



Strengthening National Safety Nets

School Feeding: WFP's Evolving Role in Latin America and the Caribbean



World Food Programme

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Foreword

WFP's vision is to eradicate hunger in our lifetime, a bold aim that is now outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 2: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture".

The recently-approved global goals reinforce the universality of WFP's mission to end global hunger and require enhanced engagement with national governments and other actors for solutions tailored to countries of all income levels.

As a result of political commitment at the highest level, strong social policies and remarkable socio-economic development, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have made great progress towards eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and meeting several Millennium Development Goals targets. However, undernourishment still affects over 34 million people in the region, the food security of vulnerable populations wavers in the face of recurring natural disasters, and inequalities are widespread.

WFP's work in the region has substantially shifted and adapted over time to this changing context, including in one of our most traditional and strongest areas of support to governments: School feeding. National school feeding programmes are the largest safety net in many countries of the region and are highly institutionalized as part of broader social protection systems. WFP's focus is to support governments in strengthening their quality and sustainability - so that these crucial programmes can best serve school children and communities and achieve their multiple objectives.

Today, WFP provides school meals to more than 2 million boys and girls in 27,000 schools and 6 countries in the region, always complementing and supporting national and sub-national programmes. In addition to this direct assistance which is increasingly linked to local agriculture support and market access programmes, WFP also provides technical assistance and policy advice on school feeding programmes based on government requests. All of this falls within an overarching capacity and institutional strengthening strategy which has so far proven effective in transitioning programmes to national ownership. Leveraging its wide regional presence and networks, WFP also facilitates with partners the successful Regional School Feeding Seminars, which provide an important platform for exchange and discussions between governments at the highest levels.

This publication, *Strengthening National Safety Nets. School Feeding: WFP's Evolving Role in Latin America and the Caribbean* provides a snapshot of our work in the region and is a testament to the success of the cooperation with governments to-date and of WFP's continued commitment to further advance the school feeding agenda in the region.

Toward a world with Zero Hunger.



Miguel Barreto

WFP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean





Supporting National School Feeding Programmes

Nearly 85 million children in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) receive a daily breakfast, snack or lunch at their schools. This is made possible with an estimated investment of USD 4.3 billion, which mostly comes from government budgets.¹

The World Food Programme (WFP) has over 50 years of experience in school feeding (SF) and was one of the first partners of many governments in the region in the introduction, implementation and expansion of school feeding programmes.

The ample experience acquired in the field has helped transform WFP over time, from direct implementer of programmes to strategic partner of governments.



WFP's School Feeding Policy

In November 2013, WFP approved a revision of its global school feeding policy, which contains key messages: Redefine WFP's role; Support national programmes; Promote innovations; Focus on results and quality programming; and Promote partnerships.

The five objectives of WFP's work in SF include: Providing a safety net for food insecure households; Supporting children's education through enhanced learning ability and access to the education system; Enhancing children's nutrition by reducing micronutrient deficiencies; Strengthening national capacity through policy support and technical assistance; and Developing links between school feeding and local agricultural production.

FIGURE 1: SUPPORTING NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN LAC



This has contributed to the gradual transition to sustainable national programmes, which are now highly institutionalized and owned by the communities and part of broader social protection systems.

WFP's work in the region revolves around a simple vision and some main areas of focus, according to the specific context of each country and the request of governments:

- **Quality programmes:** design, implementation and evaluation of nutrition-sensitive school feeding programmes in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua, focusing on results and generating evidence for government counterparts. In Colombia, the school meals programme supports conflict-affected communities. In Ecuador, the focus is on refugees from Colombia and vulnerable host communities in the border area.

¹ State of School Feeding Worldwide, WFP, 2013.

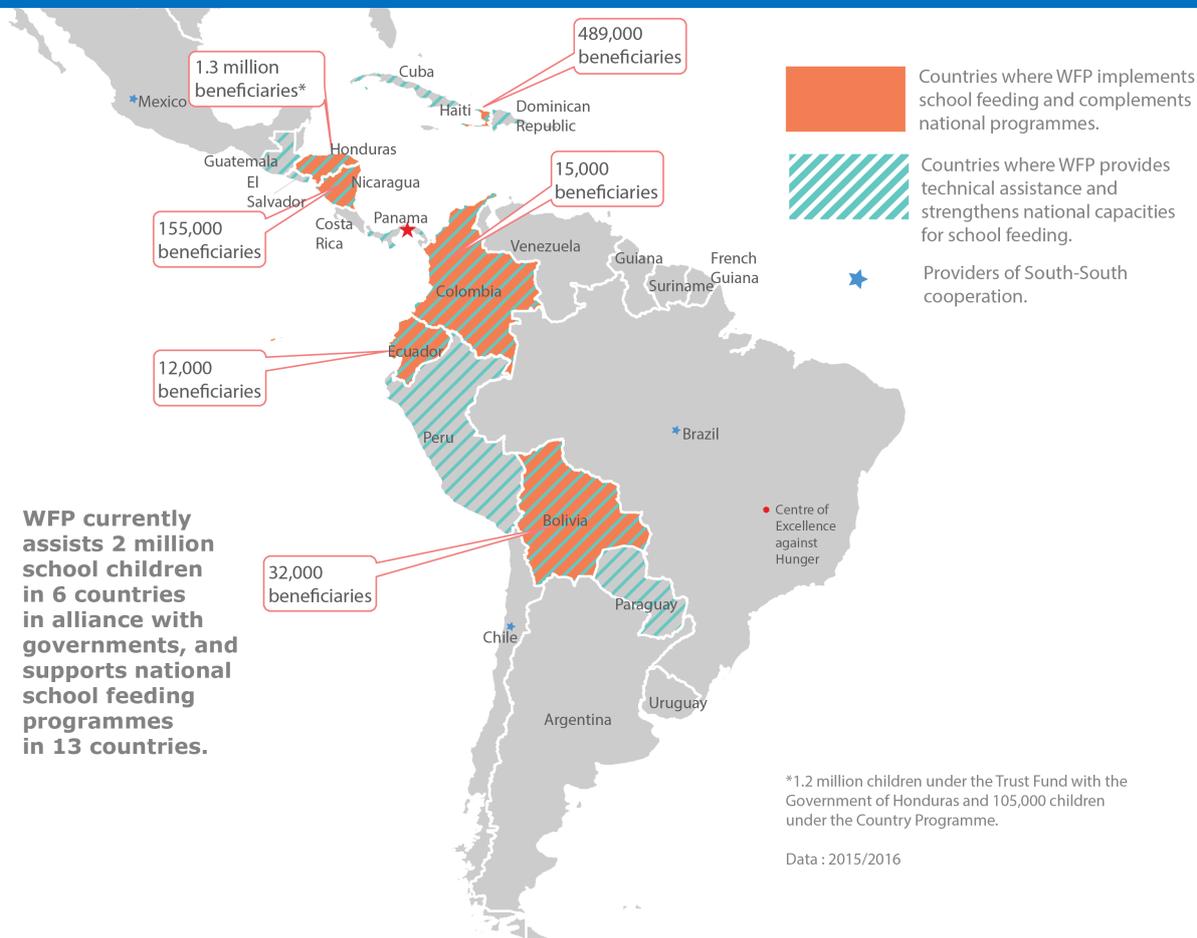
- **Innovation:** introduction of cash-based transfers in Ecuador, Colombia, Haiti and Honduras to source fresh foods from local farmers, improving the quality and diversity of the diet of school children and promoting healthy eating habits. In Honduras and Nicaragua, programmes are also linked to the Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative for the acquisition of basic grains sourced from smallholder farmer associations. In El Salvador, P4P farmers continue to supply products for the national school feeding programme. In Guatemala, new options are being explored to link school feeding demand to the offer of P4P farmers.
- **Technical Assistance:** supporting governments in strengthening various aspects of their national programmes. Some examples include support to: Peru, on issues of nutritional quality, food safety and supply chain; Guatemala, for planning nutritious menus by region and analyzing costs; Cuba, to strengthen local production of beans and its link to the school feeding programme; and Panama, to provide support on nutritional and logistical issues, among others.
- **Capacity Strengthening:** is a central aspect of WFP's work in the region at the central, sub-national and community level. In Haiti, capacity building aims to ensure the transition to a national programme, while in other countries, WFP

