procurement uncertainties and contract prices set below open-market rates. Expanding the focus of HGSF beyond cereals and legumes to poultry, vegetables, and fruits can diversify school meals and boost local economies, though this requires improved post-harvest handling and supply systems.

### School facilities:

All schools have kitchens, and most have electricity and clean, piped water; some have dedicated eating spaces. (Global Child Nutrition Forum- GCNF). The government plans to phase out firewood and charcoal use in schools by 2032, emphasising sustainable energy by increasing electricity access mainly through solar. They are promoting fuel-efficient stoves and cleaner alternatives such as LPG (currently 5% of schools) and decreasing reliance on biomass fuels.

### Nutrition and food environment:

Key guidelines include ensuring school meals meet 30% of daily energy and 50-70% of micronutrient needs, balancing at least five food groups per meal, and tailoring menus to different school levels. However, nutrition is not explicitly prioritised in the policy framework, with no explicit objective in the SF policy to meet nutritional goals (GCNF). Efforts to improve dietary practices include scaling up behaviour change communication, establishing knowledge transfer hubs, and promoting school gardens and nutrition clubs. There are limitations on food and beverage marketing on school grounds, and to school-aged children. Unhealthy foods are banned from the SF menu.

### **Partner landscape**

Theme	Partner
Governance	WFP
Financing	EU, WB, RF
Direct Implementation	WFP, WVI
Meal quality, Nutrition	GAIN, RF, HOSO
Procurement, market linkages	WFP
Agriculture	Solid Africa, WFP, SNV, PABRA
Clean cooking; Energy	EnDev, GIZ, SNV
Water	WVI, WaterAid

### **Strategic Priorities**

- Bridging the gap between **government budget allocation** and practical **school feeding costs** per child to improve menu food diversity and meal quality, as well as other hidden costs.
- Review and revise **procurement mechanisms** for enhanced participation and access, by farmers and farmer cooperatives, addressing procurement uncertainty and price setting, also beyond cereals and pulses, including fresh vegetables, fruits and poultry.
- Support the government strategy development and implementation for **renewable energy** and clean cooking in schools.

## **3.5 TANZANIA**

### **Policy and governance**

Tanzania's school feeding program is guided by the [2021 National Guidelines on School Feeding and Nutrition Services](#) to basic education students, which provide a framework for implementation and coordination among schools, communities, local governments, and partners. The guidelines emphasise strong school-level management, clear stakeholder roles, and community ownership, while promoting menu diversification and the use of data systems to support planning, monitoring, and delivery.

School feeding is integrated into the [National Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan \(NMNAP\) of 2021/22 to 2025/26](#) with coordination structures defined from the President's Office at the national level to local levels. Nonetheless, implementation is still constrained by limited inter-sectoral coordination among government institutions and partners, resulting in a gap between policy design and effective delivery on the ground.

## Modalities

- **Government-led School Feeding Programme:** Targets public boarding secondary and special-needs schools, fully financed by the government.
- **Community- and parent-led Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF):** Serving 6.5 million learners in over 16,000 public day schools, financed through parental in-kind or cash contributions.
- **Partner-supported models:** WFP, USDA, GAIN, and others supporting food-insecure regions with cash or food transfers.
- **A School Milk Programme (SMP):** Reintroduced in 2023, targeting 625 schools by 2027, linking smallholder dairy farmers to schools.

## Programme status

### Financing:

Information on Government financing shows a low fiscal allocation (12% -20%), with the majority of funding (76%) coming from parents, highlighting strong reliance on household contributions. School meals currently reach about 7 million children- 41%-49% of primary school learners, leaving nearly 14.5 million learners without access (GNCF). Public financing focuses primarily on secondary boarding schools, with a limited dedicated budget for primary day schools.

### Meal quality:

The national guidelines give advice on school meal diversification based on four out of five food groups and encourage the use of fortified foods.

