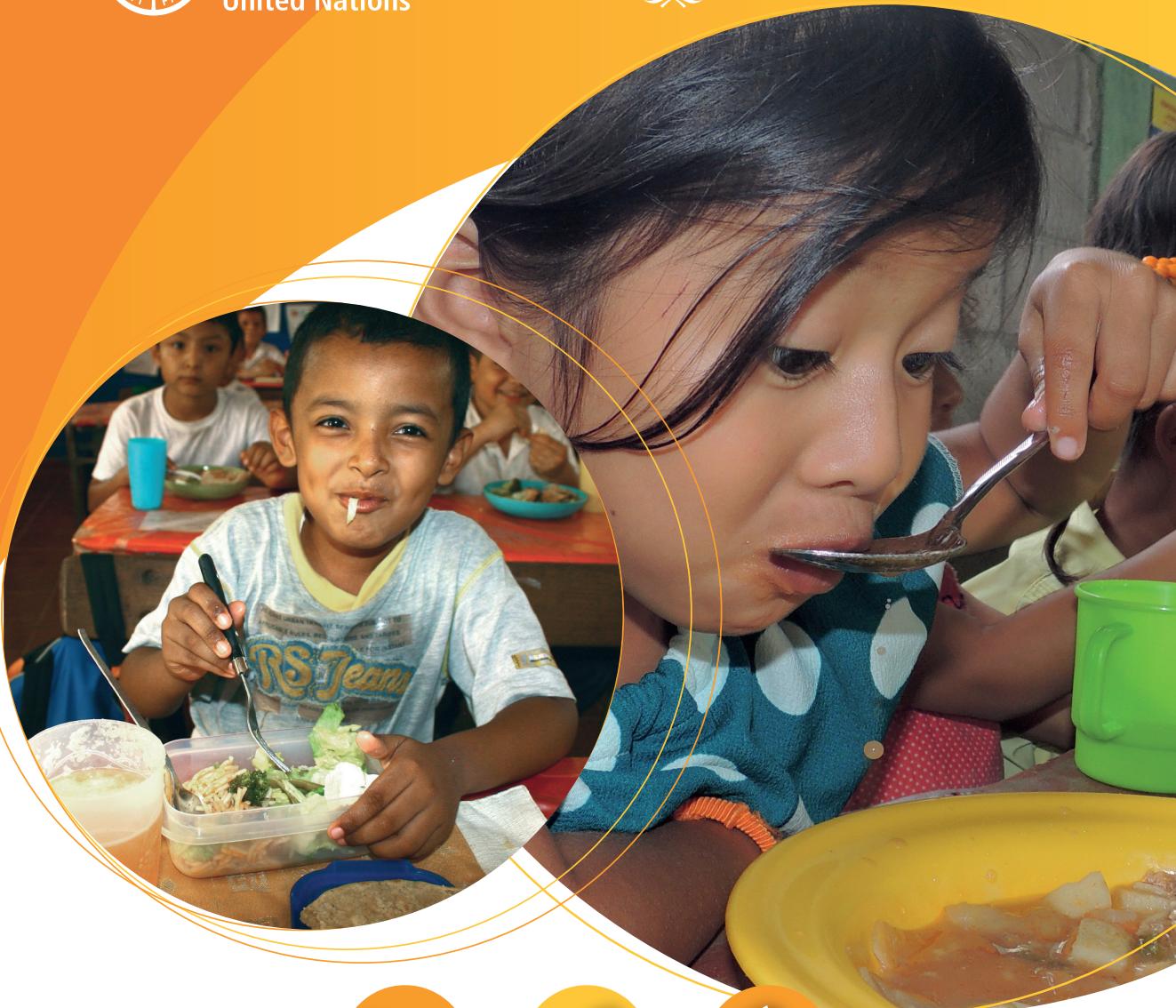




Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Food Programme



Strengthening School Feeding Programmes:

FAO and WFP joint work

in Latin America and the Caribbean

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1. Introduction

School Feeding Programmes (SFP) are the most predominant social protection network in the world (World Bank, 2018). In 2013, nearly USD 75 billion was invested, reaching more than 368 million schoolchildren worldwide (WFP, 2013), representing a huge public investment and broad coverage of the school population.

In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), SFP are explicitly incorporated into national food and nutrition security (FNS) policy frameworks and becoming part of national social protection policies and systems. At present, almost all countries in the region are implementing SFP, and about 85 million children are given breakfast, a snack or lunch at school, with an annual investment of approximately USD 4.3 billion, mainly from national budgets (WFP, 2017).

The SFP play an important role in the fight against hunger and malnutrition in all its forms and contribute to ensuring the human right to adequate food for all schoolchildren. In addition, the SFP contribute to the right to a healthy life and quality education. These programmes have a potential effect on economic development at the national and territorial level and serve as a strategy to fight poverty and food insecurity (Bundy et al. 2009). Through organized actions, within the SFP frameworks, a significant contribution can be made to the food and nutrition education (FNE) of students, parents and school staff; and, therefore, to the necessary establishment of healthier eating habits and lifestyles (FNDE and FAO, 2017; FAO, 2013).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals (SDG), approved and adopted by countries in 2015, makes it clear that no one is left behind. In the area of school feeding, this translates into a direct contribution to the fulfillment of different SDG. The SFP have the potential to contribute significantly to zero hunger (SDG 2), quality education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5). The SFP can also contribute to no poverty (SDG 1), economic growth (SDG 8) and reduced inequalities (ODS 10). In addition, through intersectoral, inter-institutional and inter-agency coordination, the SFP are aligned with SDG 17 – setting up partnerships for the SDG (WFP 2017).

