



# Standard Project Report 2015

## World Food Programme in Morocco, Kingdom of (MA)

### Capacity Development and Support for the National School Feeding Programme

Reporting period: 1 January - 31 December 2015

Project Information	
Project Number	200494
Project Category	Development Project
Overall Planned Beneficiaries	N/A
Planned Beneficiaries in 2015	N/A
Total Beneficiaries in 2015	N/A

Key Project Dates	
Project Approval Date	January 09, 2013
Planned Start Date	December 01, 2012
Actual Start Date	July 01, 2013
Project End Date	December 31, 2016
Financial Closure Date	N/A

Approved budget in USD	
Food and Related Costs	N/A
Capacity Dev.t and Augmentation	1,000,909
Direct Support Costs	400,960
Cash-Based Transfers and Related Costs	N/A
Indirect Support Costs	98,130
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>

Commodities	Metric Tonnes
Planned Commodities in 2015	0
Actual Commodities 2015	0
Total Approved Commodities	N/A

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# COUNTRY OVERVIEW

## Country Background

The Kingdom of Morocco is a middle income, yet food-deficit, country where the agricultural production fluctuates yearly as a result of weather variations and relies heavily on international markets to meet its consumption needs. The country has experienced steady economic growth and stability, with moderate inflation rates and declining government debt. Morocco is ranked 126 out of 188 countries on the 2014 UNDP Human Development Index, indicating slow improvement on the 2013 ranking of 129, and 117 out of 155 in the Gender Inequality Index.

Key economic challenges for Morocco include a need to control government spending, reforming the education sector and addressing the socio-economic and geographical disparities within the country. Morocco has achieved Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 1, with a reduction of extreme poverty from 3.5 percent in 1985 to 0.3 percent in 2011, whereas the MDG target was 1.8 percent in 2015. Economic vulnerability persists particularly in rural areas where poverty is coupled with isolation and poor-quality infrastructure, which prevents a significant proportion of the population from accessing education.

In line with the need to advance toward attaining MDGs 2 and 3, the government launched the Education Emergency Plan (2009-2012) in order to: (i) achieve universal basic education; (ii) improve system performance (teaching, management and stewardship); and (iii) improve mobilization and utilization of resources. The plan required that children be enrolled in school until they are 15 years of age. Interventions made in 2004-2015 in the country's school infrastructure along with support to the poorest students, contributed to an increase in national enrolment rates from 52.4 percent to 98.3 percent in primary education, from 17.5 percent to 56.7 percent in lower secondary education and from 6.1 percent to 32.4 percent in upper secondary education. However, despite this progress and the Emergency Plan's emphasis on gender equity, significant gaps remain between rural and urban students, and between female and male students beyond the primary level. These gaps reflect long-standing gender inequalities that persist, especially in rural areas, which restrict girls' choices and undermine opportunities for girls to access education.

Morocco is currently facing a double burden of malnutrition, experiencing incidence of both underweight and obesity, as a result of changing diets and a lack of physical activity. Morocco has made progress over the last decade in reducing underweight rates amongst children aged 6 to 59 months, with the latest nutrition data from 2012 showing 3.1 percent of the children in this age group as underweight; a significant improvement from 9.9 percent in 2004.

## Summary Of WFP Assistance

WFP's collaboration with Morocco was initiated in 1964, and a school meals programme was implemented between 1978 and 2003. In 2003, WFP ended its presence in-country after the programme was handed over to the government; this programme remains the basis for the current national school meals programme, which provides meals for 1.2 million school children in 11,500 primary schools, of which 70 percent are located in rural areas.

In 2013, the government requested WFP's partnership to review the national school meals programme as a means to address dropouts, improve nutrition and strengthen learning, especially in rural areas. In response, WFP designed the Development Project (DEV 200494) jointly with the government in order to enhance the technical capacity of education authorities to improve the implementation of the current programme.

The National School Meals Steering Committee was established in March 2014, to ensure government ownership and a coordinated interministerial approach for the optimization of school meals in Morocco. The project is being implemented in three phases: (i) an assessment of the existing school meals programme; (ii) the development of a Plan of Action for the improvement of national school meals, and (iii) study visits and sharing of experiences in school meals programmes in Brazil, Russia and countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

In November 2015, a Plan of Action for the improvement of the national school meals programme was developed, encompassing pilot activities to test out innovative school meals approaches, and to support the government in its effort to contribute to local development by promoting links to local agricultural production and processing.