Given the community-driven nature of school feeding, raising awareness on nutrition and menu quality can strengthen community ownership, increase parental engagement, and improve demand for diverse, locally sourced meals. Scaling up training for cooks and volunteers is also essential to enhance meal quality and programme effectiveness. Production / procurement:

Procurement is decentralised, both for the government and community led home-grown school feeding, with schools, community committees, and sometimes district authorities managing fixed price contracts with farmer groups, cooperatives, or small-scale dairy processors. Parent food committees manage the procurement and in-kind contributions, while food school committee manage meal delivery, with local village structures providing overall quality supervision. Limited and inconsistent funding at school level—both from government and parental contributions—undermines timely payments to suppliers, affecting trust and reliability of food supply. Strengthening the HGSF model through improved production systems—as practiced e.g. under [McGovern-Dole funded Pamoja Tuwalisa food for education](#)—better market access for smallholder farmers, and stronger linkages between farmer organisations and schools could enhance its impact.

*Pamoja Tuwalishe (Together Let's Feed Them)* is a programme implemented by Global Communities and the Government of Tanzania, reaching over 200,000 children in primary schools. Meals are provided directly through a school-based feeding model, combining food supplied through the USDA programme with locally sourced ingredients and community contributions.

### School facilities:

Access to basic infrastructure is still a major constraint for school feeding in Tanzania. Only about 34% of schools have electricity (NMNAP), with solar energy emerging as a practical off-grid solution, while donor-supported e-cooking is being piloted in grid-connected areas. Water access is also limited, with many schools lacking reliable or safe sources, highlighting the need for improved water systems, including recycling and treatment solutions. In addition, most schools have inadequate kitchen facilities, storage, and space, affecting safe food preparation and programme scale-up.

### Nutrition and food environment:

As it stands, Tanzania has no further regulations on unhealthy foods and snacks for school-going children.

## Partner landscape

Theme	Partner
Governance	WFP, Global Communities, GPE
Financing	WFP, USDA
Direct Implementation	WFP
Meal quality, Nutrition	HP, Tanzania Nutrition Care Organisation (TANCO), GAIN, Sanku (fortification)
Procurement, market linkages	WFP, HarvestPlus and CIP
Agriculture	AGRA/HarvestPlus and CIP, PCI, SNV
Clean cooking; Energy	WB, SN4All, TAREA, TanzSolar
Water	UNICEF, Water for People, Water Mission, TAYEP

## Strategic priorities

- Advocate for the implementation of the Government’s financial commitment for the acceleration of **expansion in primary schools**, facilitating a positive impact on the youngest school-aged children
- Strengthen the **home-grown school feeding approach**, driving smallholder farmers' inclusion and food systems transformation for sustainably and safely produced food supply for school meals.
- Support community school feeding initiatives by integrating them in area-based **clean cooking, renewable energy** and **water resource management** plans and programmes.

### 3.6 UGANDA

#### Policy and governance

A draft National School Feeding Policy is in place, expected for approval by 2026, and outlines a transition towards a more structured and sustainable SF programme approach, based on a hybrid model of parent-led and targeted government funding, starting in 2026 for primary schools. The policy signals a dedicated budget line, with funding already initiated in 2025/26 fiscal year. However, the National School Feeding Guidelines and Operating Standards for implementation of the policy are yet to be developed (2025).

Coordination is supported by a National Multi-sectoral School Feeding Coordination Committee under the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), which meets twice annually (SMC, Rwanda Country Progress 2025).

#### Modalities

There is no National School Feeding Programme in Uganda but there are various stakeholders’ initiatives in partnership with the Government through the Ministry of Education and Sports:

- **Parent-led School-managed programmes:** Prevalent in boarding and private schools, where parents pay fees to cover meals.
- **Community-led initiatives:** Local leaders, sometimes local authorities, mobilise contributions for food production, procurement, storage, and preparation.
- **Karamoja-Feeds-Karamoja:** A HGSFP supported by the WFP, transitioning from emergency response to local procurement.
- **Charity led initiatives** and private sector cost-sharing, with or without parent contributions.

#### Programme status

Financing:

Currently, there is no direct national budget line for school feeding, with existing annual capitation grants excluding food costs. As a result, financing largely relies on parental contributions and support from development partners such as WFP and SNV. However, the government has pledged UGX 500 million (USD 140,000) to support school feeding in Karamoja and distributed an additional UGX 500 million in the 2025/2026 fiscal year for national coordination. (SMC, Rwanda Country Progress 2025), signalling a gradual move towards increased public investment.