supports government institutions that are managing their own programmes.

In Bolivia, WFP supports the development of policies, laws and school feeding studies. In Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, Peru and Haiti WFP introduced the SABER framework for SF (Systems Approach for Better Education Results), developed with the World Bank and the Partnership for Child Development. This tool helps to analyse five key areas for the sustainability of programmes: policy frameworks, financial capacity, institutional capacity and coordination, design and implementation, and community roles.

- **Partnerships and South-South Cooperation:** building partnerships with governments, private sector, donors, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society and academia for more effective school feeding programmes. Through the Regional School Feeding Seminars, organized annually with the Latin American School Feeding Network (La-RAE) and governments, WFP promotes exchanges of experiences between governments. WFP also facilitates South-South and Triangular Cooperation in school feeding through the Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil (see *Partnering for Better Results*) and partnerships with Chile and Mexico, as well as other countries, to support exchanges of best practices and expertise in the region.

FIGURE 2: WFP AND SCHOOL FEEDING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN





Safety Nets and Social Protection

School feeding is WFP's most prominent safety net intervention worldwide. With an annual investment of about USD 320 million to complement government budgets, WFP reaches more than 18 million children in 75,000 schools and 65 countries.

With the release of its Safety Nets Policy in 2004 (updated in 2012), WFP was one of the first agencies to articulate the role of food assistance in social protection. WFP's work encompasses school feeding, nutrition programming and public works, but also more cross-cutting functions through Cash-Based Transfers, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping, and Monitoring and Evaluation. WFP operates at the intersection of safety nets, social services and labor market policies, and across the humanitarian and development spectrum.

Why is school feeding such a powerful safety net in Latin America and the Caribbean? Because it supports national systems, in particular education systems, it is large scale with a wide outreach to the most vulnerable populations, and it is predictable for recipient communities.

Parents know their children will receive a nutritious meal every day at school for the whole school year: this predictability allows families to free up other household resources, access different goods and services, save and invest in productive activities.

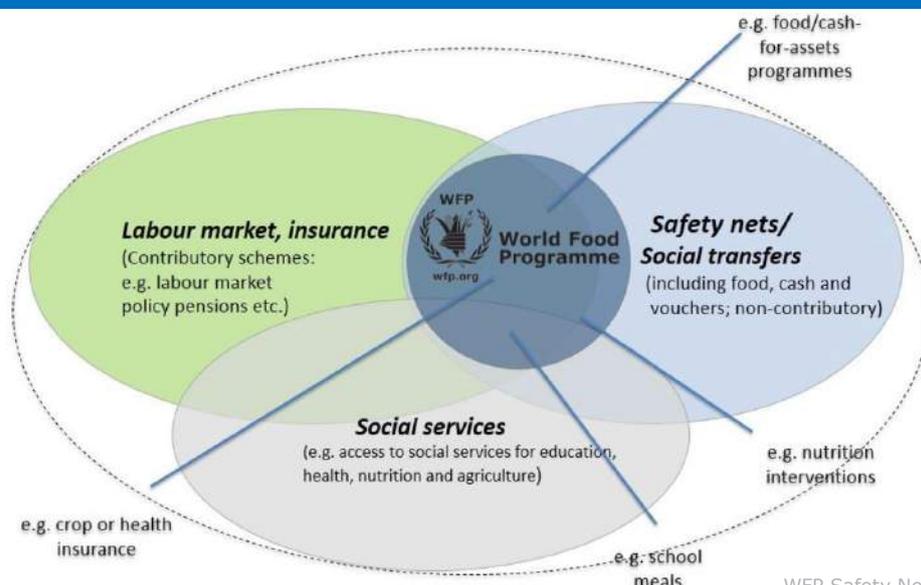
In addition, nutritious school meals promote inclusive human development by incentivizing regular attendance, decreasing health-related absences, improving concentration and learning ability of girls and boys, and ensuring the completion of the school cycle. Other conditional transfers linked to school attendance are provided by governments, while WFP does not provide take-home rations in LAC. The school feeding platform has also been used by WFP and governments in the region to respond to crises, such as the drought in Nicaragua and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Governments across the region recognize school feeding programmes as the largest and most reliable safety net within their national social protection strategies. In some countries, social protection ministries are the lead institution for school feeding.

FIGURE 3: DEFINITIONS AND COMPONENTS OF A COUNTRY'S SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

Social protection refers to a broad set of arrangements and instruments designed to protect members of society from shocks and stresses over the lifecycle.

