



Sustainable Financing Initiative for School Health and Nutrition (SFI)

School Meals Financing Rapid Assessment

Rwanda

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Flora Myamba, Ph.D
Women and Social Protection Tanzania

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List of Acronyms

HGFS	Home Grown School Feeding
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
RSFP	Rwanda School Feeding Policy
RSFOG	The Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines
SFT	School Feeding Team (of WFP and Government personnel consulted for lessons included in the paper)

1 National context (1-2 pages with supporting documentation)

- Levels of reported malnutrition among school age children
- National school feeding policy – aims and objectives

Rwanda has made significant gains in the fight against malnutrition through various policies, strategies and intervention programs that aim to accelerate progress .

Multiple multi-sectoral initiatives and interventions have led to improvements in the nutritional status of Rwandan children in the past several years. Despite the effort, the country continues to experience high rates of malnutrition and stunting for children under five. According to the Rwanda Demographic Health Survey (RDHS 2015) published in 2016 the rate of stunted children under the age of 5 in the nation remains high; recorded at 38%. The same report indicates that stunted children are more likely to be found in poor, rural and food insecure households while correlating high stunting rates with young mother’s level of education and wealth quartile, and mothers who are themselves undernourished. Information on nutritional status of primary school age and/or secondary school age children is quite limited.

In terms of food availability, the Rwanda Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (2018) reported that 81.3% of all households are food secure corresponding to approximately 2,034,942 million households, whereby 979,045 (38,6%) households among them are at high risk of becoming food insecure, 468,062 households are food insecure and 42,551 are severely food insecure. Food insecurity was reported high in western and northern parts of the Country.

The high levels of stunting children and the reported food insecurity is despite 74% of households, particularly in the rural (88%) in Rwanda practising agriculture. On a more positive note, cereal production has continued to increase annually, indicating great opportunity for the Rwanda school feeding program(s), which largely adopts home grown agricultural products.

Rwanda’s effort to address malnutrition is guided by the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1-7YGP 2017-2024), which highlights the eradication of malnutrition through enhanced prevention and management of all forms of malnutrition as one among the key national priorities¹. Along the same efforts, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2018/19 – 2023/24) aims at strengthening school nutrition programmes, through community participation and and by strengthening a national Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) program.

As such, Rwanda developed the National School Feeding Policy in 2020 and Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines in 2021. The school feeding policy has a vision that “all school children in Rwanda shall achieve their full development potential through a sustainable school feeding programme that provides adequate and nutritious meals at school.” (3.1). To achieve this vision, the policy recommends a school feeding programme that provides nutritionally sufficient food, complemented by health and nutritional interventions to all school children. The main objective is stated as “school feeding shall be recognized as a programme with multi-sectoral objectives, supporting various priority areas of the Government of Rwanda.” (3.2).

The policy requires that all food for the programme has to be procured locally from local farmers through supervision and management by local governments and schools. To ensure efficiency,

¹Republic of Rwanda (2017). Government Programme 2017-2024

productivity, adequate supply and sustainability of local foods a capacity development component for parents, teachers, students and local farmers on food production, post-harvest loss reduction, processing, storage, quality, safety and preparation has been incorporated. The proposed actions are aligned and contribute to the achievement of the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1-7YGP), Rwanda Vision 2020, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2018/19-2023/24), the National School Health Policy (SHP), the Multi- Sector Strategy to Eliminate Malnutrition, and Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 4. The Rwanda National Food and Nutrition Policy (2014)—geared towards improving food and nutrition in schools is likewise aligned to the policy as it gives much emphasis on sustaining and rapidly expanding new approaches to school feeding including the large scale HGSF programme. Moreover, the Rwanda National School Health Policy (2014) puts emphasis to the need for strengthening the ongoing school feeding programmes.

This paper has been developed through information obtained from various documents and literature review, as well as consultative discussions with four members of the School Feeding Team (SFT)². The following section (two) will document current school feeding programs in Rwanda while analysing its scope, coverage and delivery mechanism. Section three and four will look into different levels and types of financing and other contributions both through government and development partners/donors. Section five will analyse the contributions and role of the private sector, while section six will assess the efficiency in the design and implementation. Section seven will conclude with the general overview including opportunities and potential for scaling school feeding in Rwanda

2. Current programme(s) (2 pages)

- **Number of children targeted/reached**
- **Brief summary of relevant evaluation evidence**
- **Line ministry responsible for delivery**

The School Feeding Policy for Rwanda is quite ambitious; it aims for universal coverage of school meals to all public and private schools. Based on the discussion with the School Feeding Team (SFT), comprised of experts from the WFP-Rwanda and Government Personnel, there has been strong commitment by the government to achieve this goal. More evidence of commitment will be discussed later under government financing sections.

