

## How South-South Cooperation can become a driver for Home Grown School Feeding Approaches:

Experience from the “Purchase from Africans for Africa” Programme in Malawi



### OVERVIEW

The Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA) Programme is a joint initiative to promote food and nutrition security and access to institutional markets in Africa. With funding of USD 11.5 million provided by Brazil and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), school children and smallholder farmers are supported through local food purchase initiatives jointly designed and implemented by governments, UN agencies and civil society.

South-South Cooperation - through a continuous exchange and learning cycle - leads to the implementation of solutions that are jointly designed by countries from the Global South.

The programme is supported by FAO and WFP’s technical expertise. It also offers opportunities for triangular cooperation with donors. The example from Malawi demonstrates how the innovative approach of the programme can promote the link

between school feeding and small scale family farmers through local food procurement, which can lead to broader benefits for entire communities.

The programme is implementing adapted operational models of home grown school feeding (HGSF) in order to inform national policies on food assistance and small scale family farming. It provides technical support to design and implement national policies and to scale up programmes on local food purchase.

South-South Cooperation between Brazil and Malawi, facilitated by the programme partners, has been a key factor for success. Notwithstanding the still limited magnitude of this example in terms of volumes of food assistance, it is a source for innovation to support inter-sectorial and integrated approaches towards facilitating South-South Cooperation. It contributes to the goals of the Zero Hunger Challenge and demonstrates how governments, WFP and FAO can work together to successfully facilitate South-South Cooperation.

## BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF THE “PURCHASE FROM AFRICANS FOR AFRICA” PROGRAMME

The Brazilian Food Purchase Programme (PAA) was created 11 years ago as part of the country’s Zero Hunger Strategy. As a high level political priority and with inter-sectorial government involvement, the programme is also the result of the active engagement of civil society through the Brazilian National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA).

The strategy is innovative as it combines food assistance interventions such as school feeding and local food procurement, which can create benefits for entire communities. South-South Cooperation is both a driver for the development of this kind of intervention, as well as a modality to implement it. The strategy builds on three complementary pillars (implementing, programming and policy) which are based on two main components:

- (i) **Operations** which combine school feeding with support to small scale family farmers and local food procurement: An operational component aims to support smallholder farmers and their organizations to produce and market food. It seeks to ensure access to food and diversified diets through school meals. It is based on the development and implementation of adapted operational models of institutional food procurement under the government’s leadership. In collaboration with governments, FAO supports production while WFP supports local procurement from farmers’ organizations and distribution of the procured items in school feeding programmes;
- (ii) **Knowledge:** The knowledge component includes strategic dialogue and technical support in order to shape national policies on food assistance and family farming. It seeks to provide support for local stakeholders and policy makers to implement these policies and expand local purchase schemes. WFP, FAO and Brazil enable capacity-building among the five partner countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal) with Brazil, and with regional stakeholders. In this component, international experts facilitate the assessment, planning and development of local institutional procurement in each country and provide technical assistance for policy and programming. Exchange visits, trainings and international workshops for experience sharing foster the learning process. The South-South exchanges are a tool to assess and support national capacities to promote local food purchases from smallholder farmers. They also support the sharing of lessons learned among African countries.

## HOW SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION THROUGH PAA HAS SUPPORTED MALAWI’S GOALS IN FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Agriculture is the most important sector of the Malawian economy, employing about 80% of the workforce. Smallholders in Malawi, who represent more than 70% of the agricultural sector, rely on rain fed agriculture, with limited crop diversification. Despite the achievements in terms of food supply at national level, a large share of the population still suffers from insufficient access to nutritious food due to extreme poverty. Limited diversification of income sources, poor market integration and exposure to natural hazards also play an important role.

In line with other African countries, the Government of Malawi is committed to the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), and in 2010 the country developed the Agricultural Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp), which corresponds to the CAADP investment plan. The ASWAp focuses on five pillars: food security and risk management; commercial agriculture, agro-processing and market development; sustainable agriculture, land and water management; research, technology and dissemination; and institutional development and capacity building. Most of the activities and programmes promoted by the ASWAp have a pro-smallholder approach. Since 2005, following a severe food insecurity crisis, the Government of Malawi has also increased the coverage of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) which is aimed at stimulating production for food security.