Safety nets are formal or informal non-contributory programmes designed to provide predictable support to vulnerable people.



WFP Safety Nets Policy, 2012



Home Grown School Feeding

Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) is a school feeding programme that provides locally produced and purchased food to school-aged children. By building direct links between school demand for fresh and local products and available supply from smallholder farmers at local or national levels, it expands market and economic opportunities. HGSF programmes capitalize on the traditional education, health and nutrition benefits of school feeding while multiplying advantages for children, farmers and communities.

HGSF provides a platform to implement a nutrition-sensitive safety net when combined with complementary initiatives, and encourages the diversification of school meals while promoting healthy eating habits. Especially when supporting broader nationally-led systems, HGSF contributes to improving livelihoods and long-term development goals.

WFP Home Grown School Feeding Guidance (upcoming)

In Latin America and the Caribbean, governments are increasingly requesting support to link school feeding programmes to local agriculture, and are prioritizing this approach in national policy frameworks. WFP's Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative in Central America provided an initial platform to expand these links, increase the proportion of basic grains for school meals sourced from local smallholder farmer associations (in particular maize and beans), and improve farmers' capacity to meet the requirements of public procurement processes. In 2009-2014 the P4P

initiative supported 34,000 farmers and enabled the purchase of 70,000 metric tons of food from smallholder agriculture, worth 40 million USD. About 33 percent of this went to national school feeding programmes.

Following a pilot phase, this successful approach was mainstreamed in WFP's work and expanded to almost all countries in the region, from Haiti to Cuba to Colombia. These programmes strengthen value chains and expand the marketing opportunities of smallholder farmers, including institutional markets such as food-based safety nets. In other countries like Ecuador and Bolivia, WFP has been implementing integrated HGSF approaches with local governments and communities for several years, with successful experiences documented and replicated.

Partnerships are key to the success of these initiatives: with communities, farmers, women associations, private sector, research institutes, governments and other UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), among others. There is no one-size-fits-all model but HGSF should be tailored to each different country context.

The focus of WFP, partners and governments is increasingly on bringing this approach to scale, carefully balancing nutritional value, cost and availability of local products for more cost-effective HGSF programmes.



Tierra del Sol Farmer Association, Ecuador

Alexandra Bejarano, from the Imbabura Province in northern Ecuador, presides over the small farmer association *Tierra del Sol*. When she helped create the association in 2012, she was 24 years old. In becoming a WFP partner and providing fresh fruits and vegetables to schools, Alexandra and her association have found new markets and have improved the way they work. In the process of delivering food to schools that receive both Ecuadorian and Colombian (refugee) children, they have to comply with strict quality requirements. This has been useful, since the association can now make offers in government tendering processes. Farmers have also changed their family economy: now they have more stable incomes. Alexandra became a community leader and is providing an example for other women farmers.

Wherever possible, WFP works with farmers in close proximity to the schools, in order to generate greater benefits at the community level and enable the provision of fresher foods sourced from local family agriculture.

In Haiti, WFP is piloting diversified seasonal menus with produce supplied by local farmers, and planning to introduce a fresh vegetable complement for the broader school meals programme. In Honduras, WFP and the Government are testing and scaling-up different decentralized models to complement the traditional school meals ration with fresh foods, including eggs, vegetables and fruits. This combined supply chain model for HGSF is another option for governments when fully decentralized options are not viable or cost-efficient. In Colombia, WFP is implementing a new HGSF model for children in boarding schools, linked to local supermarkets. In Ecuador, WFP partners with the Ministry of Education, local governments, schools, communities and farmer associations to implement an integrated HGSF in border areas with Colombia. The programme provides a nutritious school lunch based on diversified menus, with all products sourced locally from smallholder farmer communities.