The LAC countries face serious food and nutrition problems that jeopardize the achievement of the goal to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2030. According to the Panorama of Food and Nutritional Security 2018, about 39.3 million of Latin American and Caribbean citizens are undernourished, with a 2% increase between 2014-2017 (FAO, PAHO/WHO, WFP, et al. 2018). Furthermore, micronutrient deficiencies - the so - called *hidden hunger* - persist as public health problems, particularly iron-deficiency anaemia, zinc, calcium and vitamin D deficiencies, among others (Rivera et al. 2014). On the other hand, overweight and obesity are today one of the greatest and growing challenges in the region (FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, et al. 2018). Overweight affects 7.3% preschool children (WHO 2018) and, according to national data, between 20% and 40% school-age children and adolescents.

Overweight and obesity are risk factors for the development of non-communicable chronic diseases (NCD) (Anauati, Galiani, and Weinschelbaum 2015; Tzioumis and Adair 2014), which are among the top 10 causes of death worldwide and in almost all countries in the region (WHO 2017). NCD also consume a large part of public budget in their control and management. Malnutrition due to overweight, obesity and NCD are mainly consequences of changes in dietary patterns, sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy lifestyles, along with a set of changes in food systems that promote the manufacture and consumption of processed and ultra-processed products (Monteiro et al. 2013).

Within this context, it is now evident how the countries of the region are facing the socalled *double burden of malnutrition*, typical of the rapid demographic and epidemiological transition (Popkin, Adair, and Ng 2012), which presents a risk that child malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies coexist with alarming levels of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents.

In keeping with the same, many countries are developing promising and innovative approaches to improve the nutritional impact of their SFP. Governments in the region are increasingly seeking to provide nutritious and healthy meals in schools, adapted to diverse local cultures and practices that can be linked to local agriculture and community or municipal markets, as well as food and nutrition education (FNE) to promote positive changes in food intake behaviour. Attention to quality and safety, the composition of

food baskets, and their role in promoting healthy food in and out of school has also been stimulated by the growing rates of overweight and obesity in the region (WFP, 2017). However, ensuring that SFP are designed and implemented following quality standards and more nutrition-sensitive strategies, remains a major challenge in demonstrating effective results.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) support governments in the region to achieve more sustainable, nutrition-sensitive and quality SFP. The purpose of this paper is to provide a regional view of this contribution, showing FAO and WFP joint efforts in LAC. The document also focuses on the main core strategies and joint efforts in line with the vision of the SFP as a public policy instrument to achieve the SDG by 2030. Finally, this document presents three case studies of countries where FAO and WFP work together in support of SFP: Colombia, Honduras and the Dominican Republic.



2. FAO and WFP technical assistance on school feeding in LAC

Both FAO and WFP have become strategic government partners and provide technical assistance to the SFP of the region, enhancing their role as tools to guarantee the human right to adequate food and as a dynamic mechanism to promote healthy eating habits and lifestyles to face all forms of malnutrition and as a tool to fight poverty. Efforts to link SFP to local agriculture production aim to increase dietary diversity and nutritional value, as well as increase opportunities for family and small farmers access to new markets and improve their socio-economic status.

In March 2017, the two agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) emphasizing the FAO and WFP common approach towards food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture which are closely related areas requiring holistic and integrated approaches. This paper aims to improve global collaboration, coordination and synergies between FAO, WFP and countries, to have a more strategic role in supporting member countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, particularly with respect to SDG 2. Thus, the MoU is intended to ensure that the intentions and commitments on partnerships and collaboration articulated at FAO and the WFP headquarters level are translated into concrete collaborations and actions at the country level (FAO and WFP 2017). In keeping with the MoU, FAO and the WFP have established 8 main core strategies of joint work (see box 1).

Box 1. Core strategies

According to the MoU, FAO and WFP have prioritized the following core strategies to support the SFP in the region:

- 1- Provide technical assistance to develop and strengthen national school feeding policy and regulatory frameworks, contributing to their consolidation within broader national social protection systems and relating them to other social protection instruments.
- 2- Provide technical assistance and strengthen capacities at all levels, with the purpose of achieving more nutrition-sensitive programmes with standards of quality, effectiveness and sustainability. Maximizing the contribution of the SFP to nutrition, promoting approaches aiming at preventing and fighting micronutrient deficiencies, as well as overweight and obesity.

- 3- Promote SFP links with local purchases from small farmers and family farming, through innovative and sustainable models. The transformation of SFP towards more sustainable and nutrition-sensitive models also involves policies and programmes to support small-scale agriculture, with the aim of increasing its participation in institutional and more stable markets.
- 4- Promote and strengthen the incorporation of good practices and innovations in the area of FNE and other nutrition-sensitive approaches in schools, using school feeding as a multi-benefit platform.
- 5- Promote strategies to prevent, control and reduce all forms of malnutrition, including overweight and obesity.
- 6- Promote, systematize and share knowledge and lessons learned, both among countries of the region and among subregions, with the objective of consolidating a regional community of practice and contributing to the improvement of national programmes.
- 7- Encourage the South-South Cooperation (SSC), and promote innovative partnerships, including the academia and the private sector.
- 8- Use the SFP platforms to promote gender equality, better opportunities for young people, as well as to generate dynamics of participation and community development.