Borrowing from WFP³ (similarly stated in the Rwanda School Feeding Policy- 2020-p.1), school feeding is defined to include: “i) at school meals that can include breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch or dinner; ii) take home rations provided as economic incentives to families in return for a child’s regular attendance at school; and iii) food provided to adults or youth who attend literacy or vocational training”. In line with the definition, and several others including World Bank’s definition, which is aligned to social safety nets, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) has developed and implements three categories of school feeding programs as clearly listed in the School Feeding Policy:

- i. **One cup of Milk per Child launched in 2010:** This is the National Early Childhood Development Program (NECDP) funded school milk programme, which serves milk to all pre-primary and

² The list of members of the SFT that were consulted, including government personnel and WFP members, is included in annex A.

³School Feeding Programmes: Why should they be scaled up? April 2004 Retrieved on 05 June 2016.

primary students in grades 1; two times per week in 19 districts. The One Cup of Milk per Child' program aims to reduce malnutrition among Rwandan children, with a specific objective of improving the nutrition status of children attending school in order to enhance the development of their brain capacity and to promote school retention of children attending pre- and primary schools. The Government authorised the Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) to implement the program in schools. In 2018, the program implementation shifted from RAB to NECDP. The NECDP program is fully funded and operated by the Government.

- ii. **MINEDUC supported school feeding program in public and Government-aided secondary schools:** The program provides at least one nutritious meal per day with the aim to increase students' enrolment, promote regular attendance and ultimately improving their learning performance. This program is community based, requiring parents to be primarily responsible to provide food for their children either in kind or in cash. The good news is that the Government of Rwanda currently provides 56 (6 cents US?) Frw⁴ per student per meal to supplement parents' contributions. This contribution is lower compared to 156 Frw paid before FY 2015/2016. To ensure that students receive a nutritious meal, parents are required to contribute the remaining 94 (9 cents?) RWF per student per meal via cash and/ or in-kind contributions.

It is worth noting that the School Feeding Policy (2020) records that out of a total of 455,487 students in secondary day schools, a total of 413,235 students receive lunch at school, while the remaining get lunch at home. This is about 91% of students receiving lunch at school. While this number is quite high and impressive, more is yet to be learned in terms of the students who tend to miss the meals; and whether or not the incomplete coverage is due to factors as deficit in budget or absenteeism. It is good noting that day-school meals are mandatory to all private schools. All boarding students are provided with three meals per day throughout the school year; the GoR finances boarding school meals by 100%.

- iii. **WFP Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme launched in 2002:** The programme responded to the increased food insecurity resulting from the Southern Africa Regional drought in that year. Currently, HGSF Programme is supporting at least 83,000 primary school children in 104 schools located in 4 districts namely, Nyaruguru, Nyamagabe, Karongi and Rutsiro where poverty and food insecurity is considered high.

WFP implemented in 2015-2020 the McGovern-Dole- Home Grown School Feeding Program with the aims of supporting the government in developing a national school feeding program and building government capacity for complete handover of activities by 2020.

A joint Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) exercise undertaken by MINEDUC⁵ reported the multiple benefits linked to school feeding programmes in Rwanda, not limited to: i) reduced indiscipline and pregnancy cases; ii) ease for parents to undertake other chores; iii) socialization during lunch time; iv) increased students' performance; v) reduced loss of time during lunch breaks; vi) timely accomplishment of school programs; vii) increased self-learning; and, viii) assured healthy and balanced diet for students from poor families. The benefits are consistent with the global literature that sees daily school meals provision as strong incentive to improve school enrolment and attendance, and links to reduced absenteeism and drop-out rates. Nevertheless, school meals

⁴ Please note that 1USD=~1,016

⁵MINEDUC (2015). Joint Monitoring & Evaluation Field Study on Education, Government of Rwanda

enhances children focus on their studies thus improving concentration, learning, cognitive functions, in-class behaviour and academic performance.

The M&E study further reported some challenges including shortage of infrastructure (e.g. kitchen, storage rooms, dining facilities,) and other materials appropriate for the program. Moreover, the use of existing infrastructure for milk storage was questioned, particularly its sanitation standards. This weakness was a particular case for the one cup of milk per child programme whereby schools are responsible for storing and distributing the milk.

In discussion with the School Feeding Team, it was evident that the model to utilise home grown food in local communities continue to face some hiccups, particularly in the procurement. The team argued that the whole process is not just technical; it is also political. So some decisions were taken that might have blurred the whole process. Much remains to be learned and improved for effective delivery of the program. A review of the program delivery and management will be necessary, at some point.