#### Meal quality:

Quality assurance is a major challenge for both large-scale and community-based procurement models. This is partly related to local procurement that more often lacks consistent food quality assessments and poor storage practices worsening the development of mycotoxins and other incidences of contamination and food spoilage. A risk is that with limited resources, price becomes a driving argument in food choice and purchase. While guidance promotes meals including vegetables and animal-sourced foods, most meals are still limited to maize and beans. Exceptions are charity-supported schools adopting more complete meals with vegetables and private schools, even occasionally providing rice, eggs, or meat.

#### Production / procurement:

Under the Karamoja HGSP, WFP procures food from organised farmer groups within Karamoja, across the country, and occasionally from international markets, delivering basic dry commodities (maize, beans, oil) directly to schools. However, transport delays and contamination risks from previous (chemical) loads of the trucks affect supply reliability, while access to biofortified and nutrient-dense foods remains limited due to weak supply chains.

Community- and parent-led modality rely on contributions of cash, food, land, and labour for meal production and preparation, though seasonal production and price fluctuations impact food availability.

Initiatives, such as the long-running [IOWA school garden programme](#) in Kamuli District- operating since 2006, serve as an outdoor learning laboratory and provide inputs into the school lunch programme.

#### **IOWA school garden programme**

Since 2006, Kamuli district has run a school garden programme with the support of IOWA University. The gardens function as outdoor learning laboratories while also contributing inputs to the school lunch programme.

#### School facilities:

The national [WASH in Schools programs](#) support the construction of safe water points, latrines (including gender and disability-friendly), and handwashing stations, alongside water supply solutions such as roof rainwater harvesting, storage, and purification systems, and behaviour change campaigns. Water supply is a critical issue in arid, semi-arid, and refugee-hosting areas, where it receives significant support from development partners.

Firewood stays the primary fuel for school meal preparation in schools, with only about 20% of schools having access to electricity. [Uganda's National Energy Policy](#) targets 50% adoption of clean cooking by 2040. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development aims to equip 1,000 schools with improved cooking systems.

WFP is exploring clean cooking solutions and the construction of energy-efficient cooking stoves for Karamoja, as well as ensuring dedicated storage facilities in participating schools. SNV has supported schools with subsidies for improved infrastructure, including kitchens, biogas systems, and the installation of energy-efficient cookstoves and treated water systems. CARE Denmark is piloting biodigesters that provide gas for cooking and produce slurry for school gardens, supporting both clean energy use and local food production.

#### Nutrition and food environment:

Improvement of nutrition outcomes is a specific objective of school feeding. (Bio-) Fortified foods (cooking oil, salt, maize, beans, and orange fleshed sweet potatoes) are practiced in selected projects and schools. Marketing of sweets, snack, food and beverages on school grounds and to school-aged children is restricted to stimulate a healthier consumption pattern.

## Partner landscape

Theme	Partner
Governance	WFP, SNV
Financing	Bilateral donors and development partners through WFP or INGOs, like JICA, EKN, UK, USA, MasterCard Foundation, NNF
Direct Implementation	Save the Children, WVI, WFP
Meal quality, Nutrition	FAO, WFP, HarvestPlus, ESAFF, GAIN, WHO, SNV
Procurement, market linkages	WFP, GAIN, SNV
Agriculture	WB, WFP with NNF / JICA, FAO, AGRA, ESAFF, SNV
Clean cooking; Energy	EnDev, CARE Denmark, SNV
Water	NGGC, IYUI, Water Harvest, WaterAid, Rotary, WV-Uganda, SNV, Plan, SCI, AVSI

## Strategic priorities

- Expedite the policy process for approval of the **National School Feeding Policy** through creation of evidence on proven models for different food security and supply contexts in the country.
- Advocate for the establishment of a **dedicated national budget line** for school feeding, providing responsible sector ministries and local authorities with funding for comprehensive School Feeding programming.
- **Guidance on home-grown school** feeding models that link school feeding to local agrifood systems, boosting local smallholder farmer supply to schools, increasing meal diversity, and community ownership.