According to the last FAO Regional Conference in LAC, held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, 2018, it is a priority for member states to strengthen innovative policies and programmes with a territorial perspective to fight major challenges in the area of food and nutrition, including prevention and control of the overweight and obesity epidemic affecting the Region. In order to improve the diet of future generations and boost local economies, FAO together with the WFP, can help the SFP, which are found in practically all the countries of the region, expand their national coverage, with menus aligned with the country's food-based dietary guidelines, including components of food and nutrition education, school gardens and the direct purchase of products from family farming, among others (FAO, 2018).

Likewise, the final declaration statement of the last Regional Seminar on School Feeding in LAC organized by the WFP, the Latin American School Feeding Network (La-Rae, for its acronyms in Spanish) and the Government of Mexico City in 2017, reads that it is essential to continue investing in nutrition-sensitive and quality SFP aimed at preventing and fighting micronutrient deficiencies, as well as overweight and obesity, promoting healthy dietary habits throughout life. This can only be achieved if key actors continue to work hand in hand, moving towards innovative partnerships in order to achieve better nutritional outcomes. The strengthening of synergy and cooperation between FAO and WFP is the result of this objective.

The following paragraphs provide a more detailed description of the work and core strategies of FAO and the WFP in the Region.

2.1 FAO's role in supporting SFP

School age represents a critical period for establishing knowledge and skills for healthy living. Recommendations and actions stemming from the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), highlight the potential of schools to reach the most nutritionally vulnerable populations in order to ensure the human right to food and promote healthy lifestyles that extend beyond school age.

FAO promotes the implementation and articulation of SFP with a series of components, including the participation of family farmers in the supply of school food products in different productive areas, access to inputs and services, regulations and enabling environments (Siobhan and Swensson 2017). The purpose is to develop: i) opportunities for women and young people to participate in public procurement processes to improve their socio-economic status; ii) effective food and nutrition education strategies; and iii) enabling environments to promote healthy food at school level through policy instruments, better infrastructure and intersectoral coordination mechanisms.

Over more than 70 years, FAO has consolidated broad experience in developing methodologies to address the structural causes of food and nutritional insecurity. The problems related to FNS, hunger, malnutrition and poverty have multidimensional causes. FAO's mainstreaming approach, i.e. the one that considers causes and their determinants, has made it possible to articulate the various stakeholders under a multisectoral and inter-agency approach, recognizing the SFP and including other technical areas in support of governments. Among the areas that support the SFP

are nutrition, agricultural production, extension services, sustainable management of natural resources and respect for the ethnographic and cultural diversity of the territories, among others.

2.1.1. On a global level, the interventions supported by FAO are the following:

FNE as an essential part of the teaching and learning process

At school level, the objective of the FNE is to facilitate the voluntary adoption of healthy and long-lasting dietary habits and practices that promote better health and well-being, with due respect for the environment. It is expected that the FNE:

- Is designed and implemented considering a food systems approach, practical actions and evidence-based impact, to effectively promote changes in dietary behaviours, according to the culture and stage of development of schoolchildren.
- Is explicitly incorporated into curricular agendas and runs through more than one subject (i.e. Science, Geography, History, Mathematics, Family, Home, Community, Language), bearing in mind that the goal is to meet the academic objectives and develop the necessary competencies for schoolchildren to adopt better dietary habits.
- Has the necessary resources, including professional training and capacity building opportunities, to design strategies and teaching materials that go beyond the delivery of information to develop skills and competencies in schoolchildren.
- Includes best practices and lessons learned in every stage: design, validation, implementation, and process monitoring and impact assessment.
- Is supported by legal, regulatory or public policy frameworks, and not as isolated actions with little planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Includes multi-stakeholder participation and coordination (i.e. schoolchildren, family, community, etc.) to engage the local community, as well as adequate planning and synergistic implementation.
- Promotes a food environment that is consistent with the contents/skills conveyed through FNE activities, to reinforce/complement actions aimed at healthy school feeding in an assertive and synergistic manner.

On the other hand, FAO promotes a comprehensive school approach to FNE, joining efforts to: i) integrate the FNE into national curricula; ii) adopt school gardens as pedagogical platforms; iii) provide technical assistance and professional capacity building in this area; and, iv) generate studies/publications, technical networks (i.e. RED-ICEAN / <http://www.fao.org/red-icean>) and other opportunities for exchanging experience in the context of FNE in schools.

In keeping with the same and in order to report the strategic progress in terms of methodological quality, scope and impact of FNE interventions in low- and middle-income countries and their successful integration into school systems, FAO in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), developed an international expert consultation entitled: 'Stepping up school-based food and nutrition education: Exploring Challenges, Finding Solutions, Building Partnerships'. Among the main outcomes, relevant to the work of SFP in the region, there is an emphasis on establishing technical partnerships and networks to catalyse FNE opportunities within and beyond the classroom, and building stronger links with SFP, the school food environment, the community and local food systems (FAO and UAEU 2017). All this with the ultimate goal of using the FNE as a complementary tool to actively empower children, adolescents and the school community to drive changes in food and nutrition in line with the SDG.

In response to the international call to improve food systems, FAO has designed a framework for action on school-based food and nutrition interventions and programmes, focused on the most effective options and multisectoral approaches that favour nutrition and sustainable development. This framework focuses on four pillars: i) Promote healthy snacks and meals in schools; ii) Integrate effective school-based food and nutrition education; iii) Encourage inclusive and sustainable healthy food procurement, particularly from family farmers in the territories; and, iv) Create an enabling political, legal, financial and institutional environment. Each of these pillars with explicit linkages, entry points and areas of technical support, as well as gender and indigenous people's approach, linkage with social protection policies and programmes, reduction of food losses and waste in schools; and favour social, economic and environmental sustainability.