Along the same lines, the 2015 Joint Monitoring & Evaluation report highlighted lack of commitment, low financial capabilities, irregular school meals provision and limited involvement of the local authorities to among key and common constraints. Additional challenges were linked to parents inability to pay the costs adequately and timely for many factors including poverty and prioritization of school meals at the house hold level.

The School Feeding Policy (2020) Implementation Plan⁶ states that the Ministry of Education is “the lead government entity for the coordination, management, implementation and monitoring of the school feeding programme...”, while the implementation of successful school feeding programmes is stated in the same policy to be dependent upon strong coordination, collaboration and partnerships of other sector ministries and stakeholders including MINAGRI, MINALOC, MININFRA, MIGEPROF; the UN agencies; both local and international; as well as non-governmental agencies and the private sector.

The policy further states that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) will be responsible for consolidating the existing budget lines for school feeding and ensuring sufficient budgetary allocation for the School feeding programme and related operational costs, advocating for and facilitating the mobilization of local and international resources to support School Feeding programs. The ministry will provide guidance and assistance to the School Feeding team when preparing budget proposals and multi-year funding proposals, among other roles.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) on the other hand will assume the primary role to create appropriate frameworks linking the supply chain of local farmers produces to the school feeding program. They will also assure capacity development of local farmers to increase production, improve the processing and ensure quality of their production. The ministry will assist livestock resources extension in schools and strengthen the supply chain of milk (production, processing, quality control, distribution, etc) for the scale up of the one cup of milk per child component, among other roles.

⁶ The School Feeding Policy (2020) Implementation Plan is embedded within the policy and here referring to article 7.2-pg. 21.

3 Public financing (3 pages)

- Level of financing from national and local government
- Revenue source (i.e. general taxation, earmarked taxation)
- National vs Local government mobilisation & expenditure
- (Where possible) financing by level of school system
- Is funding adequate and consistent with programme delivery goals

The Rwanda School Feeding Program is currently financed through government revenue and parents contributions. The government vision, especially in the first five or so years of the school feeding policy is to implement a universal school feeding program. As already stated in the previous sections, the government budget allocation does not add up to the full requirement as it only covers 40% of the costs of the program towards meals. The rest is expected to come from parents and communities as a parental contributions. Nevertheless, as it is mentioned in the previous sections, there is good prospects for increasing budget in the education sector allocations, which includes coverage for school feeding so as the government subsidy goes closer to meeting the full cost beyond the actual meals.

The same team informed that currently there are only two funding sources: *first* and primary is General Revenue of the government, channeled through the Ministry of Education Budget then dedicated for school feeding. According to the Rwanda School Feeding Programme Cost Analysis⁷, the cost of one cup of milk per child programme is 409 (40 cents) Frw per serving per child; the cost of WFP assisted programs are 120 Frw (12 cents) for providing one child with one meal consisting of beans, maize, vegetable oil and salt per day; the cost of providing one child with one meal per day in the secondary boarding schools is 122 Frw ; while the cost of providing one meal per day per child is 200 Frw (20 cents) in Secondary day schools. Notably, the Government only provides an earmarked transfer for school feeding of 56 Frw per day per student to secondary schools. Nevertheless, government budget allocation does not add up to the full requirement, as it only covers 40% of the costs of the programme pretty much, and the rest is expected to come from parents and indirectly from communities as parental contribution across all three levels - i.e. pre-school, primary and secondary.

In fiscal year 2020/2021 the government created a one-time double budget for the school feeding program and made massive infrastructure investments towards construction of school feeding related structures in a large number of schools, particularly building kitchens and storage rooms. The approved amount was an increased from \$8 to \$ 54.7 million⁸. The non-direct food costs are mentioned by the SFT to be of great demand and necessity including daily costs for cooks. This is a potential area of contribution by development partners and other interested stakeholders.

The *second* source of financing is through parents and guardians contributions. As described under section two of this report, the MINEDUC is making effort in establishing partnership between Government and parents to improve school feeding program in “Primary and Secondary Education”. The Government emphasises on the primary responsibility of parents in providing food for their children. Contribution from parents either as cash or in kind (food on non-food items), particularly in terms of adequacy and timing has remained a major challenge.

⁷Government of Rwanda and WFP (2012). Rwanda School Feeding Programme: Cost analysis, October 2012.

⁸National School Feeding Program in Rwanda: Presentation for Global Child Nutrition Forum (GCNF): Virtual Conference; Nov 9, 2020:

Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines of 2021 sets an average daily meal cost of 150 Rwf per student per day. The operational guideline requires parent to contribute not less than 94Rwf and government subsidy of 56Rwf per student/per day respectively. The two should contribute to a total of Rwf150 for each child to have meals at school. Table 1 below shows parent and government contributions in financing school feeding program in Rwanda.