Cash-Based Transfers for School Feeding

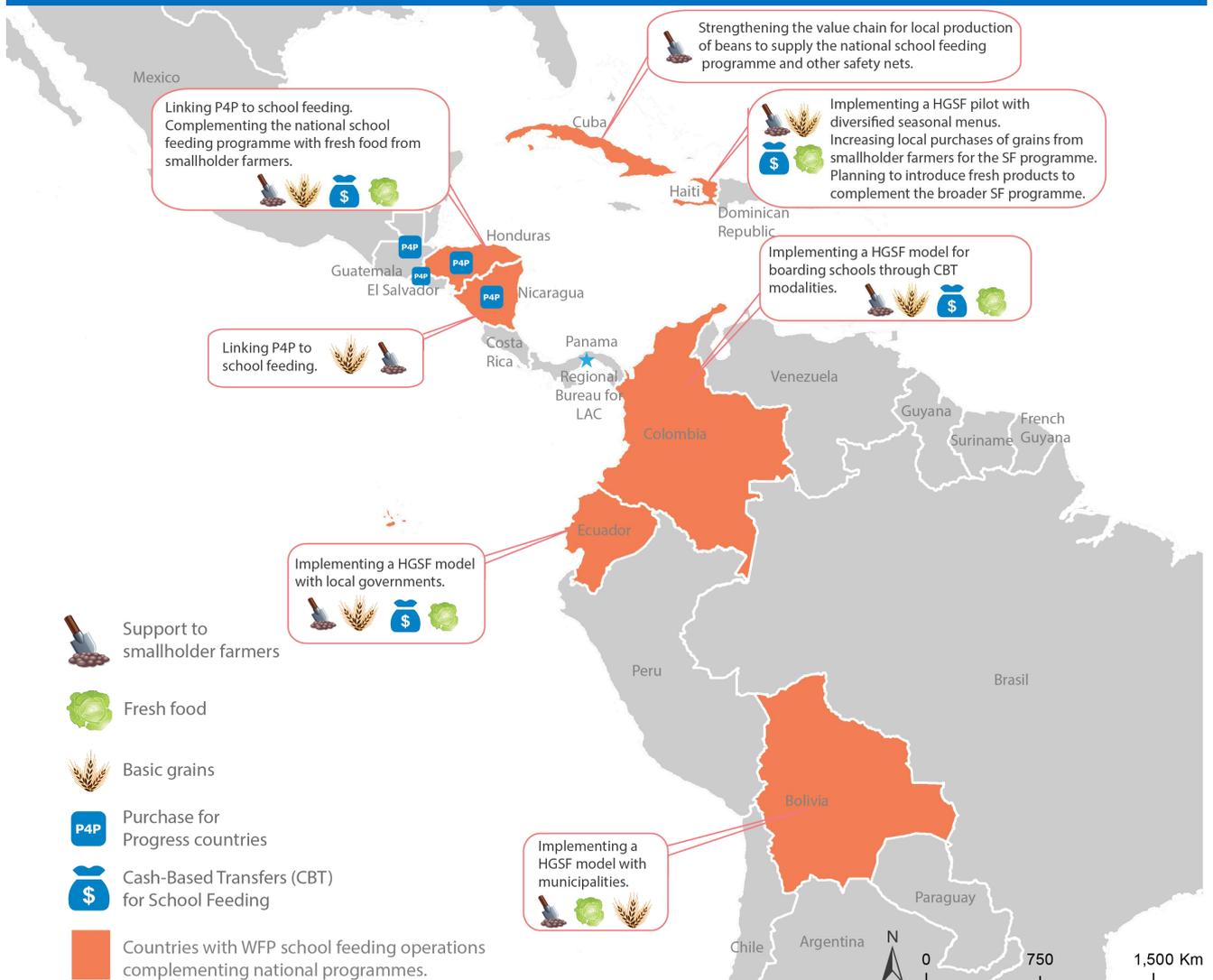


The widespread use of Cash-Based Transfer modalities (CBT) worldwide and in the region represents a renewed opportunity for WFP to support national safety nets and school feeding priorities.

Transfers of cash to school feeding management committees, municipalities, local governments or other partners working with the schools can be used for local sourcing of food, and represent a unique opportunity: they can strengthen HGSF models, empower communities and provide choice and flexibility. This leads to menus that are more varied and fresh, reflect seasonality and local habits, and stimulate local production.

WFP uses different CBT modalities for HGSF in Ecuador, Honduras, Haiti and Colombia. Government programmes are also often based on transfers of funds from central to local levels (e.g. Bolivia to the municipalities or Guatemala to the school management committees). Documenting procedures, risks, benefits and challenges of these processes is part of WFP's work in the region.

FIGURE 4: WFP SUPPORT TO HOME GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN





Nutrition-sensitive School Feeding

WFP's Nutrition Policy (2012) first outlined WFP's commitment to nutrition-sensitive interventions. These contribute to address the underlying causes of malnutrition and incorporate nutrition goals and actions, thus accelerating progress of nutrition-specific interventions. School feeding provides a unique opportunity in this sense, thanks to its wide coverage, involvement of different sectors and communities, and focus on school-age children. The integration of nutrition objectives largely depends on the context, for instance the prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies.

School meals provided by WFP and governments across the region provide a significant share of the daily required micronutrient intake for school-age children, contributing to improved child health, learning ability, educational attainment, and pre-pregnancy nutrition status for adolescent girls.



WFP provided menu recommendations for the national school feeding programme in Guatemala

Key components of nutrition-sensitive school feeding include:

a) A nutritionally-balanced school meal prepared with fortified commodities (e.g. WFP provides iodized salt, fortified vegetable oil, fortified blended foods like Supercereal, fortified flours, etc.) and complemented by fresh products such as vegetables, fruits, eggs and other local fresh produce. Ensuring food quality and safety is essential for healthy school meals.

WFP's increasing focus on HGSF approaches in the region has resulted in school menus that are more diversified and promote healthy eating habits, in a

context where overweight and obesity coexist with undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Point-of-use fortification using micronutrient powders (MNPs) added to a school meal before serving is widely recognized as one of the most cost-effective interventions to reduce such deficiencies. WFP is using MNPs in school feeding in Bolivia and is planning to introduce them in Haiti. Governments are also increasingly introducing them in their programmes.

b) School-based health interventions such as deworming and improving water and sanitation. Throughout the region, country-wide deworming campaigns are government-led. WFP complements and supports government efforts as needed and advocates for the regularity and consistency of such key complementary interventions.

c) A strong nutrition education component for both under and overnutrition is a key aspect of any WFP and government school feeding programme in the region, using the schools as a platform to deliver key nutrition and health education not only to students but also to parents, teachers and communities. School gardens are also used as a nutrition education tool.

FIGURE 5: COMPONENTS OF NUTRITION-SENSITIVE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES







Capacity Strengthening, Policy Support and Technical Assistance

In the past, when WFP directly implemented large-scale school feeding programmes throughout the region, capacity development was an important complementary activity to ensure that national and sub-national institutions and communities would be an integral part of the process and able to manage the programme in the future.

Nowadays, school feeding programmes in the region are largely led, funded and managed by national institutions and communities. Where WFP still retains a direct assistance role at the request of governments, it complements national school feeding programmes in vulnerable areas or addresses specific gaps. Furthermore, WFP engagement focuses on generating evidence on innovative school feeding models linked to local agriculture and contributes to the school feeding knowledge and practice. In this context, capacity strengthening currently lies at the centre of WFP's school feeding work in the region - through support to policies, institutions and systems and through technical assistance for improved programme quality.

In Honduras, the Government has entrusted WFP to support the implementation of its country-wide national school feeding programme for 1.4 million

children (the third largest worldwide for WFP), develop systems and local capacities and lay the foundation for full transition. WFP and the Government organized in April 2015 a high-level National School Feeding Forum to advocate for the involvement of all key ministries in school feeding.

In Bolivia, WFP supports the decentralized programme which benefits 1.9 million children countrywide. This includes a package of capacity development interventions: from upstream policy support to the Senate for the development of a school feeding law (approved in 2014); to the roll-out of SABER (see below); to conducting the national diagnostic on school feeding. It also consists of more operational support to municipalities and communities. In particular, the experience of the *Mancomunidad of Chuquisaca for School Feeding* (MAECH, see Bolivia in Annex) which was legally established with the support of WFP, still resonates as an example of a sustainable school feeding management model.