FAO supports the development of school gardens as pedagogical or learning tools to promote better dietary and nutrition habits, develop life-long skills and knowledge and enhance environmental conservation and sustainability (FAO 2010). The pedagogical school gardens produce nutritious foods, such as vegetables and include educational objectives

that can help students, school communities and families relate food farming to healthy eating patterns. With a focus on hands-on activities and classroom learning, school gardens can contribute to better nutrition and food security.

Agroecology principles such as soil management, species diversity, efficient use of water, and the use of amendments are elements promoted by FAO that should prevail in school gardens-based teaching and learning process, thus promoting sustainable agriculture at a very early age, leveraging a multiplier effect in rural communities and raising awareness among young people about agriculture that contributes to the well-being of their households.

2.1.2. Interventions supported by FAO in LAC

2.1.2.1. Interventions in the framework of technical cooperation Brazil - FAO

At the regional level, support for SFP is provided through the Programme of Brazil-FAO international cooperation for Strengthening School Feeding Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean. The SFP supported by FAO in the region and harnessing what worked for Brazil, present an integrative and catalytic approach towards food, nutrition and education, seeking long-term sustainability. The Brazil-FAO school feeding project began in 2009 in five countries. Its actions expanded over the years, reaching 17 countries. At present, the project is carried out with activities in 13 countries in the region: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

One of the first actions implemented by the project was the creation of 'Sustainable Schools', which has been a methodology to build up collective knowledge and learning as a reference for the implementation of sustainable SFP in some municipalities and schools and produce the necessary changes in school feeding policies and programmes, as well as to serve as the basis for the construction of school feeding laws appropriate to the reality of each country. This experience is consolidated through activities such as the involvement of the educational community (social participation); the adoption of adequate, healthy and culturally relevant school menus; the implementation of pedagogical school gardens as an SFP tool; the structural retrofitting of kitchens, canteens and warehouses, which give a sense of dignity and respect for the act of eating; as well as the purchase of fresh and nutritious products for school feeding directly from the local family farming.

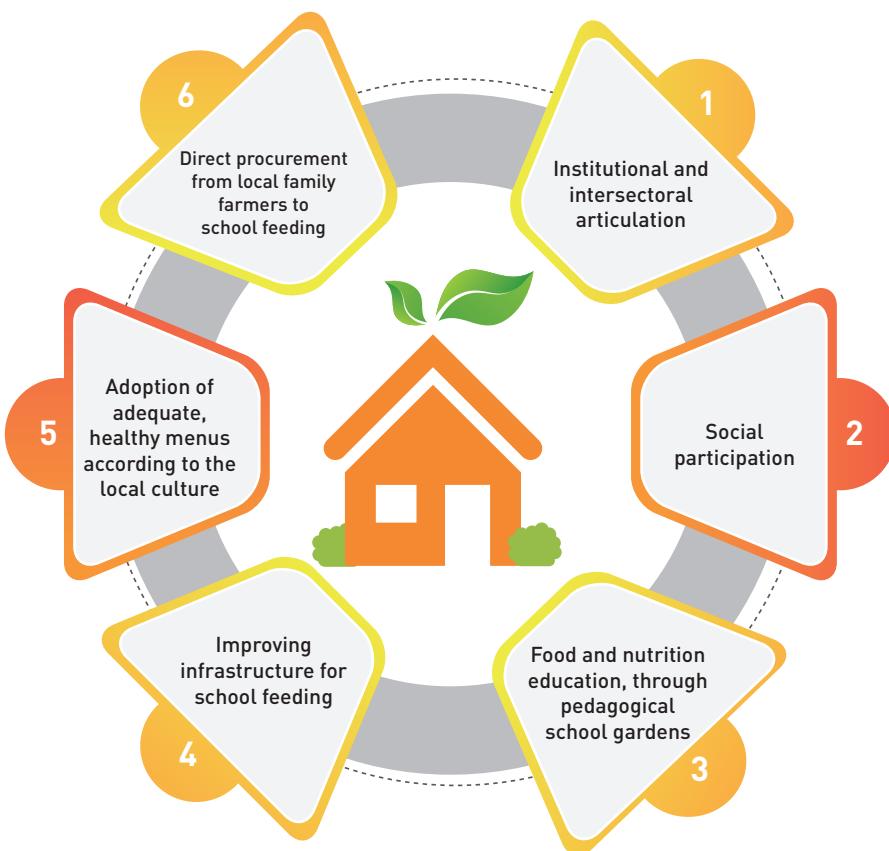
During the last five years (2012-2017), divided into two phases of 2012-2014 and 2015-2017, through the Brazil-FAO Cooperation project, Sustainable Schools have been implemented in 12 countries, directly benefiting more than 283,359 children, located in 152 municipalities in 51 departments, reaching 3,189 schools. In the second phase (2015-2017), some countries of the Caribbean subregion have been integrated (see table 1).

Sustainable Schools have leveraged SFP in LAC. Among the main benefits of the implementation of this methodology are the recognition of the importance of government institutions coordination to achieve the objectives of the school feeding programmes; scaling up to an updated public policy in line with the social realities of each country; compliance with the human right to food and, above all, the quantification and reporting of the SFP contribution to the achievement of 2030 Agenda.