While Malawi has achieved nearly universal access to primary education, school attendance and completion rates are low, partly because of the high food insecurity and challenges in nutrition. Seventy percent of eight to ten-year-old school children do not regularly eat breakfast before going to school, and in 76% of the cases this is because of inadequate access to food at household level. In Malawi, this situation perpetuates an inter-generational cycle of poverty, malnutrition and vulnerability that has significant consequences for human capital, productivity and economic development. Therefore, providing school health and nutrition services, including school meals, for all children in public primary school is imperative for improving educational quality, equity, access and efficiency.

The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2008-2017 is the long-term vision of Malawi to improve access, quality, equity, and efficiency of the education sector. This, as well as the Social Support Policy 2013, point out school meals as a guiding principle to improve primary education. In line with the NESP, the National School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Strategic Plan

2009-2018 was elaborated to provide school-age children with health and nutritional services, improving their health status and ensuring that pupils reach their optimum learning potential.

School meals are the largest and most widespread food assistance intervention in Malawi. They are being implemented by the government in collaboration with development partners, including WFP. School meal interventions provide daily meals to over 1.5 million pupils from about 1,300 schools in 22 districts, representing about 30% of the total number of pupils. A large share of the products used for school meals in Malawi come from in-kind donations from international donors. However, considering the government's priority to reduce imported food and to increase the internal production and the current positive food supply-demand balance, models that prioritize the use of locally produced products in school meals such as home grown school feeding become essential for a sustainable school meals programmes.

WFP has been linking efforts to increase agricultural production and increase access to markets through its Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative, which supported the Agricultural Commodity Exchange for Africa and warehouse receipt system. P4P supported purchases from small and medium traders at national level and from farmer organizations directly. Part of the commodities purchased in the country are being distributed through Malawi's school feeding programme which between 1999 and 2008 has registered a 40% increase in enrolment in supported primary schools.

Brazil's learning and successes in school feeding programmes has been inspiring for Malawi, where a positive scenario unfolds with the increasing potential of the agricultural sector to promote local purchases from Malawi's smallholder farmers. The country is planning to scale up school meals. Embedded into Malawi's School Health and Nutrition strategy, the government is taking steps towards promoting local food procurement from small family farmers at larger scale, to the benefit of entire communities.

PAA Africa has supported infrastructure development in seven schools in Malawi to enhance the handling of locally procured items. Seven kitchens, seven storerooms and six feeding shelters were established. Community members actively participated by providing local building materials such as sand, quarry stones, bricks, labour and supervision. These structures have helped to improve the quality of school feeding in all target schools by providing space for hygienic food preparation, storage and distribution.

Through FAO, PAA Africa provided support to farmers and their organizations to improve productivity, diversity and marketing skills, post-harvest loss management and processing. 74 local technicians and community members were trained. A consortium of local NGOs (Malawi Lake Basin Programme) supported by P4P also provided direct support to farmers' organizations to address their capacity needs through relevant training, oversight and infrastructure development. Over 106 MT of diversified food items (pulses, cereals, vegetables, fruits and animal products) were purchased directly by the schools from smallholder farmers' organizations.

Capacities of 133 local government and community members were strengthened on related areas, including fund management, record keeping, nutrition, safe food preparation, hygiene and sanitation, among others. Positive results allowed to leverage the pilot and to engage with other partners to scale up home grown school feeding to 79 new schools.

At the same time, discussions towards a school feeding programme linked to agricultural programmes in Malawi developed at the policy level, while programming tools were tested to advance implementation on the ground. This parallel approach contributed to political support for school feeding based on local food products that combine support to small scale family farmers.

The regular exchange of experiences among Malawi and other developing countries are the core of the South-South cooperation approach of PAA Africa. Specific experiences and solutions which form part of the PAA approach, and which fit into Malawi's food security and nutrition context, are being adapted through joint design, planning and implementation of activities together with Brazilian experts, facilitated through WFP and FAO. These solutions include support to production, procurement and use of diversified local products through government support to small scale family farmers and food procurement from them for school feeding.

Benefitting from the development of the relations and bilateral cooperation between Brazil and Malawi, and building on WFP and FAO technical support, PAA Africa contributes to the development of tailored local food procurement policy and programming.