Table 1: Summary of Parent and Government Contributions for School Meals in Rwanda

	Unit	Daily Contribution	Weekly Contribution	Monthly Contribution	Quarterly
			(5 days)	(21 days)	(63 days)
Average daily meal cost	RWF/student	150	750	3150	9450
Parent contribution	RWF/student	94	470	1,974	5,922
Government contribution	RWF/student	56	280	1,176	3,528

Source: Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines of 2021

The table indicates an average meal cost of 150RWF per day, which constitutes 28500RWF annually per each student. Therefore, contributions for every parent is 470 RWF per week and 17,860 RWF annually. The government contributions per student is 280 RWF per week and 10,640 RWF annually.

Households from poor populations are even more challenged. In such case, merging some aspects of school feeding program and the national social safety net programs may become imperative. The School Feeding Team informed that some discussions have been ongoing to address the poorest people’s needs if they are to also benefit from the program. This is one of the key issues worth discussion, in line with the practical strategy for implementation. The practical solution will not be taking away from the funds for school meals for everybody, but paying the deficit through somewhere else; not even the other parents but potentially coverage through the ministry responsible for social protection. This becomes a political decision to make, in terms of policy and fiscal choice.

Similar challenges were reported when WFP piloted in 2011 a “3 + 2 Initiative” to provide food for only three days per week while the community was to take on supply responsibility for the remaining two days per week. The transition had a negative impact on the regular attendance and retention of boys and girls in WFP assisted schools in both Eastern and Southern provinces⁹. Inadequate financial resources have also been a constraint for WFP in its implementation of the school feeding programs.

⁹Evaluation of WFP DEV 10677.0: Food Assistance Support to Education (January 2008 – December 2012)

The good news is that that the government continues to be committed to ensuring adequate and effective financial and technical capacity for implementation of the program. The School Feeding Team informed that the government through discussions in the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Education is exploring possibilities to increase the budget allocation of school feeding. While the rate and amount planned for the increase are yet to be formally published, a considerable increase between 30% and 40% is believed to be potential and possible.

Table 2 shows nationwide school feeding program budgetary projection, segmenting into daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual budget for the coverage of 3.2 million pre-primary, primary and secondary students. The table also segments parent and government contributions.

Table 2: Summary of National-level Financing of School Feeding Program in Rwanda

	Unit	Daily budget	Weekly budget	Monthly budget	Quarterly
			(5 days)	(21 days)	(63 days)
Average daily meal cost	RWF/3.2 million students	480 million	2,400 million	10,080 million	30,240 million
From parent contributions	RWF/3.2 million students	300.8 million	1,504 million	6,316 million	18,950 million
From Government	RWF/3.2 million students	179.2 million	896 million	3,763 million	11,290 million

Source: Author’s calculations based on Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines of 2021

The table indicates that the average cost of daily meals for 3.2 million students is 480 Rwf million; the annual budget costing is thus 91,200 Rwf million. Parent contributions will be 300.8 Rwf million per day and 57,152 Rwf million annually.

One other new and important development is the Rwanda National School Feeding Programme – Financing Strategy, which being developed by the government together with key stakeholders including the WFP as highlighted below:

The consulted SFT reported to have have been working since the end of last year through an interactive and consultative process to develop the financing strategy because it is of course the “elephant in the room”, in the sense that financing is the key and determinant for the design and implementation of any program. According to the team, a lot of the questions that this paper is trying to answer including on the potential national sources of financing and the donor/DPs landscape for school feeding will be answered by the financing strategy. For the team,

“key is to first look at what the school feeding really cost, because we have the feeling from the present implementation that the way it is funded right now

focuses only on a little part of the cost, probably only 40% or 50% it, which is mainly the food cost. However, there are many more things that a sustainable school feeding programme has to look at the full costs. So we want to identify those. Then we want to identify the funding gap, which will be pretty easy in the end.”

The same team reports that the financing strategy will address the following key issues (the list is not exhaustive):

- ❖ Identify full costs of the NSFP over 7 – 10 years using the present model and coverage (the base scenario), and factoring in increasing student numbers and prices
- ❖ Identify potential to reduce costs and find cost-efficiencies
- ❖ Identify sustainable sources of funding
- ❖ Identify the potential of temporary external funding support
- ❖ Identify ways of sharing costs between different sources of funding
- ❖ Present a proposed budget of the NSFP under several scenarios over the coming 7 – 10 years, and including the different sources of funding contributing to cover this budget

Some key questions about the model(s) for financing the National School Feeding Program that are specific to general -national revenue include, but not limited to:

- ❖ Should EDUCATION increase its budget for school feeding?
- ❖ Could SOCIAL PROTECTION contribute to school feeding? Directly to the programme, or to poorest families?
- ❖ Could HEALTH/NUTRITION contribute to school feeding? In general, or specific activities?
- ❖ Could AGRICULTURE contribute to school feeding? In general, or specific activities?
- ❖ Other sectors that could or should contribute to school feeding?
- ❖ Could SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS contribute?
- ❖ TRUST FUND to channel other contributions?