### 3.7 ZAMBIA

#### Policy and governance

Zambia's school feeding programme has evolved from its origins in the 1960s into a government-led HGSM approach under the 2020 strategy. It is embedded within national frameworks, including [the Food and Nutrition Policy \(2006\)](#) and the [School Health and Nutrition \(SHN\) Policy \(2020\)](#), positioning school meals as a key intervention for human capital, social protection, and food systems. [The 2020 Food and Nutrition Act](#) further strengthened coordination through the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFC). [The National HGSM 2020–2024 Strategy](#) promoted local procurement, community participation, and diversified, nutrition-sensitive menus, its expiration has created a policy gap affecting coordination and planning.

Zambia recognises school feeding as central to long-term national development (MoFNP, 2022). As a member of the School Meals Coalition since 2022, Zambia has also committed to scaling up coverage, strengthening coordination, and improving monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge systems for more adaptive programme management.

#### Modalities

- **National Home-Grown School Meals Programme:** Formalised under the 2020–2024 strategy, reached approximately 4.6 million learners across 106 districts in 2024. The programme relies on locally procured food through district structures, with strong community participation and linkages to smallholder farmers. School meals typically include maize-based staples, legumes, and fortified oil, and the government aims to achieve universal coverage by 2030.

- **Community-contribution and community-led feeding:** Complement the national programme, with parents and communities contributing firewood, labour, and sometimes food ingredients. In many rural and urban settings, local actors—including communities, churches, and NGOs—initiate and manage feeding activities through informal, locally sourced procurement. Examples include organisations such as [Mothers Without Borders](#) and the [Food Relief Network](#), which support community schools in rural areas and low-income urban neighbourhoods, respectively.
- **PPPs:** Emerging as a complementary modality, involving collaboration with local millers, food processors, and clean energy providers. These partnerships offer opportunities to improve school feeding through the supply of fortified foods, development of school kitchen infrastructure, and adoption of energy-efficient cooking solutions.
- **Key partners support:** WFP provides technical assistance and supports local procurement, including pulses sourced from smallholder farmers, alongside past investments in school gardens, energy-efficient stoves, and hygiene facilities. [Mary's Meals](#) delivers daily meals to around 605,000 learners across 16 districts, mainly in Eastern and Northern provinces. In addition, [GPE](#) and [Save the Children](#) support feeding programmes in 15 drought-affected districts through the Accelerated Funding grant, targeting vulnerable regions across Western, Southern, Central, and Lusaka provinces.

## Programme status

### Financing:

Public financing for the HGSM Programme has risen sharply from ZMW 39.4 million (USD 1.7 million) in 2023 to ZMW 534.4 million (USD 22.5 million) in 2025 (World Vision Zambia, 2025), reflecting national commitments toward universal coverage. Still, allocations remain insufficient to cover the rising costs of food commodities, logistics, and expanded drought-response operations.

Government financing currently covers only 27% of total programme requirements, with the remaining 73% funded by development partners (GCNF). Long-term sustainability will depend on integrating school feeding into broader education and social protection financing frameworks, strengthening domestic resource mobilisation, and exploring innovative financing models.

### Meal quality:

Zambia faces increasing food safety risks, with rising outbreaks of foodborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, salmonella, and aflatoxicosis, making food safety a critical concern for school feeding. Strengthening food handling protocols, supplier certification, storage conditions, clean kitchens, safe cooking fuels, reliable water access, and waste management systems is essential to mitigate these risks.

School meals remain heavily reliant on maize and beans, with limited inclusion of nutrient-rich foods and biofortified products. However, emerging initiatives—such as UHT milk pilots and a growing livestock sector—offer opportunities to diversify diets by including milk, eggs, and fish products, while also strengthening local value chains.

In 2023–2024 international donors collectively supported large-scale drought-response feeding, enabling expansion of the HGSM to 4.6 million learners across 106 districts.