# OPERATIONAL SPR

## Operational Objectives and Relevance

This project strengthened national capacity and provided technical assistance to enable the government to implement a more efficient, effective and sustainable school meals programme as a vital component of its wider social safety net system. The project was designed to contribute to the government's strategic vision for education sector reform (2015-2030) was aligned with the National Nutrition Strategy (2011-2019) and with the government decentralisation process. WFP reviewed the existing national school meals programme and provided support to the Ministry of Education's ongoing efforts by identifying capacity gaps, strengths and opportunities, while advising on best practices. Furthermore, the project provided recommendations on the necessary steps to take in order to apply the five international quality standards for school meals adopted by WFP, in line with the latest school meals policy.

At the same time, the project supported the Ministry of Education's Department of Social Support and School Life in collaboration with the Department of Population of the Ministry of Health, which is already participating in the school meals programme, and which requested technical assistance with the preparation of menus, promotion of the use of enriched foods, and provision of training on nutrition.

The school meals project supported WFP's Strategic Objective 4, and was in line with the first strategic pillar of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-2016, with respect to support for the education sector.

In line with the government's request, WFP assistance consisted of technical support and capacity development activities and did not include a food assistance component or direct beneficiaries.

## Results

### *Beneficiaries, Targeting and Distribution*

The project consisted of technical support and capacity development activities. There were no food entitlements associated with this operation, and therefore no direct beneficiaries. The assistance was organised around WFP's standards for the design and implementation of high-quality sustainable school meals programmes.

### *Progress Towards Gender Equality*

Gender equality was fostered as part of this project implementation through ensuring participation of women in the National School Feeding Steering Committee and participation in the government study visit to the Global Child Nutrition Forum, where two of the four delegates that attended were women. Efforts were made by WFP and the Social and Industrial Foodservice Institute (SIFI) to ensure gender representation was as equal as possible in trainings held, within the limits of the existing majority of male officials in relevant positions at the regional and local levels.

WFP worked to build awareness about the importance of gender equality in national school feeding design and implementation. With WFP's support, the government is exploring opportunities to improve gender equality through its national school feeding programme. In particular, the project recommended to the Moroccan government the establishment of partnerships with rural women's community based organizations (CBOs), with the aim to include them in the school feeding supply chain. This will create income generating opportunities for rural women at the community level through the procurement of locally-produced commodities for school meals or through their participation in meal preparation.

## Outputs

The five technical activities carried out by WFP in 2015 were a comprehensive assessment of the national school meals programme, including: a cost analysis; a nutritional review of the programme; a workshop to summarize and review the findings of the comprehensive assessment phase with the government; participation in the Global Child

Nutrition Forum in Cape Verde; and the development of a Plan of Action for the improvement of the national school meals programme.

The in-depth assessment of the Moroccan school meals programme was launched in 2015 following the System Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) school meals workshop that took place in December 2014. This evaluation enabled the establishment of the National School Meals Capacity Index (NCI) as a baseline value to measure future progress.

The comprehensive assessment of the Moroccan school meals programme, including a cost analysis and a nutritional review of the programme were carried out by a national consulting firm selected through a competitive process by the government, in collaboration with WFP and its partner, SIFI.

The questionnaire for the comprehensive assessment and cost analysis was developed by local experts from the consulting firm Mazars, in collaboration with WFP and SIFI. Mazars, SIFI and WFP experts conducted a training provided to national, regional, and local government officials for the roll out and completion of questionnaires prior to the data collection phase of the study. WFP provided a series of trainings to ensure that the methodology of the cost analysis of the school meals programme was compliant with WFP standards. In addition to this, WFP experts presented international examples on school meals supply chain management best practices to government staff involved in national school meals programme management. Overall, 19 of the 61 government staff who received training were women.

FIRTEP-Qualité, a Moroccan consulting firm specialized in food technology, conducted an audit and nutritional, health and safety review of the menus used by schools. The study concluded that even though nutrition and safety guidelines existed for meals in schools and boarding schools, there was a need to ensure their use in practice, which remained insufficient. It further recommended to update the contents of the guidelines to ensure balanced, age-specific meals, and introducing safety rules in all regions and schools where children benefit from school meals. Recommendations included the need to streamline the existing rules and regulations for school meals; and to develop manuals addressing the broader school meals management activities, notably supply chain management.

As part of the foreseen South-South cooperation and study visits for the exchange on school meals best practices, a delegation composed of government officials of the Ministries of Education and Health participated in the 2015 Global Child Nutrition Forum held in Cape Verde, on Innovative Financing for Nutrition-Based School Meal Programmes. The event featured five days of intensive training, technical assistance and planning, directed toward establishing country operated sustainable school meals programmes.