The completion of the financing strategy is expected, at least in drafts, in March-April 2022. The government foresees and hopes that development partners and other stakeholders including civil society organizations (CSOs), religious, etc. will join this effort and fill into some of the gaps.

The RSFP (2020) acknowledges the key requirement of adequate and reliable resourcing for effective implementation of the School Feeding Policy and Strategic Plan. The RSFP directs that core financing of the school feeding programme shall be obtained in a national budget line under the MINEDUC. The Government shall consolidate the budget lines to support the ongoing programmes, proposed scale up, new initiatives and all the related operational costs. Relevant ministries shall intervene to ensure the implementation of integrated initiatives on comprehensive school feeding components outlined in the SF policy and Strategic Plan.

The policy states that the budget of complementary interventions related with school feeding will be allocated to the relevant ministries as well as funding from stakeholders as the WFP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO, World Bank, etc, among other development partners. Complementary financing is also anticipated from non-governmental agencies, the Private Sector, and the local community. To

ensure sustainability, clear commitment and exit strategy should be agreed upon by government and development partners for each intervention.

At the school level, the policy determines that there will be a school committee responsible for the day to day management of school feeding activities. It further states that the school feeding committee will be composed of the head teacher, two representative of teachers (male and female), two representative from students (male and female), a representative from the SGA, a store manager and a representative of cooks. However, guidance on how much these administrative roles should cost is not detailed; possibly left to the schools. This could have contributed to the question below on administration costs. The forthcoming financing strategy is expected to make it quite clear.

The committee is expected to perform the multiple responsibilities including integrating school feeding activities into the school action plan; records management (both numbers of children feeding and food utilization); and ensuring school readiness for school feeding (kitchen, stores, dining, utensils and water and sanitation (WASH) facilities), while ensuring all kids present at school eat the actual meals.

Whether the funding is adequate and consistent with program deliverables for the School Feeding Program or not is yet to be well assessed and documented because we do not know yet which options the government is going to prioritize. Much as the government funds fully the meals costs, the demand on developing and strengthening the infrastructure investments including building kitchens, improved cook stoves, energy serving sources of power, capacity building in various areas including WASH, agricultural extension services, etc. remain of key importance and is not fully addressed.

It is important if these additional investments beyond the actual meals costs covered for by the government will be considered by the DPs and other stakeholders, at least for a certain period before they can transition to a more sustainable handing over strategy. The risk of not addressing these is where it ends up with parents bearing for the non-food costs, which is estimated by the SFT to be about 50-60%. In such case, poor households will be overburdened and possibly lose the benefits. It is worth a reminder that the meals costs is estimated at around 40% of all necessary investments for school feeding package.

The SFT advised that there might also be short term and/or longer term financing options; some choices will be easier than others. It only takes a political will to make such decisions. As an example, developing a trust fund, campaigns or lottery where introduces a specific levy toward the program will enter into political discussions and take longer time than other options.

4 Donor financing (2 pages)

- Level of donor financing
- Type of donor financing (grant vs concessional etc)
- Major actors (WB, bilateral, McGover-Dole etc)
- Observations on coordination

Apart from the parents who contribute in cash or in-kind, no other Development Partners (DP) are currently giving monetary budget support to the government, which in Rwanda is the predominant sort of aid mechanism. Donors like the World Bank through projects are giving general budget

support to education as a sector; none of that is going directly to school feeding programs at the moment. The School Feeding Team informed that the government budget for school feeding is \$4-5m annually. A breakdown between pre-school, primary, and secondary has not provided.

There is also good prospects of other development partners coming in; the forthcoming financing strategy is going to address approaches and options for other sectors to also come in. The other sectors primarily social protection, agriculture, health (WASH) infrastructure sectors, etc. should also pitch in from their ministerial budgets towards the school feeding requirements. This will be an important achievement of the financing strategy and the program. This is the essence of multi sector or sub-sector reality of school feeding.