## **WFP'S AND FAO'S ROLE IN FACILITATING SOUTH SOUTH COOPERATION THROUGH PAA**

PAA Africa has built on WFP's Purchase for Progress (P4P) and school feeding initiatives, and on FAO's long standing expertise

in support to small scale family farmers' production and market integration adding a South-South lens. It is being implemented with joint support of Rome-Based Agencies. WFP, leveraging its experience under the P4P initiative, has utilized its lessons learned to partner with the Malawian government providing a guaranteed market for smallholder farmers' produce, through the Brazilian funds. The school feeding programme is the off-taker in all five PAA Africa supported countries, including Malawi. In Malawi, WFP and FAO have acted as partners at strategic, technical and implementation levels. On the one hand, strategic and technical dialogue was facilitated among the PAA Africa countries on the local food procurement agenda, through international consultancy and knowledge sharing events. On the other hand, models were tested and the capacity of the government was strengthened in the implementation of Malawi's home grown school feeding approach. PAA Africa supported the efforts of Malawi and Brazil to hold discussions at the level of policy making and programming while ensuring effective implementation on the ground.

## SNAPSHOT OF PARTNERS INVOLVED IN THE INITIATIVES

**Brazil:** Funding is provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its General Coordination of International Actions against Hunger (CGFOME). The Brazilian Government and the Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), which consists of representatives from government and civil society, follow the programme implementation, providing technical and political input. They also take part in strategic and technical dialogue with the partner countries through the programme's international activities.

**UK:** Funding and technical inputs are provided by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

**Malawi:** The implementation of PAA in Malawi is carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, Water and Development (MoAIWD) in partnership with WFP and FAO. The District Councils facilitate capacity building and food procurement at school level. MoAIWD and civil society play the role of strengthening the productive capacity of smallholder farmer organizations that are linked to the schools for adequate supply of diversified food commodities.

MoEST provides overall coordination of the programme and is responsible for the procurement of food items to supply school meals, build storage rooms, feeding shelters and kitchens to ensure the quality of the food, and monitor the implementation of the initiative, with technical and financial support from WFP.

**UN agencies:** FAO and WFP are working hand in hand to complement their mandates, to support PAA African countries to exchange solutions building on their individual strengths

✓ WFP (School Feeding and P4P initiatives) contributes to the development of home grown school feeding, supporting local procurement distribution and diversification of school meals. WFP P4P facilitated the negotiation and signing process of the contracts between the schools and farmer organizations.

✓ FAO contributes to the design and implementation of tailored agricultural support for small scale family farmers, which are linked to the HGSP procurement, providing support to governments for the design and implementation of agricultural programmes and policies, in order to stimulate productive and sustainable impacts in the agricultural sector and in order to allow diversified small farmers' food supply for the targeted demand of school feeding purchases.

✓ Both agencies work together on strengthening the Government's capacity on programming and design of policies on local food procurement and on supporting strategic and technical dialogue with Brazil and the other PAA countries.

## MAIN SUCCESSES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**For Malawi:** *Implementation of Malawi's National Priorities, while testing what works on the ground.* The programme, with the South-South learning component in dialogue with Brazil, has provided tools for the Government to implement Malawi's School Health and Nutrition strategy. Procurement and school feeding are both in line with Malawi's priorities. The initiative has provided policy and programming dialogue combined with support to effective implementation on the ground. At the same time, experiences on "what works" and "what doesn't" at the local level allows to influence the direction of policies, so it is a two-way learning process. PAA is being implemented as part of Malawi Government's vision of sustainable universal access to school meals by testing different modalities.

*Strengthening Malawi's local procurement systems.* The exchanges have supported local purchases from small farmers' organizations in Malawi. WFP now transfers the PAA procurement funds to the local government and supports the involved public institutions to carry out the necessary procedures. The increased government involvement in procurement operations has led to the strengthening of Malawi's local procurement systems.

Benefits for the whole community. Evidence from PAA initiatives, in Mangochi and Phalombe, Malawi, has shown that sharing and adapting the Brazilian model of dialogue in Malawi's local context has supported entire communities to benefit from it:

- (i) School children have diversified meals at school, including fruits, a variety of legumes besides meat and fish;
- (ii) The schools' staff and the parents of school children have been trained on planning and management of funds, and on how to maintain the school gardens and apply new agricultural techniques to plant new products;
- (iii) The farmers that also participate in the food preparation as volunteers, have learnt new recipes which they are using at home;
- (iv) The farmers who are selling to the school now have a stable market and can plan their production in advance, while they receive training in production and commercialization. The community involvement in the programme has also increased through voluntary work and the provision of local building materials, firewood, water and cooking among other responsibilities.