According to the implementation and installed capacities of each country, six key components are developed in Sustainable Schools (Figure 1). The level of adoption of each of the components in each country is different and has relied on the possibilities, priorities and needs of the local and cultural context, among others.

Figure 1.

Components of the Sustainable School Feeding Programmes proposed by FAO



Source: Programme of Brazil-FAO International Cooperation for School Feeding in LAC.

A description of each component of the Sustainable Schools model is presented below¹:

C-1. Intersectoral articulation and C-2 Social participation: The intersectoral articulation and social participation of main stakeholders linked to the public-school feeding policy provides a solid sustainable base for actions carried out at schools and is a cross-cutting issue of

¹ Additional information about Sustainable Schools Model components is available at <http://www.fao.org/in-action/programa-brasil-fao/proyectos/alimentacion-escolar/es-cuelas-sostenibles/es/>

the implementation of the project. It contributes to and promotes the formation of technical and management teams to make decisions at the national, departmental, and municipal and school levels who elaborate and execute the work plans for the implementation of Sustainable Schools. This last aspect is important because it empowers local stakeholders in a participatory manner, providing them with information and decision-making opportunities and establishing mechanisms for transparency and accountability.

C-3. Food and nutrition education, through pedagogical school gardens:

Another important aspect is the organization of FNE actions that are executed from the establishment of pedagogical school gardens, involving parents, students and, above all, teachers and principals. The purpose of the school garden is to facilitate the learning process of the students in a playful and healthy manner, articulating the various areas of knowledge. In addition, it guides students to improve their eating habits and create the culture of eating properly and healthily.

C-4. Improving infrastructure for school feeding: This component considers the retrofitting of the space where food is prepared, served and eaten. Canteens and food storage areas are important to preserve food safety and quality. This activity is planned with the participation and contributions of the school community and jointly with governments at the national and local levels, promoting territorial development and empowering local social organizations.

C-5. Adoption of adequate, healthy menus according to the local culture:

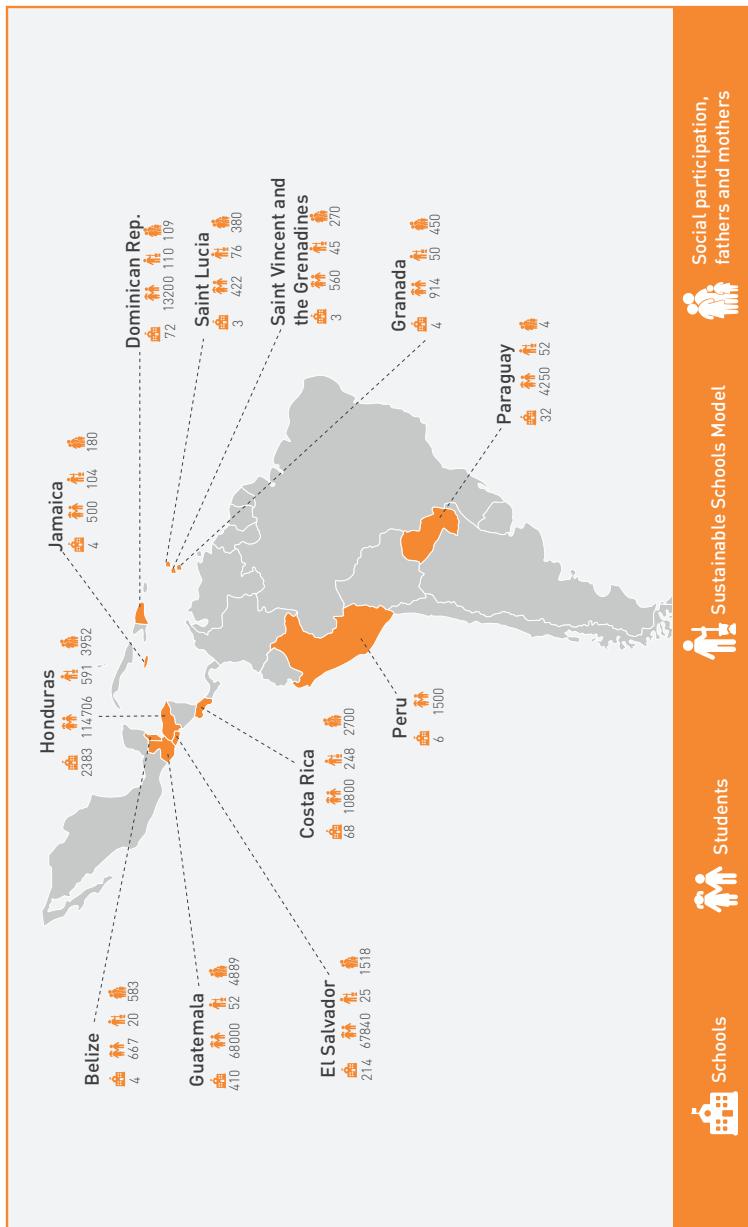
A sustainable SFP should offer healthy meals, in adequate quantity and quality, using fresh food, according to the culture and local preference, optimizing growth, development and health of students. Planning adequate menus is essential in this process. The nutritional requirements of school children as well as the results of the study of the nutritional status of the students should be considered when planning menus.

C-6. Direct procurement from local family farmers for school feeding:

This component is executed according to the menus and nutritional requirements of students. The idea is to buy food from local farmers to ensure diversity and respect for food culture. Hence, school feeding turns into an accessible market for local family farmers. Procurements are organized with the participation of the community and this promotes economic development in the territories.