In Ecuador, small-scale farmer associations have used the knowledge acquired in their working relation with WFP to establish new direct links with public procurement processes. In addition, local

VII School Feeding Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean

More than 200 participants including government representatives, regional and international school feeding experts, public and private organizations from 18 countries participated in the VII School Feeding Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Lima, Peru in August 2015. The theme of the regional meeting was "School Feeding: A Social Protection Tool for Sustainable Development and Social Inclusion". The event was organized by the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS) of the Government of Peru, WFP and the Latin American Network for School Feeding (La-RAE). The previous seminar took place in Mexico City in October 2014. In the photo above (left to right): WFP Regional Director, Miguel Barreto; Haiti Minister of Education, Nesmy Manigat; Peru Minister of MIDIS, Paola Bustamante; Peru Minister of Culture, Diana Álvarez Calderón and Executive Director of La-RAE, Manuel Espinoza.



governments partnering with WFP have established technical teams trained in Food and Nutrition Security, with strengthened knowledge on targeting and project management.

In Peru, WFP has no direct operations but provides on-demand technical support to the national school feeding programme *Qali Warma* which reaches more than 3 million children countrywide. This support contributed to improvements of the decentralized procurement process and of the micronutrient content of the meals provided at school. WFP is also planning to support *Qali Warma* with a supply chain assessment for remote areas and with a cost-benefit analysis of the programme, among other specific studies and pilots.

In Colombia, WFP and the Ministry of Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2015 for a comprehensive package of technical assistance and evidence-based decision making tools for the national school feeding programme which covers more than 3.3 million children countrywide. This work is in parallel to the WFP school meals provided to boarding schools in conflict-affected areas.

In Panama, a school feeding supply chain assessment was piloted for the first time in 2014 as technical assistance to the Ministry of Education, focused on remote indigenous areas of the country. It resulted in an adjustment of the programme to better serve the most vulnerable people in this upper-middle income country.

In Nicaragua, the capacity strengthening component of WFP's school feeding support to the national programme is also very strong and longstanding. The programme has been particularly successful with its focus in empowering the School Feeding Committees at community level and enhancing national logistics and M&E capacities.

In Guatemala, WFP provided technical assistance to the national programme to develop nutritious menus by region, analyse costs and conduct regional consultations with communities.

In Haiti, among other capacity development activities, WFP is supporting the government to develop its first school feeding policy, setting the foundations for a national school feeding programme linked to local agriculture by 2030. To support this process, the Minister of Education created a Task Force with key ministries and other stakeholders. WFP is one of the lead government partners in building school feeding systems.

From 2011 to 2014, WFP also implemented a Regional Capacity Development Project which fostered different initiatives in support of national school feeding programmes. The project activities have been mainstreamed into regular country work and are continuing to support national priorities. In 2015, WFP embarked upon a bold project to systematize all capacity development activities conducted in the region, including for school feeding. The report will contribute to shaping WFP's work in this area.

These and other successful experiences in the region are also leveraged and shared more broadly between governments thanks to the Regional School Feeding Seminars, co-organized by WFP, the Latin American Network for School Feeding (La-RAE) and rotating host governments. The seminars have taken place on annual basis for the past ten years and highlight the importance of WFP's brokering role in facilitating exchanges of experiences between countries.

WFP's capacity development work contributes to building effective and sustainable school feeding programmes in the region, as well as consolidating the school feeding global knowledge base.





Systems Approach for Better Education Results for School feeding (SABER-SF)

SABER-SF was developed by the World Bank, WFP and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD) and adopted in WFP’s School Feeding Policy. It is part of a broader effort by the World Bank to share countries’ best practices and establish baselines for various areas in education systems. SABER-SF focuses on school feeding as part of school health policies and is based on the landmark WFP-World Bank publication, *Rethinking School Feeding* (2008).

This initiative aims to assist countries in identifying strengths and gaps in school feeding policies and institutional frameworks as well as roadmaps to improve their national systems. In addition, it encourages comparative analysis and helps to track progress over time.

The SABER-SF toolbox includes an indicator framework (with progress levels categorized from Latent to Advanced), a questionnaire, a standard report format and an action plan. The five policy goals of SABER-SF can be seen in Figure 6. WFP’s work to support national school feeding programmes in LAC is structured around these five areas as key pillars of school feeding quality and sustainability.

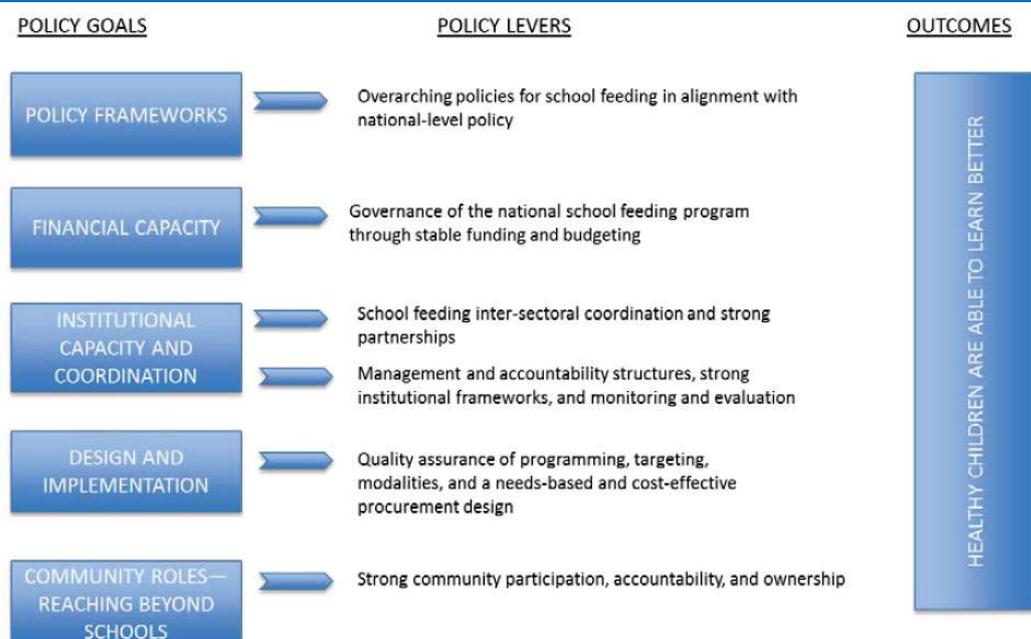
Applying SABER-SF in the region

Bolivia: First pilot country in the region where SABER-SF was used (April 2014). The Ministry of Education led the effort with WFP’s support and gathered the main school feeding stakeholders. The methodology proved to be a useful tool to conduct a high-level diagnostic, identify success factors and priority areas for strengthening school feeding systems. Shortly after the exercise, a school feeding law was approved, further institutionalizing the programme.