Opening dialogue with the civil society voice. Strongly in line with Brazil's focus on engaging civil society in government programmes and policy development processes, PAA promotes dialogue with civil society on school feeding, support to smallholder farmers and local procurement. School committees at the local level are partly composed of civil society representatives who shape the course of how the initiative is being implemented at the local level. At national and district levels, technical working groups (TWG) composed of Government sectors, civil society and other partners provide a coordination platform.

**For Brazil:** Strengthening cooperation with Malawi. Brazil is strengthening its political and socio-economic ties with Malawi through South-South and Triangular Cooperation. PAA provides a platform to work on shared goals in food security and nutrition, based on solidarity, mutual learning and cooperation in the agricultural sector. The opening of a Brazilian embassy in Malawi in 2013 is both an indication of the strengthening of this relationship and of the expectation to continue collaboration, including through initiatives such as PAA Africa.

Complementing Brazil's approach, capacity and reach in Home-grown School Feeding and Support to Small Scale Family Farmers. The tripartite partnership with WFP and FAO that supports PAA has also complemented Brazilian cooperation

capacity in food and nutrition security. Partners' consolidated systems, expertise, and tools complement Brazil's efforts in international cooperation. This effect is being reinforced by benefits through building new partnerships, e.g. with local stakeholders in Malawi, supported by FAO and WFP's existing relationships in the country.

**For WFP and FAO:** Joining forces through RBA collaboration in facilitating South-South Cooperation. Supporting South-South Cooperation through PAA has been an opportunity to work hand in hand and to deepen the relationship between FAO and WFP. It is a successful example of how food and agriculture based UN agencies can complement and not only strengthen each other's efforts in a specific sector (agricultural production, procurement, school feeding), but also in facilitating South-South and Triangular Cooperation on this specific initiative, building on the strengths of each other's mandates.

Testing innovative models of local food procurement from small family farmers for school feeding in the context of the Zero Hunger Challenge. By supporting the creation of a home grown school feeding model complemented by tailored support to smallholder farmers, such as through PAA in Malawi, WFP and FAO are testing an innovative model which can help achieve the Zero Hunger Challenge). Key entry points are the diversification of school menus, and their links to local production, procurement and market creation.

Facilitating WFP's shift from food aid towards food assistance and FAO's emergency and rehabilitation operations linked to development investment and policy. WFP has been enhancing efforts to create sustainable hunger solutions through a shift from food aid to food assistance. FAO has been linking agricultural emergency rehabilitation with development approaches that can create sustainable hunger solutions. In PAA, WFP is able to develop a model where funds are transferred to the government which can then lead to diversifying the food basket and supporting diversified production. FAO is able to develop partnerships with governments and non-governmental organizations in dialogue on national priorities (programmes and policy). FAO provides tailored support (rural extension, agricultural inputs and financial services) to farmers in order to respond to the food procurement demand. By supporting the development and use of country systems and local structures, government capacity grows stronger. This may contribute to greater sustainability of approaches and a possible transition away from foreign food assistance.

Strengthening WFP's and FAO's existing relations with Malawi. PAA Africa not only strengthens their relations with Malawi, but also opens up a space for dialogue with middle-income countries, including the BRICS, like Brazil. The political capital which is

associated with Brazil, can help WFP and FAO to better achieve their organizational goals and offers room for collaboration on a wide range of topics related to food security and nutrition.

## MAIN CHALLENGES

### **For Malawi:** *Identification of the appropriate beneficiary schools.*

Applying the correct criteria to select beneficiary schools is not always straightforward. Criteria should take into account regions which have ongoing school feeding initiatives, core education challenges, areas which are food insecure, basic school infrastructure, engagement of communities, and presence of vulnerable households with potential for increasing production. It is important to design South-South initiatives from the beginning together with all developing country partners involved. The country adapting a solution has the best overview of where and how an initiative can be most effective in the specific country context.

*Capacity development.* Government ownership of school feeding programmes that are linked to local food production and purchases requires trained human resource availability at central and decentralized country levels. There is a need to invest in short and medium term learning activities, trainings and incentives to increase human resources capacities. At the same time, the transfer of trained extension staff and removal of trained school committee members can be challenging for maintaining capacity over time. When trained extension and school staff are transferred from their initial designated area of operation to other areas, capacity gaps need to be filled. For example, when the term of office of school garden committee members expired while they were going through training or had just completed it, this can pose a challenge. Efforts are made to conduct regular trainings or refresher courses to strengthen the capacity of the new members as well as existing ones. Efforts are also being made to identify together with community members around the schools, lead farmers (village extension multipliers), who will be trained in various aspects of crop production. They can pass on the skills and knowledge to following farmers through demonstration plots and farmer field schools.