### Production / procurement:

Staple foods such as maize, cassava, rice, beans, sweet potatoes, and groundnuts are procured locally in bulk at the district level from smallholder farmers, cooperatives, and traders, with District Education Offices overseeing distribution to schools. Fruits and vegetables are mainly sourced through parental contributions and school or community gardens. However, recurring droughts, erratic rainfall, and weak rural infrastructure—such as poor roads, limited storage, and weak aggregation systems—disrupt supply chains, leading to delays, spoilage, and reduced access to diverse foods, thereby undermining the sustainability of the home-grown model.

### School facilities:

Over 55% of schools lack electricity (EPPSA, 2023), as well as proper kitchens, secure storerooms, reliable water sources, and energy-efficient cooking technologies. This perpetuates heavy reliance on firewood, increasing costs and reducing efficiency. [Zambia's WASH in Schools \(WinS\) strategy](#) recognises WASH as essential for learners' health, dignity, and learning, and commits to providing safe, equitable WinS services in all learning institutions by 2030.

### Nutrition and food environment:

The HGSM strategy adopts a rights-based approach, recognising every child's right to adequate, quality food. It aims to improve awareness, production, and consumption of safe and diverse diets among learners, while also promoting smallholder farmer participation in markets. Integrated within the broader School Health and Nutrition programme, it contributes to improved dietary diversity and nutrition outcomes for children. However, food safety remains a concern, with risks such as aflatoxin contamination, poor post-harvest handling, inadequate storage, and limited cold-chain capacity affecting food quality.



## Partner landscape

Theme	Partner
Government departments	MoGE, MoA, MLGRD, MoEnergy, MoWDS, MoFNP
Governance	WFP
Financing	WB, EU, Finland, Irish Aid (co-financing energy/water infrastructure)
Direct Implementation	Mary's Meals
Meal quality, Nutrition	WFP, ZARI, CGIAR (biofortification)
Procurement, market linkages	WFP, SNV
Agriculture	ZARI, CGIAR (biofortification), SNV
Clean cooking; Energy	WFP, SNV/GIZ, GRBA/GPRBA
Water	WFP, SNV, WaterAid, UNICEF, BORDA Zambia, WVI, CFG

## Strategic priorities

- Update National HGSM strategy and **strengthen the policy framework** for enhance coordination and accountability for scale up.
- Enhance local procurement and supply chain for **safe local food delivery** to schools by enhancing farmer cooperatives capacity for food safety standards compliance, through improved production and handling by their members, and aggregation, storage and food quality testing.
- Addressing **food safety** and food-borne disease challenges through improved school facilities.

## 3.8 ZIMBABWE

### Policy and governance

School feeding in Zimbabwe was initially launched as an emergency response in the late 1970s and has since evolved into a government-led nationwide HGSFP, formally established in 2016. It's guided by strong policy framework, including [the National School Health Policy \(2018\)](#), the [School Nutrition Guidelines \(2022\)](#), and [the Multi-sectorial Food and Nutrition Strategy 2023—2025 - MSFNS](#) ), with recent legislation (Statutory Instrument 13 of 2025) mandating at least one hot meal per day in all schools. The programme is fully embedded in national education and social protection systems, aiming to improve learner health and education outcomes while strengthening local food systems through stable markets for smallholder farmers.

### Modalities

- **Home-Grown School Feeding Programme:** Implemented across all 10 provinces and 72 districts in Zimbabwe, reaching over 3 million learners—around 85% of public primary school students, though coverage remains limited in secondary schools. Food is largely procured centrally, with staples such as maize, beans, and porridge mixes distributed to schools, while fresh produce is sourced locally or through school-based production units. The programme relies heavily on community participation, with volunteer mothers (about 75% of cooks) contributing labour, firewood, water, and, at times, additional food items.
- **Community-Led School Feeding:** Play a vital role, particularly in remote areas where government support is inconsistent. These programmes are largely sustained by community groups, including Mother Support Groups (MSGs), and rely heavily on volunteer cooks, local fundraising, and in-kind contributions of food items. They are often complemented by school or community gardens and small livestock initiatives. While coverage varies and is not systematically documented, these efforts are supported by NGOs such [CAMFED](#), [ORAP](#), [FACE](#), [World Vision](#), and [Family Action for Community Empowerment](#).
- **Partner-Supported School Feeding** initiatives complement government efforts, particularly in drought-prone and resource-constrained districts, including organisations such as [Mary's Meals](#), [Malilangwe Trust](#), [ADRA](#), [Red Cross/IFRC](#), [ActionAid](#), and [Hilfswerk](#). Centrally managed procurement systems of NGOs supply food to schools via competitive tendering and organised distribution channels to schools.

