Home Grown School Feeding Programme

Zambia

Feed Minds, Change Lives

Good nutrition is the foundation on which life is built. It has an immediate impact on the health of a community and is essential to children's physical and intellectual development

Background

A healthy and well-balanced meal can help school pupils' mental alertness, but many children can rarely have access to such a meal. In Zambia, many children from poor households go to school hungry. They walk long distances to school, when they finally arrive, they lack energy and naturally find it difficult to learn and concentrate. Many other children cannot enroll at all; they work, look for food, or help with family chores. School becomes less of a priority. Even when they do enroll, many are frequently absent, reducing their learning capacity and academic performance.

Machinkha Basic School's grade three pupils with their milk

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i. School meals

The World Food Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Education has been jointly implementing a School Meals Programme from 2003. A meal is provided to more than 800,000 children across the country every school day.

A girl eating her school meal

The programme aims at improving the quality of learning and overall learner outcomes. Plans are underway to improve the nutritional value of the food through fortification in line with the National Food and Nutrition Strategy (2011-15) which, identifies HGSF programme for addressing under-nutrition in children.

The programme also aims to enhance smallholder farmer's productive capacity by linking them to a ready market – in this case the school. Farmers are reached through cooperatives, given skills in crop aggregation to guarantee quality assurance. This helps them access alternative markets which they would normally not be able to.

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide. One in eight people in the world have no access to adequate nutritious food to keep them healthy and lead an active life.

ii. Milk for Schools project:

WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) are implementing a pilot project with support from the Swedish Government in a public private partnership, to provide milk to 39 schools in Nyimba district, reaching over 18,000 pupils. The project provides 250mls of fresh milk to each child three times a week. While the overall objective of the project is to support the growth of the small dairy farming in Zambia, it also aims to use the milk as an incentive for children to attend school and improve learner outcomes. Milk is known to be a full meal with great nutritional value . However, Zambia has one of the lowest per capita consumption of milk and milk products in the region hence the need to implement the programme in non traditional milk drinking areas.
Preliminary results from this project have already encouraged government to pilot the project in Mpika district, while the private sector have decided to pilot it in 18 private schools in Lusaka.

Targeted Criteria

The programme targets districts with food insecurity and low education achievement including high HIV, poverty and malnutrition rates. Selected district uses saturation principle to cover all schools in the area. This is important as not doing so would lead to children shifting from non feeding schools to feeding schools.

Benefits of HGSF:

Equitable access to education: through increased access to education by enhanced enrolment, attendance and completion.

Learning achievement: through increased children's ability to concentrate and learn, by addressing short-term hunger which is common in children from poor households.

Wider socio economic benefits:
School feeding has potential to spur significant economic development outcomes when integrated with other school based health and nutrition, environment and water and sanitation interventions.

Farmers selling beans to WFP for use in the HGSF

HGSF connects smallholder farmers to school markets within the same areas, increasing benefits on both the supply and demand side. The programme can also be used to develop school gardens that serve as a learning pedagogy and an avenue to stimulate and sensitise them on locally grown crops, thereby fuelling crop diversification efforts .

With increased market access, farmers can increase their income base and participate more in the wider social and economic sectors of the economy. This builds the local economies and directly impacts on poverty levels. Additionally, the school feeding has a direct nutritional contribution to the overall nutrition goals in the country. With the introduction of fortification, this programme will compliment government efforts to address micronutrient deficiencies in school children by providing foods rich in iron, iodine, folate and Vitamins A and D.

Child protection: The programme contributes to protection of children from the risk of child labour

Evidently, the HGSF programme provide a huge potential to grow the Zambian economy and enjoy from spin off benefits.

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