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Figure 2.
The data below refers to people covered by Brazil-FAO project until 2018



Source: Adapted from Project Evaluation Report GCP / BRA / 0180 / BRA. Strengthening School Feeding Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean. International Technical Cooperation Program Brazil - FAO. 2018

2.1.2.2. Interventions within the framework of the Mesoamerica without Hunger Program

On the other hand, there is also the support of the Mesoamerica Hunger Free (MHF) Programme, a triangular South-South cooperation initiative stemming from a collaboration agreement between FAO and the Government of Mexico, through the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID, acronym in Spanish), in which nine other Mesoamerican countries (Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic) are currently participating, in addition to Mexico as a resource partner.

The MHF Programme develops and supplements actions towards school feeding in Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. In Belize, MHF has set up the design and implementation of the pilot experience of the 'Sustainable Schools' school feeding model in four schools in the communities of Pueblo Viejo, Santa Elena, Santa Cruz and San Antonio, with the necessary infrastructure adjustments for food reception, storage, preparation and intake.

In **Costa Rica**, MHF supports the school gardens and is building family farmers' capacities to effectively meet the food demand of educational communities. In **Guatemala**, the pilot experience in schools of Departments and Municipalities such as Jocotan, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, where local producers supply fish and vegetables for school menus, is also noteworthy. It should be noted that the pilot experience has been a reference for the drafting of the country's National School Feeding Law. In the **Dominican Republic**, the SFP is strengthened through the connection between family producer organizations and school feeding programmes, as well as many innovations in the structure of the program. **El Salvador** has developed pilot and innovative experience in the six components, with much emphasis on public procurement and food and nutrition education practices. **Paraguay** has made progress with the School Feeding Law and has gradually expanded the service to students throughout the country. Some Caribbean countries, such as Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, have made progress in implementing the Sustainable Schools experience by promoting many changes in conceptions and organizations of healthy and local food supply in schools.

2.1.2.3. Interventions under the SEAN-EUROSAN Program from Honduras

As an example of other coordination experiences, it is worth mentioning that as part of the Dry Corridor Alliance (DCA) promoted by the Government of Honduras, the EUROSAN-Western project financed by the Delegation of the European Union in Honduras seeks to implement the National Food and Nutrition Security Strategy on a large scale, working with associations and municipalities under the direction of the General Coordination Secretariat of the Government of Honduras through UTSAN. As part of the EUROSAN-Western project, FAO is developing activities for the implementation of an agriculture and nutrition extension system to strengthen institutional capacities of 10 associations in the departments of Copan, Ocotepeque, Lempira and Santa Barbara (SEAN-EUROSAN), in order to contribute to improving food security of 15,000 family farmer households.

This experience of working with 10 associations and 63 municipalities has generated a more active participation of the education and health sectors. At present, 233 educational networks are being approached, including 756 pre-school and primary educational centres, with direct technical assistance of 137 technicians and local governments' investment to operationalize the system. Inter-institutional coordination spaces are built up; demand for local products in centres related to the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) for the entire school cycle is being assessed; focus on family farmers with the potential to participate as suppliers; characterization of households according to the National Family Farming Strategy; development of the methodology for voluntary registration of producers and suppliers of the NSFP; improve the infrastructure to provide adequate spaces for food storage, preparation and intake.

The process of NSFP implementation is an example of how an agricultural and nutritional extension system works in the municipality.

2.2 The role of WFP in support of SFP in LAC

The WFP has been working for nearly 60 years on school feeding, implementing large-scale programmes, promoting innovative models and providing technical support and capacity building to countries. Today, the WFP supports about 18.3 million students in 71 countries, providing them with meals, snacks and rations to bring home (WFP, 2017). WFP supports the connection between school feeding programmes and local agricultural production in 46 countries, in line with approaches and

benefits for nutrition, education and development of local economies. In addition to this direct support, it is estimated that technical assistance and the development of capacities to improve the quality and sustainability of national programmes, benefits 45 million schoolchildren worldwide.