### Programme status

#### Financing:

School feeding financing remains highly variable, with government expenditure fluctuating significantly. In 2019, USD 10.3 million was allocated to school feeding, rising to USD 14.6 million in 2020 and then falling sharply to USD 5.5 million in 2024 (GNF, 2024). Around 10% of some yearly budgets are effectively disbursed due to inflation and delays.

To address these constraints, the government promotes School Business Units (SBUs), encouraging schools to establish gardens, livestock, and other income-generating activities. These initiatives support programme sustainability, help diversify school meals, and provide a buffer against delayed public funding by enabling schools to maintain feeding activities independently.

### Meal quality:

Policies stipulate one hot meal per day that meets the nutritional requirements of all learners, alongside micronutrient supplementation (School Health Policy 2018). Where possible, fortified foods and bio-fortified foods (e.g. orange maize) are used (School Nutrition Guidelines 2022). [The School Menu Planner](#) (SMP-PLUS) supports the development of nutritionally balanced and cost-effective school menus using locally available foods. In practice, however, food diversity in school meals depends on available resources, and access to vegetables and animal-source foods remains limited. The adoption of fortified and biofortified foods is also minimal. Additionally, weak hygiene standards and inadequate food storage infrastructure raise significant concerns regarding food safety and quality.



### Production / procurement:

The HGSFP operates through a centralised procurement system that prioritises the most vulnerable areas, although competitive tendering processes often exclude smallholder farmers and their cooperatives. At the provincial level, state-backed providers such as the [Grain Marketing Board \(GMB\)](#) and [Silo Industries](#) supply subsidised cereals and pulses to schools. However, logistical challenges—particularly during the rainy season—affect timely delivery to remote areas. Fresh produce is sourced locally at the school level, though availability varies by region. While some areas can produce a diverse range of fruits and vegetables, others face climatic constraints that limit year-round production.

School-based units play a key role by either directly supplying nutrient-dense foods—such as vegetables, legumes, livestock products, and fruits—or generating income to support more diversified school meals.

### School facilities:

Access to WASH is mixed and varies significantly by region. Only 37% of rural schools have reliable year-round drinking water, while 78% of schools have basic sanitation; only 10% have toilet facilities (WHO&UNICEF 2024). Handwashing facilities are inconsistent, especially in drought-prone Matabeleland and Masvingo. These gaps directly affect school feeding by limiting safe cooking, food safety, and overall hygiene.

Energy access in rural schools remains largely traditional, with 60–90% relying on firewood or charcoal for cooking (Bruce, 2023), while urban schools more commonly use electricity or LPG. Clean cooking initiatives are still limited and primarily implemented through pilot initiatives.

### Nutrition and food environment:

School health programming includes nutrition services, nutrition education, and physical activity within the school curriculum, and also promotes the establishment of school nutrition clubs. UNICEF supports efforts to improve the school food environment, including restricting the sale of unhealthy foods and drinks, and the promotion of fresh fruits and vegetables in and around schools.

Only 37% of rural schools have reliable year-round drinking water, while 78% of schools have basic sanitation, only 10% have toilet facilities.

## Partner landscape

Theme	Partner
Government	MoPSE, MoHCC, FNC
Governance	WFP
Financing	Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland
Direct Implementation	Mary's Meals, Malilangwe Trust, ADRA, Red Cross/IFRC, ActionAid Hilfwerk International; Through Mother's groups: CAMFED, ORAP, FACE, World Vision, Family Action for Community Empowerment
Meal quality, Nutrition	WFP, CRS
Procurement, market linkages	WFP, WVI
Agriculture	
Clean cooking; Energy	UNDP, WFP, Solar Cookers International, Modern Cooking Facility for Africa, and Innovation Africa, SNV (biogas)
Water	UNICEF, World Vision, GOAL, Africa AHEAD

## Strategic priorities

- **Integrating lessons** across the humanitarian and development school feeding project spectrum to ensure sustainability and climate resilience of the national school feeding programme and community-level initiatives.
- Further develop the **school feeding business unit model** to address its weaknesses and reap the benefits in terms of financing sustainability, meal diversity and integration of local opportunity crops, and local employment.
- Address **water scarcity and WASH services** in schools to enhance school feeding food safety and hygiene.