The WFP in Rwanda has this last tail that is used to well provide some food, but mainly also a lot of technical technical assistance to help the government. Of course some development partner have channeled their contributions through WFP; and this includes some of the major grants by the US government that we are managing as WFP and others. WFP implemented in 2015-2020 the McGovern-Dole- Home Grown School Feeding Program with the aims of supporting the government in developing a national school feeding program and building government capacity for complete handover of activities by 2020. A total of US\$25 million was expended on the program over five years. Additional funding from MasterCard, Feed and Caterpillar Foundation were secured for the intervention (WFP Mid-Term Evaluation 2020). The new financing strategy is going to be much more detailed in terms of strategies and inclusion of the DPs and others stakeholders.

Multiple other donors have contributed to school feeding indirectly through funding school gardens, which are among the source of food supply for schools meals. Development Partners including the EU, FAO, Gardens for Health International and WFP), CARE International through their Farmers of the Future Initiative (FOFI), and the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) with support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have funded school garden projects implemented through the MINEDUC. As of 2018, around 68.5%, schools had garden projects. The number had increased from 60.7% in 2014¹⁰. Total contributions from donors have been difficult to determine since most have not been clearly published.

The SFT highlighted that EU, for example, is reallocating a small portion of money to support on stoves in some schools. So there may be such interests among partners like the AU to supplement a specific components, which do not have a lot to do with the direct costs of school meals.

Promotion and implementation of school gardens is policy guided and contributes towards achieving objectives of multiple policies the National Food and Nutrition Policy 2013-2018 (NFNP), the National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan 2013-2018 (NFNSP), the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2014-2018, the School Health Policy 2014 – 2018 (SHP), and the RSFP (2020). As an example, the National School Health Strategic Plan 2014-2018 requires the MINEDUC to ensure the provision of at least one balanced meal per learner during study time and strengthen school gardening and farming activities wherever land is available.

The benefits of school gardens do not end at school level. FAO (2012) reports that through school gardens, students, parents and local community gained practical skills on modern technical

¹⁰National Comprehensive School Feeding Policy for Rwanda 2020. Ministry of Education, Republic of Rwanda.

agriculture and animal husbandry practices such as the building of home gardens, kitchen gardens, methods of sowing or planting due to their participation.

Despite the benefits, the school garden projects are not without challenges. One of the challenges is that of short term nature of the school gardens initiatives without operational exit strategies for sustainability. Other challenges include limited number of district agronomists who can be linked to teaches to provide continued technical backstopping and coaching services. This is more important particularly since training was delivered to strengthen teachers capacities on various aspects. Moreover, water resource scarcity particularly during the dry season; limited access and ownership of land; lack of financial resources for the gardening activities, and exposure to external destructions as most of the schools are not fenced, are among the barriers.

The SFT believed there are a total of 10 different stakeholders including about seven different ministerial departments and three DPs including UNICEF, WFP and the World Bank who are current and potential future collaborators. The team foresee the opportunity to work quite closely with UNICEF and World Bank. The Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors are likewise termed as potential in the near future through this assignment.

The critical and challenging question to the national stakeholders will be on the choice of options on funding sources that could of interest to them, and that are politically interesting . Some of them will be more difficult to develop than others. How to deal with political considerations of the government, where they say “we don't want to go into this”, specific levy, for example, or earmarking specific proceeds for school feeding that “does not fit into our political ideas”? Ultimately it is the government that runs the country. Much of this will have the opportunity to be explored and decided for through the new Financial Strategy. It is worth noting that the development of the financing strategy is consultative, hence it provides more opportunities for stakeholders to engage and propose best options for some of these major issues. There is always an opportunity for DPs and other stakeholders to intervene.

The Government of Rwanda recognizes the need for coordination that is well structured and decentralised. The School Feeding Policy emphasizes on multi-sectoral collaboration specifically by education, agriculture, health, nutrition, etc. on the basis of their technical expertise and comparative advantages and partnerships with all stakeholders including the community. As such, the design and implementation of a the School Feeding Program requires coordination among all the different national policies and programs, and the key stakeholders involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This is in order to multiply the school feeding benefits and strengthen consistency and efficiency towards a common goal.

The multi-sectoral nature of the school feeding program necessitates both vertical link (vertical coordination) and horizontal link (horizontal coordination) as important aspects of the coordination mechanism between the policy and the operational levels. Borrowing from the AU-owned TRANSFORM Training modules on Social Protection Floors¹¹ vertical coordination occurs along the hierarchy of structures or different structural levels; for example, national, sub-national/regional/district, and local/municipal/community levels. On the contrary, horizontal coordination takes place across ministries where activities across sectors operationalise social protection policies.