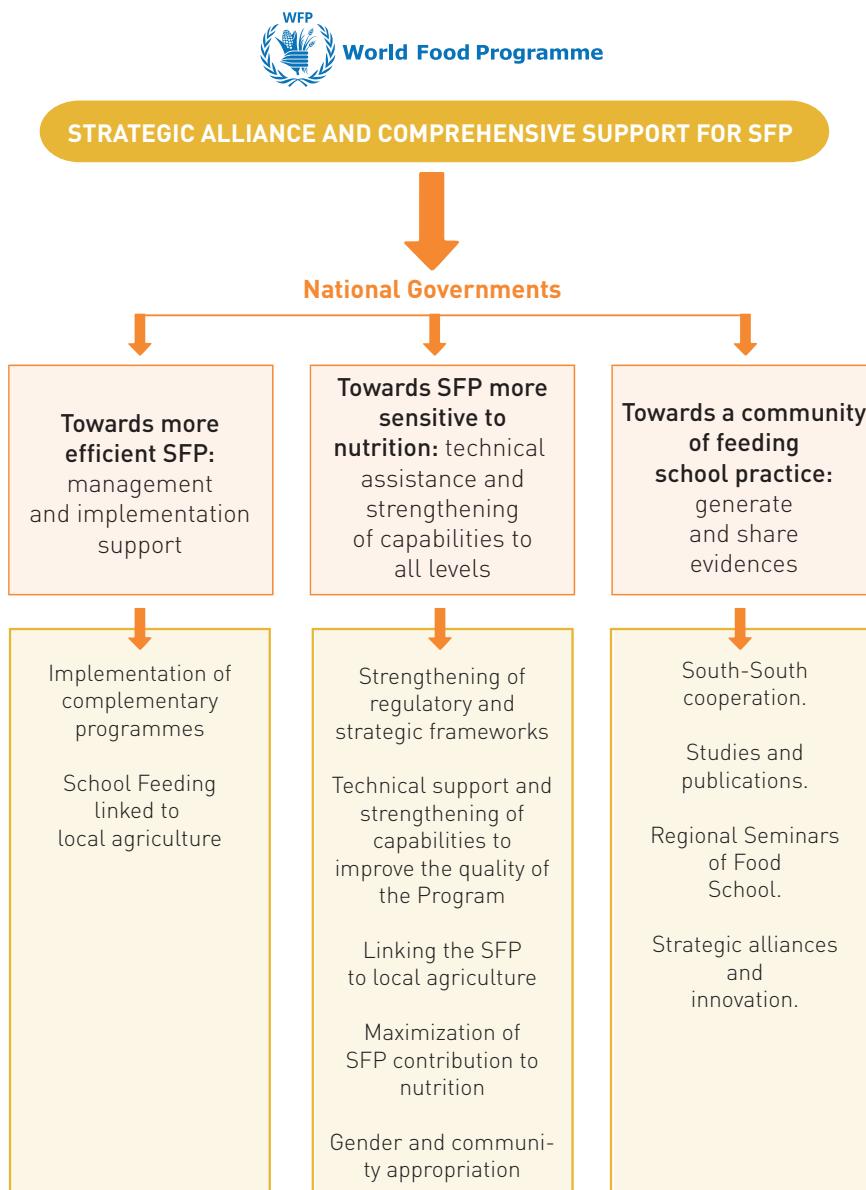
In LAC, SAPs are, in many cases, the largest social assistance network and have been institutionalized as part of national social protection systems. The commitment of governments sustained social policies, as well as the socioeconomic development achieved over the last two decades have contributed to the consolidation of these programmes. However, in a context where malnutrition continues to affect more than 39.3 million people, along with increasing rates of overweight and obesity, and where recurring natural disasters and inequalities continue to threaten food security, governments are increasingly seeking to improve the quality, safety, effectiveness and sustainability of their SFP to face these challenges.

WFP's approach and working strategy in the region has been changing according to the new needs, with the aim of supporting governments, in line with their efforts, so that SFP may better serve school-age children and adolescents and communities and achieve their multiple objectives. Some examples of adapting the WFP technical assistance according to national needs are: in Nicaragua the vertical expansion of the SFP during the 2017 drought; in Colombian Guajira with the horizontal expansion of the SFP in indigenous areas in 2018 due to the child malnutrition crisis. Likewise, in association with the private sector to improve the value chain of local products and processed products safety in the territories such as dairy products in Honduras.

Figure 3 provides a summary of the comprehensive support strategy of the WFP to national SFP.

Figure 3.

Comprehensive Support Strategy of the WFP to SFP in LAC



2.2.1 Supplementing government efforts: direct assistance to SFP

At present, the WFP provides school feeding to more than 2 million girls and boys in 27,000 schools in 7 LAC countries: Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua, supplementing and supporting national and sub-national programmes, with a growing focus on nutrition-sensitive programmes linked to local agricultural production. While the direct implementation of the WFP has decreased and continues to decrease thanks to the gradual adoption of SFP by governments, some countries still receive complementary support according to the needs and requirements of governments, especially in vulnerable and remote areas.

An essential and complementary element to direct assistance is the promotion of FNE activities, as well as health and nutrition activities at school. In terms of challenges posed by malnutrition and rising rates of overweight and obesity, schools are an excellent platform to provide nutrition and health education to parents, schoolchildren, teachers and their communities. School gardens are an example of a pedagogical initiative that has been asserting itself in the region. The implementation of deworming campaigns is also a cost-efficient example of school health activity.

2.2.2 Promoting, developing and expanding SFP linked to local agriculture

Countries in the region are increasingly looking for linking their SAPs to local agricultural production, with the aim of improving the nutritional intake of school feeding through the provision of fresh food and to diversify diets, as well as stimulating local economies and community development. This approach is being prioritized in school feeding policy frameworks and strategies in many countries. In the last decade, the WFP has worked steadily to promote, develop, and expand school feeding programmes linked to local agriculture, with the objective of supporting governments in achieving quality, nutrition-sensitive programmes.

The Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative began in 2009 in several countries in the region - Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, among others - with the objective of supporting small farmers, strengthening their production, handling and marketing capacities for basic grains - especially maize and beans - so that they could participate in public bidding processes and supply SFP in a sustainable manner. Between 2009 and 2014, the P4P initiative supported 34,000 small producers and allowed the purchase of 70,000 metric tons of food, worth USD 40 million. Nearly 33% of this investment benefited the SFP. This successful approach was

