





School Health and Nutrition

Evidence shows that school health and nutrition programs provide wide-ranging and mutually reinforcing benefits across several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including  Education,  Nutrition,  Child health,  Social protection,  Poverty reduction and  Rural livelihoods.



the Learning
Generation EDC

OUR VISION | The School Health and Nutrition (SHN) transformation is part of the Learning Generation Initiative (LGI), whose mission is to empower the people within and connected to education systems to enable all children to be learning within a generation. In line with the LGI mission, the SHN transformation's goal is that governments prioritize investments in school health and nutrition to advance equitable access to education and learning for all.

WHY SCHOOL HEALTH AND NUTRITION | As financial pressures on governments mount, there is a danger that the current benefits of school feeding programs will be eroded, and the potential benefits of program expansion will be left untapped. That would represent a major setback for the SDGs. An expansion of school feeding programs could help accelerate progress in learning and provide safety nets for vulnerable children. Moreover, school feeding represents an important link in the food system chain. There is, therefore, now an urgent need to develop global as well as country-specific strategies that lead to a sustainable resource base for present, and the growth of school meals programs, particularly in the low- and lower-middle-income countries where these programs are most needed.

IMPACT TO DATE | To address these critical financing issues, the Sustainable Financing Initiative (SFI) for School Health and Nutrition officially launched in 2022 as one of the five initiatives under the School Meals Coalition (SMC) to work with governments and donors to help countries identify multiyear financing opportunities for school feeding programs with a particular focus on low- and lower-middle-income countries.

The initial phase of the SFI (2021–2022) included scoping research on national financing, the role of donors, international financing, and the private sector. In the paper "[School Meals Programmes and the Education Crisis: A Financial Landscape Analysis](#)" and the accompanying policy brief, SFI reviewed the current state of domestic and international investments in school feeding programs, along with existing challenges, and possible policy solutions to promote sustainable financing. These documents drew on case studies from seven countries (Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Guatemala, Rwanda, Senegal, and Tanzania) that explored diverse contexts, allowing for a greater understanding of financing patterns and challenges under a sustainability lens.

A series of promising financing options were developed for the "[Investment Case for School Health and Nutrition](#)" paper, prepared jointly with the SMC's Research Consortium for SHN to inform discussions of the Global Education Forum in April 2022, which fed into the preparation work for the UN Transforming Education Summit in September 2022.

In April 2023, the SFI published a paper for the UK Foreign Commonwealth Development Office, under the "What Works Hub," titled "[What Works: School Meals Programs](#)." The paper outlines the significant—and growing—body of evidence that well-designed and effectively delivered school meal programs are a cost-effective and scalable means to build human capital, improve learning outcomes, and improve health and nutrition.

In July of the same year, the SFI published "[School meal programmes: A missing link in food systems reform](#)" to influence the Food Systems Summit Stock Take event and position school meals as a unique opportunity to improve food systems, climate change, and education outcomes.

Initial finance strategy support has been provided to Rwanda in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), and SFI has developed a country finance strategy methodology and financing tool that is ready to use with the governments of other countries.

WHERE ARE WE FOCUSING NOW? | The SFI will continue to conduct robust research and evidence, accelerate progress at the country level, and strengthen influence at the global level. Our objectives by 2027 are to:

- Work with country governments to develop credible medium- to long-term financing strategies for school feeding programs, undertaking fiscal space and costing analysis and exploring different funding options, drawing on the research and tools developed.
- Set forth a global agenda and options for school feeding financing, based on an analysis of the state of financing, including more in-depth research on donor funding, domestic financing strategies, innovative financing, and cross-sectoral financing opportunities.
- Conduct an in-depth examination into the financing of school meals as a means to encourage local sustainable financing and Home-Grown School Feeding.

OUR APPROACH | The SFI uses the LGI approach of Analyze, Act, Amplify.

Analyze Undertake research and analysis of global and national financing for school meals programs and develop options for long-term financing in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

Act Work with country governments to support the development of national strategies for financing high-quality school meal programs.

Amplify Communicate and disseminate the SFI’s research and country work and work with key actors through the steering committee, working groups, and SMC to encourage country governments and international actors to invest more in the sustainable financing of school meals programs.

Using LGI’s framework of Analyze, Act and Amplify, we will focus on the following elements:

Examples of our current and planned work		
	Financing for School Meals	Expand to School Health and Nutrition
Analyze	Undertake research agendas on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor financing • Innovative financing (debt swaps, earmarked taxes, climate finance) • Home-grown school feeding • Domestic financing • Political economy of financing for school meals 	Explore research gaps on school-based health and nutrition that complements school meals
Act	Develop an online school meals financing tool Work with 12–15 country governments to develop sustainable financing strategies	Explore opportunities to support governments on areas beyond financing
Amplify	Work with the School Meals Coalition and our champions to advocate for greater investment in school meals and greater cross-sectoral collaboration; undertake political engagement; share evidence; influence global fora and publications, such as the State of School Feeding report	

WHO ARE WE WORKING WITH? | The SFI works to support the priorities and needs of governments of the School Meals Coalition. As such, SFI works closely with the SMC, WFP, funders, research partners, and country governments to establish country partnerships. The SFI works closely with the other SMC initiatives, specifically the Research Consortium and the Data and Monitoring Initiative to ensure coherence and complementarity. The SFI maintains a strong link to the Global Education Forum. It is guided by a high-level steering committee, which is chaired by Cristina Duarte, Special Adviser for Africa for the UN Secretary-General, providing strategic guidance to each of the objectives.

CONNECT WITH US | To learn more about our work or partner with us, you can visit our website at: <https://www.learninggeneration.org/transformations-school-health-and-nutrition> or contact us at kkullman@edc.org.