Guatemala: In March 2015, the Ministry of Education and WFP facilitated a National School Feeding Workshop, which brought together key institutions from different sectors and levels of government. The SABER-SF methodology was used to analyze progress, gaps and proposals for strengthening the national school feeding programme. Based on the identified need to reinforce the planning of nutritious school meals, WFP and the Government released a set of recommended regional menus for the national school feeding programme.

Honduras: A high-level National School Feeding Forum was organized in April 2015 by the Government of Honduras and WFP, to catalyze intersectoral coordination, exchange experiences on

FIGURE 6: POLICY GOALS FOR SCHOOL FEEDING (SABER AREAS)





SABER exercise in Bolivia, April 2014.

school feeding in Honduras and discuss different Home Grown School Feeding models. The second day of the Forum was dedicated to the SABER-SF exercise, where five working groups put forward a set of concrete recommendations for a national action plan. The WFP Centre of Excellence and FAO were key partners for the Forum.

Haiti: In August 2015 the Ministry of Education and WFP organized the National SABER-SF Workshop, which gathered all key school feeding stakeholders. In the case of Haiti the workshop had the main purpose of identifying key priorities to be included in the upcoming national school feeding policy being developed with the support of WFP. The SABER-SF recommendations will be included in the policy's strategic implementation plan and help build the foundations of the national school meals programme in Haiti.



SABER exercise in Guatemala, March 2015.

In general terms the SABER-SF diagnostics conducted in Central and South America showed that school feeding policies and systems in these countries are highly institutionalized, strongly supported by communities and steadily advancing in terms of intersectoral coordination and institutional/financial set-ups. Opportunities for improvement remain in the systems for school feeding design and implementation (SABER area 4), which include targeting and M&E systems, supply chains linked to local agriculture and school menu planning systems.

Peru: In June 2015 the Ministry of Social Development and Inclusion (MIDIS) and WFP organized the National SABER-SF Workshop in Lima. The stakeholder meeting gathered key national/sub-national institutions and partners working in support of the *Qali Warma* programme. Participants identified through a consensus process the main areas of advancement and priorities for school feeding moving forward. Soon after, the Government of Peru hosted the VII School Feeding Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean, which included a high-level session on SABER-SF, with the participation of the World Bank, WFP, PCD and governments.



WFP regional school feeding network discusses SABER during a training in Panama, December 2014.



Partnering for Better Results

School feeding programmes require strong partnerships at strategic, policy and operational level. WFP strives to strengthen collaborative approaches for better results, in line with its Corporate Partnership Strategy.

Communities and governments at all levels are the most critical partners for WFP's work in school feeding. Communities include parents, school children, teachers, school directors, farmers, civil society and local leaders, who are all active participants in the school feeding management process. School Feeding Management Committees are the primary partner at school level, also ensuring social audit through feedback mechanisms.

From the government's side, WFP works with the lead ministry for school feeding (often the Ministry of Education) as well as other key ministries such as health, social development, agriculture, economy and finance, etc. Subnational governments are also key partners, including municipalities and local departments of education. WFP also helps to facilitate South-South Cooperation to share best practices. Other partners include non-governmental

organizations, churches, research institutes and universities, legislative bodies, private sector and farmer associations.

WFP also coordinates and cooperates with other UN agencies such as FAO, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, and others. WFP has leveraged corporate school feeding partnerships for school feeding knowledge, such as with the World Bank, Partnership for Child Development and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). WFP also works with Tetrapak, the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) and the Latin American Network for School Feeding (La-RAE), in particular on the regional school feeding seminars.

Traditional, emerging and host government donors are key to the work WFP does in the region, as financial partners and beyond. The same applies to private donors, corporations and individuals who contribute greatly to school feeding efforts across the region. As a voluntarily funded organization, WFP strategically partners to maximize resources, efficiency and cost effectiveness, in order to have a greater impact.

WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger

WFP's Centre of Excellence against Hunger (CoE) is a global forum for South-South policy dialogue and learning on school feeding and food security programmes, based on the successful experience of Brazil. The Centre is a partnership between WFP and the Government of Brazil and it was created in 2011 to support governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the development of sustainable solutions against hunger.

The CoE works with study missions, high-level policy advice, technical assistance and knowledge building, hence representing an important and innovative complement to WFP's work at country level. In 2014/15 the CoE participated in an exchange meeting with the Government of Cuba on school feeding, hosted a study visit of parliamentarians from Bolivia (shown right) to support the finalization of the school feeding law, and participated actively in national and regional school feeding dialogues, like the National School Feeding Forum in Honduras and the Regional School Feeding Seminars in Mexico and Peru.





Evidence Generation

Demonstrating results on school feeding is critical for WFP and partners, to ensure this important investment is creating tangible benefits for the communities served. Enhancing the school feeding knowledge-base is also crucial for informed policy making. External evaluations and studies supported by WFP enable better informed decision making and improvements in programmes. Regular Monitoring & Evaluation activities are likewise essential and one of WFP's areas of expertise and support.

WFP school feeding projects in the region to contribute to WFP's Strategic Objective 4, *Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger*, including goal 3, *Ownership and capacity strengthened to reduce under nutrition and increase access to education at regional, national and*

community levels. When school feeding is part of WFP's relief and recovery operations, like in Colombia and Ecuador, it also contributes to Strategic Objective 2: *Support food security and nutrition and re-build livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies*.

In general terms the most well-documented results of school feeding remain related to access to education and indicators such as enrollment, attendance, retention, primary school completion and drop-out rates. The benefits related to health and nutrition and their links to regular attendance and learning outcomes are also widely recognized. The same applies to the multiplier effects of HGSP programmes. WFP also uses the SABER framework to track progress overtime. Below is a summary of key findings from evaluations conducted in 2015.

 **Ecuador:** WFP and the National Institute of Evaluation for Education carried out an impact evaluation on the HGSP model implemented by WFP and local governments. The study analysed the benefits of linking school feeding to local agricultural production by introducing fresh foods into school lunches, and complementing the model with nutrition trainings for students, teachers and parents. WFP strengthened the diet of school children, by providing fruits and vegetables with school meals. This is important because in Ecuador, according to the latest nutritional survey, the population consumes on average less than half the amount of fruits and vegetables recommended by WHO standards.