*Emerging cooperation between school management and farmer organizations.* In some cases, there were hesitations from school management to procure food from farmer organizations. Especially at the beginning of the pilot in the new schools, it was noted that the sources from which to procure food were very entrenched in some school management structures. WFP and FAO in collaboration with the Malawi Lake Basin Programme and the Ministries of Education and Agriculture have been working on sensitizing the schools and farmers organizations on the

design of the programme. The signing of contracts has helped to bind the two parties together.

*Community Engagement.* Limited understanding of the programme by some community members and schools can affect the full participation during the introduction of the programme. The majority of schools took time to understand how the programme would operate. WFP facilitated capacity development for local communities and the schools have been sensitized on the importance of the intervention, its approach and the need for their full engagement.

*Financial disbursements and reconciliations.* Funding schools through central structures can require more time than foreseen. WFP has negotiated with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to utilize the existing decentralized modality of transferring funds. Now the funds are disbursed to the district council accounts that transfer the funds to schools within two days. Additionally, financial reporting and adequate accountability of the funds spent continues to pose a challenge to schools and delays further disbursements. WFP has facilitated training on basic financial reporting, but there is need for more meaningful support.

**For Brazil:** *Implementation reality.* Even when carefully elaborated, South-South initiatives may encounter challenges in the implementation, because every country context is different. Sharing a Southern solution – such as the Home-Grown School Feeding experience – within Malawi's reality requires time, preparation and sensitization at the side of all partners, in order to jointly design and implement a model which best fits the context. Guaranteeing political and technical support throughout this entire process is considered by Brazil a challenge and a condition for success of the initiative.

**For WFP and FAO:** Inter-agency partnerships are at the heart of any well-coordinated support measure to South-South Cooperation. It is essential to reinforce national government capacities as well as multi-sectorial mechanisms. Sometimes, establishing these relations and finding an effective working mechanism can take some time, as it is related to building implementation capacity, processes, operating procedures, and making sure that necessary resources are available.

Finding a sustained funding model: In the same spirit, it is important to identify a sustainable funding mechanism, especially one which enables harnessing the practices, solutions and experiences of a country like Brazil. It can then better facilitate the development and scaling up of solutions to food security and nutrition in a country like Malawi.

## KEY MESSAGES FOR SOUTH SOUTH COOPERATION

Learning from this experience, there are a number of key messages which are important to consider:

✓ **Political will:** Sharing strong political will is a basic requirement for triangular partnerships like the one described here between the United Kingdom, Brazil, Malawi and the UN.

✓ **Learning and flexibility to adapt:** Pilot projects should build on existing initiatives and working structures. They should be supported through monitoring and be flexible for adjustments in the implementation, building on practical experiences. This requires dedicated capacities, time and commitment from all partners involved, with strong participation of the developing country that is adapting the solution.

✓ **Room for experimentation:** Innovation is at the heart of South-South initiatives. It can be fostered through the sharing of Southern expertise, joint design, planning and implementation of initiatives or technology transfer. Because development can't be considered a linear process, it requires room for testing new approaches, evaluation and re-design, as required. For the UN and national development agencies this is an important aspect to keep in mind when scaling up support to South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

✓ **Joint planning and implementation of initiatives:** Cooperation initiatives requires joint design, planning, implementation, monitoring and adaptation. The developing country partner needs to play a leading role from the beginning to make sure the country's priorities are well reflected and the right group of people are targeted.

✓ **Support for South South learning and cooperation through tangible results:** The most effective way to bolster South-South cooperation in the context of school feeding and local procurement is to demonstrate concrete results of any support initiatives and to highlight the changes for the people involved (school children, local producers, and community members). Capturing these results and changes require dedicated capacities and resources. The return on this "investment" is high, not only in terms of continuity of ongoing South-South initiatives and positive changes for communities, but also in terms of spill-over effects through the "political capital" of governments and civil society organizations for advocating and expanding successful models in other settings.

✓ **Clear definition of roles:** Different types of roles – financial, strategic, and technical – can be played by Governments and UN partners in support to South-South and Triangular cooperation. These roles must be discussed and clearly defined in partnership arrangements.

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