## 4. Strategic entry points

### Pillar 1: Strengthen policy, governance, and financing systems and ensuring operationalisation.



#### *Recommendations*

- Strengthen operationalisation of existing school feeding policies, strategies and legislation: clarify roles, responsibilities and accountability across all sectors and government levels to improve effective coordination, implementation, and scaling of school feeding programs.
- Update policy frameworks: strengthen the evidence base and advocacy to ensure revisions and alignment with multi-sectoral needs for decentralised governance, adequate financing, and coordination.
- Integrate school feeding into national sector plans: align with agriculture, trade, finance, social protection, health, education, and climate action to ensure coherence and sustainability.

### Pillar 2: Building sustainable and equitable financing.



#### *Recommendations*

- Develop national financing plans: financial audits, and cost assessments to set up clear pathways toward full domestic funding.
- Diversify financing sources: draw on both traditional and innovative blended financing tools.
- Community resource mobilisation and parent contributions can strengthen ownership, financial sustainability, and accountability, but equity must be safeguarded by linking low-income households to local solidarity mechanisms or formal safety nets to prevent exclusion.

### Pillar 3: Deepening home-grown agri-food linkages for nutrition and local development.



#### *Recommendations*

- Build farmer resilience: support climate-smart and regenerative agricultural practices through strengthened extension services, helping both local food systems and school gardens.
- Promote climate-resilient crops: prioritise culturally appropriate, nutritious opportunity crops that are adapted to local ecologies and climate conditions.
- Strengthen local capacity: engage smallholder farmers, cooperatives, and MSMEs in capacity-development to scale local procurement.

### Pillar 4: Supporting investment in kitchen infrastructure, clean energy, water supply and WASH.



#### *Recommendations*

- Fund infrastructure as a long-term investment: kitchen, storage, and sanitation facilities should be financed by relevant ministries, rather than absorbed into school meal operational budgets.
- Include schools in water resource planning: integrate schools into community-level water management systems for supply, storage, treatment, and recycling.
- Tailor clean energy solutions to context: clean cooking and renewable energy adoption should be guided by geography and school conditions, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

### **Pillar 5: Enhancing nutrition objectives, school environment and menu guidance for meal quality and diet diversity.**



#### *Recommendations*

- Integrate nutrition education: use meal diversity and quality as a platform to build nutrition awareness and healthy food production and consumption practices in communities.
- Create healthy food environments: promote legislation or guidance that supports children in developing healthy eating habits.
- Support local menu planning: roll out tools like the School Meal Planner to help schools design culturally appropriate, nutritious menus aligned with national dietary guidelines.

### **Pillar 6: Integrating youth employment and entrepreneurship in school feeding: food production, minimal (fortification) processing, catering and institutional markets.**



#### *Recommendations*

- Consider outsourcing of critical services - a market-based approach to school feeding management can relieve the burden on teachers and headteachers while improving quality and cost-efficiency.
- Create pathways for youth enterprises - engage young people in catering, value chain roles, energy maintenance, and WASH services to drive local entrepreneurship, social cohesion, and economic development.

## **5. From Insight to Action**

Building on these insights for the eight countries, SNV is deepening its collaboration with governments and local partners to address the critical bottlenecks and aim for scaling of sustainable, nutrition-sensitive school feeding systems. We invite donors, governments, private sector, and civil society to collaborate in strengthening financing, improving meal quality, advancing local procurement, and investing in environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient solutions.

Together we support governments and communities to make universal school feeding coverage a reality; improving education outcomes, reducing hunger, and strengthening local economies.

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