Findings showed that the dietary diversity of schoolchildren improved and that children in the programme had higher than average test scores and performed better in school. The complementary nutrition trainings were a crucial component of the model, as parents were more inclined to prepare nutritious and diversified meals at home. The study also looked at the cost-efficiency of different school feeding models. The impact study helped local governments to demonstrate results of their investment in school feeding. These positive results were confirmed by the broader evaluation of WFP's Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation.

 **Honduras:** The mid-term evaluation of the Country Programme demonstrated that WFP reinforced local capacities by enhancing knowledge on basic nutrition, promoted partnerships in food management, and improved accountability processes. The participation of local leaders and the efforts of municipal governments increased resource mobilization, social audit, and transparency. Childhood education became a priority issue in many communities. 2014 data indicated that gender parity was achieved in all primary schools and that almost all children in WFP-assisted schools received deworming treatment. Women have also been empowered by participating in the school feeding management process.

 **Haiti:** The evaluation of the school feeding Development Project highlighted several achievements, like the appropriate targeting based on food security and education, the introduction of local agricultural produce, and the enhanced M&E capacity. WFP-assisted schools showed an increase in retention rates from 75 percent in 2012 to 95.5 percent beginning of 2015. The evaluation noted that there was unanimous consensus among all stakeholders that the school meal is a key element to ensure retention, regular attendance and concentration of students; and that the school meal is an important contribution to the daily food intake of school children. The recommendation informed adjustments to the programme for 2016-17. The school meals programme in Haiti is widely recognized as a powerful platform to reduce hunger, attract and keep children in school, enhance their capacity to learn and hence contribute to improved literacy, health and overall human capital development.



Looking Ahead

WFP's commitment to school feeding and social protection in the region is unquestionable and will remain a top priority. WFP will continue to support governments and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Through its work in school feeding in the region, WFP will particularly contribute to ending hunger and achieving food security (SDG 2), while making significant contributions to end poverty (SDG 1), ensure inclusive and quality education (SDG 4), achieve gender equality (SDG 5) and reduce inequality (SDG 10), among others.



While WFP direct school feeding assistance will decrease as governments consolidate their programmes and find stable national financing options, other types of support as laid out in this publication will continue to support national strategies. In particular, WFP will establish innovative partnerships to:

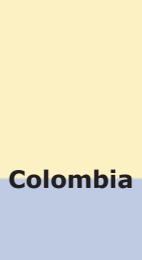
- Strengthen the nutrition-sensitive focus of school feeding programmes across the region;
- Support governments in bringing to scale cost-effective Home Grown School Feeding models linked to smallholder agriculture, with particular attention to women farmers;
- Complement education sector efforts to attract out-of-school children in particular girls, and provide a quality of educational environment that promotes learning and educational achievement, in support of SDG 4 and SDG 5;
- Strengthen the integration of school feeding into broader national social protection systems, in support of SDG 1.3, and assess the shock responsiveness of school feeding and other safety nets in case of crises;

- Generate evidence on the benefits of school feeding as an investment in human capital development and as a tool to contribute to long-term food security;
- Support governments in appraising the sustainability and quality of their national programmes and in prioritizing actions to advance them further - at policy, systems and operational level;
- Develop clear transition strategies and roadmaps with countries where WFP still retains a major role as implementer;
- Sharpen a "Leaving no one behind" lens to ensure that national school feeding efforts benefit the most vulnerable, remote, food insecure and underserved communities in the region, and complement other inclusive social protection programmes;
- Where relevant, integrate school feeding support into broader country strategic plans which will clearly define WFP's most appropriate role to advance national hunger solutions;
- Promote school feeding innovations for better results, including the combination of different cash and food modalities, new urban models, and the use of technologies for data management, planning and monitoring of large-scale national school feeding programmes;
- Continue to facilitate regional exchanges on school feeding, act as knowledge broker and regional repository of school feeding best practices, and foster South-South Cooperation.

WFP's role in supporting school feeding efforts in the region will continue to evolve in order to best support school children and countries.

Together we can achieve Zero Hunger by 2030.

Annex: A Snapshot of WFP's Support by Country

 <p>Bolivia</p>	<p>As part of its broader Country Programme, WFP supports school feeding in three vulnerable Departments of Bolivia, serving approximately 32,000 children. WFP complements the municipal programme by providing locally-purchased fortified commodities as well as Micronutrient Powders (MNPs). This enables School Feeding Committees to prepare a nutritious breakfast for the children in addition to lunch, and to use municipal resources for different fresh and dry products. In 2008 WFP contributed to the creation of the <i>Mancomunidad of Chuquisaca for School Feeding</i> (MAECH), a legal body uniting 11 municipalities for the management of the school feeding programme. WFP has progressively phased out its direct support to these municipalities, but the MAECH continues to work efficiently, representing a successful sustainable model linked to smallholder farmer support. WFP also provides technical and policy support to the national school feeding programme, as explained in the <i>Capacity Strengthening</i> section. Bolivia was the first country in the region to implement SABER-SF. The national school feeding programme in Bolivia covers approximately 1.9 million children.</p>
 <p>Colombia</p>	<p>In Colombia, WFP has two lines of work in support of school feeding: on one side as part of its Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation it provides a school lunch to children in boarding schools located in conflict-affected areas. The project has a specific protection focus as it also aims to reduce the risk that children are recruited by armed groups. Innovative modalities are being used to better serve communities, through a virtual card linked to points of sales, where School Feeding Committees can choose from a list of 55 nutritious products. The project currently serves approximately 15,000 children. On the other side, in 2015 WFP and the Ministry of Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a comprehensive package of technical assistance and evidence-based decision making tools in support of the broader national school feeding programme. A strong nutrition-sensitive focus is ensured, by integrating in this package a set of nutrition education activities which promote healthy eating habits and good nutrition. The national school feeding programme in Colombia covers approximately 3.3 million children.</p>
 <p>Cuba</p>	<p>As part of its new Country Programme, WFP supports Government safety nets programmes including the national school feeding programme. In particular, WFP works with partners to strengthen the value chain for the local production of beans and complements the Government school feeding ration. Data gathered in schools by WFP on food and nutrition helps strengthen the capacity of local-level decision makers to improve the quality of school meals. In addition, the <i>Educate your Child</i> programme assists families in educating their children and preparing them for school in rural and urban areas where support is most needed. WFP works closely with the Ministry of Education and is planning a set of joint activities in support of the national programme. The Vice-Minister of Education actively participated as speaker at the VII School Feeding Seminar for Latin American and the Caribbean, held in Peru in August 2015. The national school feeding programme in Cuba covers nearly 1 million children.</p>
 <p>Dominican Republic</p>	<p>WFP no longer has any direct school feeding assistance in the Dominican Republic but provides on-demand support to the national programme, particularly focused on nutrition. WFP supports the Ministry of Education by evaluating national school feeding rations and providing recommendations for incorporating essential micronutrients into the menu, for improving the programme's sustainability based on quality standards, and supporting with developing a monitoring and evaluation protocol. The national school feeding programme in Dominican Republic covers approximately 1.4 million children.</p>
 <p>Ecuador</p>	<p>As part of its Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation, WFP partners with the Ministry of Education, local governments, schools, communities and farmer associations to implement a Home Grown School Feeding programme in border areas. The project serves 12,000 children from both Colombian refugee families and vulnerable Ecuadorian communities. The model is based on cash transfers from WFP and local governments and provides a nutritious school lunch based on diversified menus. Products are all sourced locally from smallholder farmer communities, often led by women. WFP and the Ministries of Education and Health are discussing the best practices of WFP's model which could be shared and potentially replicated to support the broader programme, particularly its nutrition education component. The national school feeding programme in Ecuador covers approximately 1.8 million children.</p>
 <p>El Salvador</p>	<p>WFP no longer has any direct school feeding assistance in El Salvador. Following a successful transition to national ownership in 2012, WFP continues to provide technical support to the national school feeding programme when requested, on strengthening the links between the P4P initiative and the national programme, on nutrition-sensitive school feeding, and other areas. The Ministry of Education of El Salvador is an active participant in the regional school feeding seminars co-organized by WFP and benefits from this broad exchange of experiences. The national school feeding programme in El Salvador covers approximately 1.3 million children.</p>

