



School Meals Coalition Monthly Newsletter

September 2023



Dear Partner,

Please join us to welcome to the School Meals Coalition, the Governments of Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Latvia, and Peru. The Coalition is also pleased to welcome Action Against Hunger, Akshaya Patra Foundation and Sustainable Energy for All. They will work closely with member countries to achieve their commitments. We look forward to a strong collaboration with you to ensure every child receives a healthy, nutritious daily meal in school by 2030.



School Meals Powering Food Systems Transformation



The School Meals Coalition hosted the “*School Meals Powering Food Systems*” session at the Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment held in Rome, Italy, on 24 July 2023. The session enabled governments to share progress toward Coalition objectives and, in members announced new commitments demonstrating how school meal programmes operate across policy siloes and produce results:

- The President of Sierra Leone, H.E. Julius Maada Bio said the national school feeding programme, launched in 2018, now supports over 800,000 children with the government covering 80% of its cost.
- The Prime Minister of Nepal, H.E. Pushpa Kamal Dahal mentioned his government has quadrupled the budget to reach 3.3 million children and is committed to scaling up further.
- Germany announced a new EUR 22 million grant for Sierra Leone and Laos to implement a food systems approach to school meals.
- Bangladesh joined the School Meals Coalition, announcing its commitment to increase the coverage of the program by 50% and committing to double the annual budgetary allocation in coming three years to approximately US\$ 470 million.

The UN Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Amina Mohamed closed the session with four calls to action for governments:

1. Work to reach all 730 million school children by 2030 with nutritious meals.
2. Make changes to the programmes so they can be more sustainable and climate-friendly, including adopting targets for local purchase.
3. Integrate school meals into climate finance.
4. Develop a plan of action to mobilise the \$1.7bn needed to low-income countries, among others, through debt relief highlighting the SDG Summit High Impact Initiative on Food Systems in September as an opportunity for progress.

You can watch the full session [Here](#) and read Ministerial Statements delivered at the UN Food Systems Summit [Here](#).



Quotes of the month

“In the case of Africa, when you feed a child, you feed a mother, when you feed the mother you feed the family, when you feed the family, you feed the whole community...”

Ms. Christina Duarte, UN Under Secretary General and Special Advisor on Africa during the School Meals Powering Food Systems Session.

“I believe this support is crucial as school meals have so many advantages. One may ask why we haven’t discovered that earlier and invested more to scale up programmes to effectively fight hunger and poverty, and importantly give equal chances for girls to remain in school...”

H.E. Cem Özdemir, Minister of Food and Agriculture in German, speaking at the School Meals Powering Food Systems session.





Country Spotlights



Children in the Philippines are receiving iron-fortified rice and milk to tackle micronutrient deficiencies and improve their learning.

Photo: WFP/Rein Skullerud.

Govt of Somalia forges partnerships to scale up school meals

The ministries of Education, Culture and Higher Education; Agriculture and Irrigation; and Finance in Somalia have signed a joint Declaration of Commitment to develop a roadmap and establish inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms for the effective implementation of the National Homegrown School Feeding programme. This was during a Multisectoral Roundtable Meeting hosted by the Federal Government of Somalia in Mogadishu on 16 August 2023, to lay a strong foundation of building a government-owned school feeding programme. The meeting brought together technical teams from the Ministries to discuss a partnership aimed at ensuring that every child in Somalia receives a healthy and nutritious meal in school by 2030. Read the full story [Here](#).

Philippines changing its approach to school meals

The Government of Philippines is ensuring that school children receive iron-fortified rice and milk to tackle micronutrient deficiencies and improve their learning capacity. This level of commitment is not a surprise given that the Philippines Government is one of the countries that submitted early its commitments to the School Meals Coalition in 2021. Since then, the country has made huge strides in strengthening partnerships both within and outside government. It is also one of the countries leading the way in holding itself accountable to its commitments! The Assistant Deputy Minister for Operations of the Department of Education, Mr. Dexter Galban explains how the Government has changed its approach to SBFP after they joined the School Meals Coalition. Find his story [Here](#).

Zambia taps into homegrown solutions

Zambia will invest more funds to scale up the national Homegrown School Feeding programme, in view of a huge influx of children coming to school. This was after President Hakainde Hachilema declared free education last year. According to the Minister of Education in Zambia, Mr. Douglas Munsaka Syakalima, the government is expecting to double the number of children receiving School Meals from the current 2 million to 4 million by 2026. He explained this calls for “homegrown thinking” to be able to sustainably scale up the national programme. “We would like the children, when they get home after school, to teach their parents what they are learning! But importantly, we would also like them to profoundly understand the importance of growing food for themselves, to feed their communities and advance food security efforts in the country.” Minister Syakalima said as schools teach the children to grow food, they are also imparting skills on the risks affecting food production the world over. “One such risk is the effects of climate change on agricultural production, particularly rain-fed agriculture, if we look at the context in Southern and East Africa region. Read the full story [Here](#).



Event Digest

G20 Leaders Push for a Better Planet

The New Delhi G20 Leaders Declaration committed to accelerate the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the declaration the G20 reaffirms they will “Encourage investments in inclusive, sustainable, and resilient agriculture and food systems. Support accessible, affordable, safe, and nutritious food and healthy diets in school meal programmes. Promote innovation for inclusive agri-value chains and systems by and for women farmers.”

