



South-South and triangular cooperation

## Scaling-up school feeding

*Harnessing what worked for Brazil*

### Development challenge

Global hunger increased to 821 million people and up to 39,3 million in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2017. One in every four inhabitants of the region suffers from obesity, while, on the other hand, child malnutrition continues to decline. Latin America and the Caribbean produce enough food to satisfy the needs of its population. However, poverty restrains people's access to nutritious meals. Children in particular are severely affected, as inadequate nutrition not only results in poor health, but it also reduces their life prospects in the long-term. Hunger decreases children's cognitive performance, participation and often results in absenteeism.

### Development solution

School feeding has been distinguished as a multisectoral policy because it has allowed countries to achieve objectives in different strategic areas such as education, health, agriculture, social development, environment, territorial development and others. Therefore, it can be considered a transversal policy in confronting poverty and other social problems, because at the same time that it favors the human development of students, it improves diet habits, guarantees access to healthy and adequate food and promotes the development of the local economy, due to the purchasing of food produced in the school environment.

These programmes also provide important incentives for parents and children intended to reduce school absenteeism and dropout rates. The provision of school meals, ultimately, can play a key and central role in building

healthy and well-educated communities. In addition, it can ensure food and nutrition education as well as it can strengthen healthy habits and attitudes. For all of this, school feeding policies can contribute to the achievement of SDG goals, especially SDG 2, for the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, and SDG 4, for quality education.

In this perspective, the Brazilian experience of more than 60 years in the development of the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE), which has universal coverage, has become a highly respected programme in Latin America and the Caribbean. Every day, school meals are offered to more than 41 million schoolchildren in the country.

School feeding programmes make it possible to guarantee:

- **good food:** school meals are provided to all students, as a matter of public policy, through systematic and continuous programmes with guaranteed government resources;

- **strengthened technical capacities:** of institutions, as well as the skills of managers and technicians who are involved in school feeding activities;
- **community incentives:** introducing the local foods produced by family farmers in the school menus;
- **social participation:** involving a wide range of community and government actors, including civil society, cooperatives and parliaments, contributing to the design and implementation of school feeding policies and practices;
- **appropriate policy:** articulating school feeding policy alongside other policies, programmes and actions that strengthen food security at country-level.
- **Change of paradigm:** the inclusion of the School Feeding policy in the human rights context has raised interest from governments, the educational community and civil society.
- **Purchase from family farming:** the policy has been strengthening local economies through the purchase of family farming products.
- **Intersectoral policy:** facilitating the articulation between different government sectors like health, education and agriculture.
- **Social and community participation:** promoting the empowering of parents and government.
- **Renewed interest in school garden:** educational school gardens have been taken up as a entertaining tool for learning about food, the environment, health and hygiene. These gardens have also served as a learning laboratory to engage and educate other actors, including local authorities, parents and those with gardens at home.
- **Sustainable schools model:** the implementation of this methodology, with the government support, defined schools as reference centers for sustainable school feeding programmes. These schools have helped to building the knowledge regarding the provision of healthy food menus, the food and nutrition education for the change of habits, the improvement of the kitchens' infrastructure, as well as the participation of the different levels of government, parents and community in the developing of school feeding programmes.

## Results and lessons learned

- **Regular school meals and improved nutritional status:** over 280 000 school children receive a daily healthy meal. The nutritional status of children and attendance rates have improved.
- **Improved legal frameworks:** partner countries have built awareness and developed their legal frameworks for school nutrition, institutionalizing school feeding policies and the public purchase of food from family agriculture.
- **Raised awareness:** policy-oriented research findings published in the study "Panorama of the school nutrition and the Possibilities of Purchases from Family Agriculture", reviewed 10 country case studies in Latin America.

## Solution exchange

Since 2009, with funding from the National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE), the Ministry of Education of Brazil, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in partnership with the Brazilian Cooperation Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Brazil, have been supporting an SFP to advance the Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean 2025 initiative. This South-South Cooperation (SSC) initiative focuses on sharing Brazilian knowledge, technical know-how, policies and practices for school feeding with 13 countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and Santa Lucia.

Through this initiative, technical support and experience are being exchanged with each of the participant countries, engaging more than 5 200 qualified experts. A survey was conducted on the nutritional status of over 13 000 students in the region to ascertain a baseline of needs. In addition, 2 000 participants from partner countries completed an e-learning and face-to-face course on school nutrition: "Development of Sustainable Programmes based on the Brazilian Experience".

## Potential for upscaling

Building on the successes of this initiative, the stage is set to scale-up and further strengthen SFPs, policies and institutions, both within the countries where there is an existing partnership and additional ones.

FAO, the government of Brazil and partner countries are committed to continue this initiative, scaling-up support to 13 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, until 2020.

## Contact us

Interested partners are invited to get in touch with FAO for more information:

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