WFP and SIFI held a workshop to summarize and review the findings of the comprehensive assessment phase and present recommendations for a Plan of Action for the improvement of the national school meals programme. Developed by WFP and its partner SIFI, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education's Department of Social Support and School Life, and constituting the final deliverable of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between WFP and the government signed in 2013, a definitive draft of the Plan of Action was submitted in November for the consideration of the National School Meals Steering Committee.

The government requested WFP's continued collaboration until December 2016 to support the implementation of the Plan of Action. Accordingly, and to adapt to the government's required schedule, a National School Meals Steering Committee Seminar for the validation and launch of the Plan of Action originally planned for the end of 2015 was rescheduled to the first quarter of 2016.

Finally, a visit by a Moroccan delegation to WFP's Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brasilia, which was scheduled to take place in November 2015, has been rescheduled for March 2016, at the request of the Government of Brazil. The visit's purpose is for Moroccan officials to gain insight into Brazilian social protection programmes and school meals best practices, with particular focus on the links between local smallholder production and the school meals system.

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
<b>SO4: Capacity Development - Strengthening National Capacities</b>				
Number of government staff trained by WFP in nutrition programme design, implementation and other nutrition related areas (technical/strategic/managerial)	individual	58	61	105.2
Number of technical assistance activities provided	activity	7	5	71.4

## Outcomes

The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) school meals evaluation conducted by WFP identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school meals policies, institutional arrangements and systems in order to help plan for future actions. The SABER assessment revealed the overall National Capacity Index of 2.8 out of a maximum value of 5. The SABER assessment highlighted that the programme, which includes meals in pre-primary, middle and secondary schools, including boarding schools, is fully funded by the government with a yearly allocation of 900 million dirhams (USD 90 million), which represents 18 percent of the Ministry of National Education's budget, excluding salaries.

The SABER results and the school meals NCI constituted the baseline for the project. For each policy goal, indicators measured progress toward achieving that goal over four stages: latent; emergent; established and advanced.

Policy frameworks evaluated by the SABER exercise, were integrated into national strategies for the education and health sectors. However, a comprehensive strategy for school meals and a national school meals policy were found to be non-existent. The financial capacity was evaluated as established, since the programme was fully funded nationally, yet the budget proved insufficient to cover all infrastructural and equipment requirements, and certain delays occurred in the transfer of funds.

The institutional capacity and coordination was scored as established, with coordination functioning at both regional and local levels and a dedicated structure for school meals management existing in the Ministry of Education. Design and implementation was also found to be established: directives and procedures relating to national school meals programme design and implementation existed and were broadly applied, with a need to reinforce them at primary school level, especially for targeting, menus, monitoring and evaluation. Community participation was evaluated to be emerging, since effective participation of parents and communities in school meals committees was rare and limited to occasional cash or in-kind contributions; with an absence of a regulatory framework specifying community roles and responsibilities.

In accordance with the SABER school meals methodology, an assessment is to be carried out every two or three years to track progress in national school meals programmes. Therefore, WFP has advised the government to carry out the next SABER workshop in 2017. Building on the SABER, an in-depth institutional, operational and financial assessment was carried out in collaboration with SIFI and Morocco-based international consulting firm Mazars, which concluded with a set of actionable recommendations to enhance programme design and implementation.

Overall, the baseline showed significant opportunities for improvement of the Moroccan school meals capacities, which provided analytical justification for WFP's continued involvement in the capacity development and technical assistance activities. The findings of SABER and the comprehensive assessment phase, in addition to the lessons learned from the study visits, were incorporated into the draft Plan of Action for the improvement of the national school meals programme, which was submitted to the National School Meals Steering Committee and is expected to be validated in the first quarter of 2016. The implementation of the activities and recommendations of the Plan of Action are expected to drive significant improvements in national capacities.

Outcome	Project End Target	Base Value	Previous Follow-up	Latest Follow-up
<b>SO4 Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger</b>				
<b>Ownership and capacity strengthened to reduce undernutrition and increase access to education at regional, national and community levels</b>				
<b>NCI: School Feeding National Capacity Index</b>				
<i>NATIONAL , Base value: 2014.12 Joint survey SABER-SF Workshop</i>		2.80	-	-

## Sustainability, Capacity Development and Handover

WFP support focused on technical assistance and capacity development, ensuring that ongoing efforts in national school meals were in line with the international standards of an efficient, effective and sustainable school meals programme.