¹¹ TRANSFORM Training modules on Social Protection Floors are unpublished materials, also available through www.socialprotecion.org

The National Steering Committee drawn from a core group of decision makers in key ministries and partners has the responsibility of providing overall leadership and guidance on the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the achievement of the School Feeding policy objectives. This is clearly stated in the RSFP (2020). The RSFP further identifies the next layer of coordination to be district, whereby school feeding activities are to be coordinated by the District School Feeding Committee composed of the Vice Mayor in charge Social Affairs; Directors of Education, Directors of Health, Directors of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Directors of Social Development unit, CNF Coordinator, Security organs, Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) Officer; Faith-Based organisations' representative, and Private Sector Federation representative.

Sector/Cell level follows from the district whereby a team is set up to coordinate the implementation of school feeding activities. The team is led by the Sector Executive Secretary and shall include Sector/Cell Officers for Education, Agriculture, and Social Affairs, Animal Resources Officer, CNF Representative, Faith-Based organisations' representative, and Private Sector Federation representative. While most of these facts have been clearly spelled in the school feeding policy, the actual implementation may be yet to happen given that the policy is quite new.

5 Role of private sector and households (1-2 pages)

- Are private sector actors engaged (specify actors and levels of financing)
- Do households contribute

Non-state actors (private sector, faith-based organisations, CSOs/NGOs, etc.) have been listed in the school feeding policy and operational guidelines to be required to perform the following roles:

- i. Support to individual schools – pros and cons ('adopt a school', patronage)
- ii. Support to the NSFP in a district – pros and cons
- iii. Support to the NSFP at national level – pros and cons
- iv. Ways of enhancing contributions from non-state actors (e.g. public recognition, tax exemptions, etc.)
- v. Strategy decision on contributions from the private sector (e.g. channel district and national level contributions through trust fund; estimate / target for contributions from private sector – high, medium and low)

Beyond the above listed school feeding contributions by DPs, local communities and families, there is limited information on substantive work or contributions by a group or single private organizations.

In terms of contributions at the household level, the Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines (RSFOP) 2021 requires parents to contribute the remaining 94 RWF per student per meal via cash and/ or in-kind contributions after the government subsidy so as to ensure students receive a nutritious meal. The district school feeding committees may, however, decide in consultation with school-level school feeding committees to revise the amount that should be contributed by parents based on food commodity costs in the local area and the capacity of parents to pay. It is worth a reminder that within the national school feeding program, the government provides a subsidy of 56 RWF per student per meal. Based on a daily contribution of 94 RWF per student per meal, the RSFOG (2021) calculates and finds that a parent would contribute a total of 1,974 RWF per month, 5,922 RWF per quarter and 17,860 RWF per year.

According to the same guideline (RSFOG 2021) in-kind contributions can include firewood, labor or food. In-kind food items must align with a school's planned meal menus, which may vary from term to term. Parents may also contribute other items such as manure or other materials required for the school garden. However, in-kind contributions must first be guided by the RSFOG and approved for by the School Feeding Committee, who will also determine the value for these items based on daily labor costs or the market price of food items which must be updated on a regular basis.

6 Efficiency and equity reflection (2 pages)

- Administrative costs of programme delivery
- Allocation against deprivation and targeting indicators

Information on the administrative costs is quite limited, primarily due to the fact that financing has been multi-sectoral hence contributed for by multiple ministries led by the Ministry of Education; including Education, health, and agriculture. A School Feeding Unit was created within the Ministry of Education for proper implementation of School feeding scale up, however, the implementation budget is unavailable at the moment. The utilisation of home grown foods and school gardens likewise limits the availability of specifically calculated administrative cost. As an example, the Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines-RSFOG (2021) does mention the number of cooks that should be adequate per one kitchen however, information on the specified budget and costs was not readily available. More data is continue to be sought.

Allocation against deprivation has been considerably observed. As an example, the Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines-RSFOG (2021) directs that students who have higher nutrition requirements such as adolescent girls may be considered to receive top-ups in meals. The Home Grown School Feeding Program similarly targets districts in the south and west of Rwanda with some of the highest rates of poverty and extreme poverty in the country (based on 2014 figures). These areas are also characterized by severe food insecurity and high stunting rates. According to the Decentralized Evaluation (2019), primary school enrolment is high, though the quality of education in rural areas is generally poor; the mean years of schooling is 3.8, which is categorized on the SDG dashboard as "stagnating."

The same evaluation observed that there was a good mix of data sources for the evaluation that helped to build inclusivity and credibility of evidence. While the inclusive sources helped to determine the fact that women's empowerment and gender equality have improved in recent years, including high rates of girls' primary school enrolment, some weaknesses were observed. As an example, the report misses the opportunity to assess gender dynamics and human rights in the intervention, including on how different social groups relate to the school feeding programme in terms of employment, food provision and community engagement. The evaluation further reports on the little attention given to the unintended effects on human rights or gender. Similarly there were limited recommendations on gender and women's economic issues, particularly given their culturally determined exclusions. Overall, equity aspects were not considered in the findings, conclusions or recommendations.