The School Meals Coalition is thrilled to see the continued prominence given to school meals on the G20 agenda. On June 12, 2023, [G20 Development Ministers adopted the G20 Action Plan on Accelerating Progress on the SDGs](#). This plan places school meals as one of the key levers capable of advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), emphasising its role in promoting SDG 5 on Gender Equality. Specifically, the Action Plan highlights the need to: “Promote well-conceived school meal programmes that offer safe and adequate nutrition and healthy diets which can (i) Advance nutrition education and develop better eating habits, (ii) Further gender equality in education by increasing enrolment and retention of girls in school which would enable them to perform better and improve their adult job prospects, and (iii) Provide local smallholder farmers, particularly women, with a predictable outlet for their products, leading to stable incomes, and higher investments and productivity.”

Brasilia hosts regional meeting on Human Capital Development

By Ericka Galindo, Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil

The high-level “Power of Multi-Sector Approaches for Human Capital Development” regional meeting co-organised by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in partnership with the World Food Programme was held in Brasilia between 29-31 August with over 200 participants from more than 20 countries. Participants exchanged knowledge and experiences to promote multisectoral approaches connecting education, food systems, nutrition, health, and other sectors for human capital development.

Main highlights included the announcement by the Mexican delegation that they would be hosting the 10th Regional School Feeding Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean, in 2024; and the launch of the “The State of School Feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean 2022 report”. Some of the highlights of the report are:

- The negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and longstanding structural challenges on education. As a result, up to 12 million children, adolescents, and youth of primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary age are already out of school in LAC.
- These compounding challenges are currently affecting the educational journey of over 118 million boys and girls between the ages of four and 17 is estimated to be in jeopardy.
- 80.3 million children received school meals, such as breakfast, snacks, or lunch, across Latin America and the Caribbean in 2022. Most of these children live in South America (63.2 million), followed by Central America (13.3 million), and the Caribbean (3.8 million). Find the Report [Here](#).

An outcome document that will feed into the Ministerial Meeting in Paris in October, recommended focusing on the development of innovative financing solutions for school meals programmes, and establishment of percentages of local purchases from smallholder farmers.



Upcoming Events

‘Exploring the Nutritional Ecology of School-Age Children’ – Join the Research Consortium’s “Nutrition Measurement” Community of Practice on 26 September to hear about the outcomes of Phase I of a project aimed at establishing a universal set of indicators for measuring the nutrition of school-age children. [Register now](#).

School Meals Coalition Ministerial Meeting - The invitations for member states of the Coalition have now been sent out by France. If you shared with the Secretariat your Ministers contact details, please follow up with your capital **to ensure your Minister RSVPs as soon as possible**. The meeting is to take place on 18-19 October 2023 in Paris.



Talk to us

Rwanda Champions Regional Scaling Up of School Meals

The launching of the Eastern African Regional School Meals Coalition Network in Kigali, Rwanda in June this year is a welcome development in the School Meals Coalition as the network of nine countries demonstrates its commitment to collectively reach universal access to school meals by 2030. Rwanda’s Minister of Education, Mr. Gaspard Twagirayezu says his country is championing creation of regional networks that can strengthen cooperation in scaling up school meals. He shares his insights on the importance of the Eastern Africa region to put their heads together in ensuring every child receives one nutritious meal on each school day.

Rwanda was at the forefront of organising the launching of the Eastern African Regional School Meals Coalition, tell us why Rwanda is championing this initiative? Read the full interview [Here](#).



Resources and Publications

Universal free school meals: the future of school meal programmes *The Lancet* has published a new comment on “Universal Free School Meals” policies co-authored by Juliana F.W. Cohen; Stephane Verguet; Boitshepo Bibi Giyose; and Donald Bundy. The comment describes how these policies allow all students within a school, region, or country to receive a school meal at no cost. It further explains how they are expanding in some settings to support nutrition and academic equity, and gender equality, as well as providing a good return on investment for all students globally. Other benefits are the promotion of good health, and cost-effectiveness with

numerous returns on investments, including multisectoral impacts in the social protection, and the food systems domain. The commentary can be [found here](#).

An Interactive Experience The interactive version of the State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022 is now live. This new multimedia platform presents a dynamic snapshot of the 2022 report. To begin the interactive experience and learn more about how Governments and their partners are working to rebuild, scale up and improve school-based health and nutrition programmes worldwide. View Here: WFP | [The State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022](#)

New profiles added to the School Food Global Hub: The Country profiles of Suriname, United Arab Emirates and Yemen were added to the FAO-WFP School Food Global Hub. Existing profiles of other countries such as Nauru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and the United Kingdom are now up to date. Visit the [hub](#) to find out more.

The School Food Case Study: United States of America: The Research Consortium has conducted a case study on the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, which serve free or low-cost nutritious meals to tens of millions of children each day in the U.S. The working paper can be found [Here](#)

The School Food Case Study: Canada: The School Food Programs (SFPs) in Canada provide an example of how a country without a national school food policy and program endeavours to nourish students including through municipal and provincial/territorial governments, select federal government departments and agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at all levels. Read the working paper [Here](#)

We Would Like to Hear from You!

The Coalition is working on the next iteration of its website, [schoolmealscoalition.org](#) which will include new content from the field to harness the voices and exciting work being done by its members and partners. All partners are strongly encouraged to contribute stories, videos and pictures highlighting their key activities and events. We would also like to hear what content you would like featured on the website. Please share your thoughts [Here](#)

As the Coalition celebrates its second anniversary, all countries are encouraged to submit their initial commitments or to provide updates on previous commitments. The Coalition has issued updated [Commitment Guidelines](#) to support countries in this process. The secretariat is happy to be a resource as needed. Please send any inquiries to global.smcsecretariat@wfp.org

If this newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to be on our regular mailing list, please contact us at global.smcsecretariat@wfp.org. If you would like to join the School Meals Coalition, you can signal your interest in signing the Declaration of Commitment (as a government) or Declaration of Support through contacting the same email address.

Yours sincerely,

School Meals Coalition Secretariat