The NCI was established through a consultative process during the SABER school meals workshop, which involved all national stakeholders who participate in the design and implementation of school meals in Morocco, at the national, regional and local levels. The SABER report provided the government with a strategic overview of the current state of affairs in national school meals served as a tool for prioritization and planning the way forward to

enhance its programme.

The review of the school meals programme included studies carried out by national consulting firms that were selected by the government through public tender processes. The technical terms of reference for the tenders related to the comprehensive assessment and cost analysis, and the nutritional, health and safety review of the programme were developed in close collaboration with WFP and its partners. Moreover, WFP assisted the staff working on the studies, for quality assurance and to ensure compliance with WFP standards, through training sessions and missions conducted by WFP experts in Rabat.

WFP and SIFI worked in the development of the Plan of Action for the improvement of the Moroccan school meals programme, through a participatory process that featured continuous feedback from the Ministry of Education's Department of Social Support and School Life, to ensure that the recommendations and guidance would be actionable, sustainable, and added value to improve the programme's efficiency and effectiveness in line with national education and health priorities.

## Management

### Partnerships

WFP partnered with SIFI in activities implemented in support of the government to strengthen the national school meals programme. SIFI provided technical assistance and supported the ongoing capacity development activities carried out by WFP.

The project continued to be developed with the government at the strategic and policy level and with SIFI at the design and technical levels. Implementation of the national project was conducted in consultation with local authorities, communities and school staff through field visits. SIFI advocated for the advancement of the project according to the stipulated timeline and expected milestones, while contributing to ensure sound alignment of WFP's assistance with the Ministry's technical needs related to programme design and implementation. Such advocacy was further enabled through SIFI personnel based in Rabat and sitting at the Ministry of Education's Department of Social Support and School Life. In addition, SIFI was highly involved in support of the national consulting firms engaged in the comprehensive assessment studies, and in providing inputs for the development of the Plan of Action for the improvement of Morocco's national school meals programme.

In addition to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health has had an active participation in the project through its membership in the National School Meals Steering Committee.

Furthermore, WFP coordinated its SABER school meals assessment activities through the implementation of a methodology developed jointly by the World Bank and the Imperial College London's Partnership for Child Development.

Partnership	NGO		Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement	UN/IO
	National	International		
Total		1		

### Lessons Learned

The lack of a national school meals policy was highlighted in the policy framework workshop during the SABER assessment. Although taking note of the recommendation, the government chose to focus on joint work in partnership with WFP to develop a Plan of Action for the improvement of its national school meals programme, rather than aiming the technical assistance at the conception of a national school meals policy. This was based on school meals being appropriately mentioned and regulated in various strategic and legal documents pertaining to both the education and health sectors.

The SABER school meals report further recommended a review of targeting mechanisms and their coherence with other social safety net interventions, in order to ensure the sustainability and optimized use of financial resources committed to school meals. A review of targeting mechanisms and harmonisation with other safety nets was included in the Plan of Action as an essential priority in the 2016-2018 period. Further addressing the improvement opportunities proposed by the SABER school meals report, the in-depth institutional, operational and financial

assessment drew attention to the need to review the geographic distribution of canteens, and to increase coverage in the most vulnerable areas, particularly for middle schools. The assessment found there was parity of access to school meals for girls and boys in primary and boarding schools, but a need to increase the proportion of girls in middle school, as a means to address the higher dropout rate of girls at that level. WFP worked to ensure the government will include this concern in the upcoming review of the targeting criteria and procedures included in the Plan of Action.

Not all schools that offered school meals had access to water and electricity, with most of them requiring basic or improved equipment and facilities. WFP advocated for an enhanced portion of the national budget to be destined to the upgrading of school infrastructure, in particular for the improvement of facilities where school meals are served. Finally, the assessment included an appeal to increase nutrition related actions, particularly in terms of nutrition education. All of the findings brought forth by the review phase were taken into account in the recommendations of the final draft of the Plan of Action for the improvement of the national school meals programme, which was being examined by the National School Meals Steering Committee, and is expected to be validated and launched during first quarter of 2016.

WFP managed the project in Morocco from Tunisia. Sound project monitoring and implementation was ensured through regular missions by WFP staff, frequent communication with its government counterparts, and the engagement of WFP regional and international experts for key programme inputs. In addition, to facilitate monitoring and follow up of programme activities, WFP worked closely with government and NGO counterparts and could rely on its cooperating partner staff based in Rabat.