In response to the COVID-19, one key donor support towards school feeding is documented, more particularly financed by the Global Partnership for Education¹². The same source document that Global partnership for education provided support of 5 Million USD to school feeding during school closures in 11 out of 30 total Districts with highest poverty rates to support families with low income affected by COVID-19. The total number of Children in only 11 District is equivalent to 807,694 students of Pre- primary to Primary six only. The Global Partnership for Education further awarded \$1 million for construction of permanent hand-washing stations in 1,348 schools to enhance hygiene standards and help to prevent COVID-19 infection.

The Government of Rwanda coordinated with schools and partners to distribute food in school storerooms to students at home to avoid expiration during school closures. The government has established a simplified mode of procuring food stuffs for students. The method of procurement had various advantages including;

- ❖ Creation of Local Market for local small holder farmers
- ❖ Availability of fresh and nutritious meal to students from locally sourced
- ❖ Involvement of parents in the purchase of food for students
- ❖ Involvement and ownership of school feeding program by parents

7 Observations on scope for financing scale-up of programmes (2 pages)

Various policies and strategies have been/ and continue to be developed including the Rwanda School Feeding Policy (2020) its operational guidelines and the forthcoming financing strategy. These documents have clearly stated all the relevant provisions that guide the design and implementation of school feeding program(s).

For example, as a step towards implement of the school feeding policy, the Government of Rwanda has scaled up the School Feeding Program from pre-primary up to secondary schools, equipped schools with kitchens and cooking stoves, and provided a subsidy for each student's meal to complement parents' contributions. The important news is that implementation has been ongoing and lessons are being garnered through implementation and various evaluations as we document in the paper.

MasterCard (2017) conducted a cost-benefit analysis of School Feeding Investments and concluded that every dollar invested in school meals in Rwanda can generate a return of US\$4.80 and US\$5.60 for home- grown and in-kind modalities, respectively, over a child's lifetime. This confirms the important value school feeding contributes to the students, families, communities, and more important in achieving long-term and development outcomes for Rwanda.

The Government of Rwanda remains strongly committed to continuing financing the on going programs. The goal to achieve universal coverage for school feeding program(s) is a clear indication that the government is ready to bring the school feeding to scale. What has been implemented thus far contributes immensely as "pilots" to help the existing program improve and achieve better outcomes with scale.

¹²National School Feeding Program in Rwanda: Presentation for Global Child Nutrition Forum (GCNF): Virtual Conference; Nov 9, 2020

As presented earlier in the paper, much as the government commits to financing school meals, more items in the school feeding package including infrastructure and food supply continue to demand for additional financing. Reliance on parents financing is also questionable in terms of scale, adequacy and sustainability.

Development partners have the opportunity to chip in and/or continue to collaborate with the government in addressing these gaps. When there is political will from the government side, and if government raises the demand stakeholders including DPs and the private sector will commit to finding options to help achieve the goal(s), not only at the national level but also feeding into the global SDGs agenda and related objectives.

As an example, the HGSF Program financed by McGovern-Dole Program presented earlier is highly relevant for Rwanda. The sustainability of the Program will also depend on government readiness and capacity to scale up the existing national program for secondary schools to include primary schools. Of course the incorporation of the McGovern-Dole Program components into a scale-up of the national school feeding program may presents a budgetary challenge for the government. Can WFP and or/any other donors find interest in supporting for school feeding in the most food insecure areas for five to seven more years to come? What else would stakeholders want to contribute could range from capacity strengthening, technical knowledge, education and sensitization by CSOs/NGOs, etc. What is the strategy to attract donors to collaborate?

Most of the answers are presented in the financing strategy. The preliminary outline of the strategy highlighting what is set to be spelled in the strategy indicates a continued need for a strategy to involve Development partners/stakeholders. The demand/gap is there .

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Consultations

School Feeding Team (WFP and Government) in Rwanda

Jacques SEZIKEYE

jacques.sezikeye@wfp.org

+250 788 302 281

Focal for system strengthening, capacity building, and the partnership with the government institutions in in general

Peter HAAG

peter.haag@wfp.org

Worked for WFP more than 20 years; now on school based programs unit in headquarters but still work mainly for country offices. In Rwanda involved since 2020 when we work together on writing the operational guidelines for the national home grown full feeding programme.

Flavia KOBUSINGYE

flavia.kobusingye@wfp.org

I'm working with the WFP for a short term. I'm so time consultant working on school feeding UM school feeding financing strategy. I'll be working with the Peter. She has worked for many years for MINECOFIN (the Minister of Finance)

Tiina HONKANEN
tiina.honkanen@wfp.org