Source of national school feeding programme beneficiaries: State of School Feeding Worldwide, WFP, 2013.

 <p>Guatemala</p>	<p>WFP no longer has any direct school feeding assistance operation in Guatemala but provides technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and the national school feeding programme. WFP supported the development of a school feeding law, led the revision of existing school feeding menus for the national programme and the development of new national and regional menus, carried out an analysis of costs and advocated for an increase in the allocation to School Feeding Committees. It also conducted regional consultations on school feeding as well as SABER-SF, and is exploring options to strengthen the links between P4P and the national school feeding programme. The national school feeding programme in Guatemala covers approximately 3 million children.</p>
 <p>Haiti</p>	<p>School feeding is WFP's flagship programme in Haiti. It represents the country's largest safety net, delivering daily hot meals to approximately 489,000 children countrywide. In the Nippes Department, WFP is implementing a HGSP project with diversified seasonal menus, with all produce supplied by local smallholder farmers. Elsewhere, it is planning to introduce a fresh vegetable complement, as well as Micronutrient Powders (MNPs). WFP has a comprehensive capacity strengthening strategy and is supporting the Government in developing its first school feeding policy, in order to set the foundations for a national school feeding programme linked to local agriculture by 2030. A SABER-SF exercise was conducted in 2015 to inform the policy. WFP also extends capacity development to the local procurement unit of the Ministry of Agriculture.</p>
 <p>Honduras</p>	<p>In Honduras, the Government has entrusted WFP to implement its country-wide national school feeding programme for 1.3 million children (the third largest worldwide for WFP), develop systems and local capacities and lay the ground for full transition. WFP and the Government organized in April 2015 a high-level National School Feeding Forum and conducted SABER-SF. In addition to the links to the P4P initiative, the recent innovation in this programme is the introduction of fresh food including eggs, vegetables and fruits supplied by local small farmer associations. This is the first time that WFP implements this on such a large scale as part of a government programme and an example for other countries in the region moving toward a HGSP model. Through its Country Programme WFP complements the national school feeding programme, reaching about 105,000 children in the most vulnerable departments. WFP has fostered the strengthening of the School Feeding Committees, recognized as one of the key successful features of the national school feeding programme.</p>
 <p>Nicaragua</p>	<p>As part of its Country Programme, WFP complements the national school feeding programme managed by the Ministry of Education and serves approximately 155,000 children in 12 vulnerable municipalities. The daily mid-morning meal provided by WFP is complemented by community contributions and sourced locally as much as possible, thanks to links established with the P4P initiative. The national school feeding programme focuses on empowering the School Feeding Committees at community level and enhancing national logistics and M&E capacities. School gardens, with an education objective, are also an important component of the programme. WFP provides technical assistance to the national programme on supply chain and other school feeding management issues, having been a longstanding partner of the government in introducing and expanding school feeding. Currently school feeding is the largest safety net in the country and was also used by the Government to support drought-affected people with additional meals provided at school. The national school feeding programme in Nicaragua covers approximately 970,000 children.</p>
 <p>Panama</p>	<p>WFP has no direct assistance in Panama but technically supports the national programme when requested, with nutrition studies among others. In 2015 WFP supported the national school feeding programme by conducting a supply chain assessment in remote indigenous areas. This resulted in adjustments to the programme to better serve vulnerable communities. It was a first successful pilot of the tool in the region. The national programme in Panama covers approximately 480,000 children.</p>
 <p>Paraguay</p>	<p>WFP has presence in Paraguay through a satellite office managed by the Bolivia Country Office. While WFP does not have any direct school feeding assistance in the country, it engages with the Ministry of Education in support of the national programme, and supports the participation of the Government at regional school feeding events to exchange ideas and improve the national programme. The national school feeding programme in Paraguay covers approximately 10,000 children.</p>
 <p>Peru</p>	<p>In Peru, WFP has no direct school feeding operations but provides on-demand technical assistance to the national school feeding programme, <i>Qali Warma</i>, managed by the Ministry of Social Development and Inclusion (MIDIS). This support contributed to improvements of the decentralized procurement process and of the micronutrient content of the school meals. WFP is also planning to support <i>Qali Warma</i> with a supply chain assessment for remote areas and a cost-benefit analysis, among other specific studies and pilots. In 2015 WFP and MIDIS conducted SABER-SF and co-organized the VII School Feeding Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean.</p>

Source of national school feeding programme beneficiaries: State of School Feeding Worldwide, WFP, 2013.



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