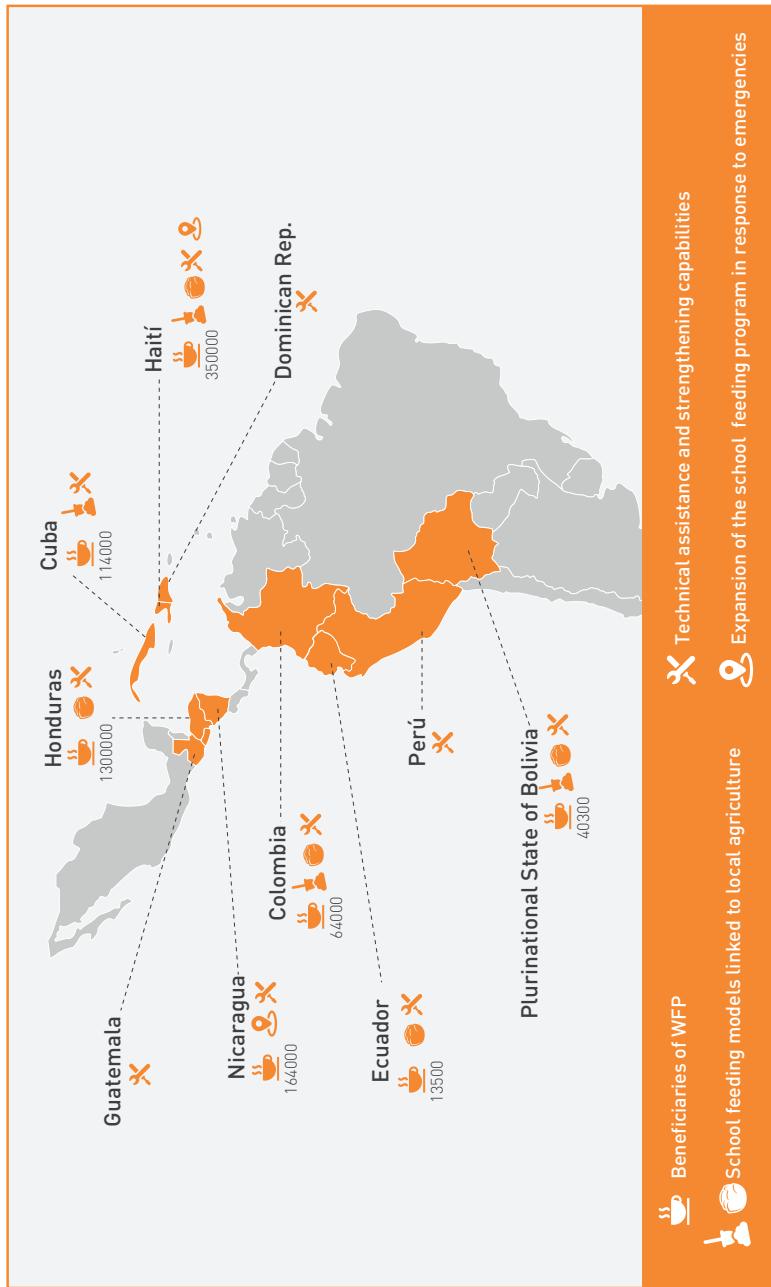
gradually incorporated into the work of the WFP and expanded to more countries in the region, such as Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador and Haiti.

In recent years, much work has been done to expand the links of SFP not only to basic grains, but also to fresh produce such as vegetables, fruits, eggs and dairy products. As a result of this experience, different models have been tested, consolidated and expanded, based on the needs of governments and the characteristics of the communities. The use of money transfers, for example in Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti and Honduras, has been a tool to buy fresh food from small farmers, agricultural cooperatives and rural banks. Other models involving local authorities, municipalities or other local entities are being implemented in several countries, such as Guatemala and Peru.

2.2.3 Technical assistance to achieve nutrition-sensitive SFP

WFP responds to government requests through technical assistance, capacity building at all levels and guidance on school feeding policies and strategies. Technical assistance covers institutional and strategic levels, as well as technical aspects. The objective is to support governments to achieve more nutrition-sensitive, quality and sustainable SFP. WFP provides a comprehensive package of technical assistance tools that are designed to meet governments' demands for support (see Box 1). This technical assistance has been continual and diverse based on the different contexts and needs of SAFs in the region. Figure 4 provides a summary of the countries in the region where WFP complements SFP and provides technical assistance to governments.

Figure 4
Support of WFP to SFP in LAC



Source: WFP

As shown in Figure 4, the WFP supports 10 LAC countries complementing the implementation and management of SFP and providing technical assistance and strengthening capacities.

In **Honduras**, in addition to assisting the government in the implementation and management of its national programme reaching more than 1.2 million schoolchildren, the WFP strengthens institutional and local systems and capacities in the design, implementation and management of innovative school feeding models linked to local agriculture. In **Haiti**, the WFP implements the largest school feeding programme in the country reaching 340,000 schoolchildren and supports the linkage between school feeding and local agriculture and has promoted the development of the first national school feeding policy and strategy in the country. In **Colombia**, the WFP complements the national programme by providing food to more than 60,000 students in the La Guajira region, and provides technical support to improve the programme at both the institutional and technical levels. School feeding is also playing an important role in response to the Venezuelan migration crisis affecting bordering regions. In **Ecuador**, a complementary school feeding programme linked to innovative local agriculture is being implemented and technical assistance is being provided in the consolidation of nutrition-sensitive approaches. In **Nicaragua**, is complementary to the national programme, feeding more than 164,000 schoolchildren and strengthening capacities at different levels. In 2017, with the prolonged drought in the dry corridor, the government was supported to expand the programme in response to the emergency, assisting 200,000 schoolchildren in vulnerable areas. In **Guatemala**, the government is being assisted to improve the quality of the programme and consolidate sustainable school feeding models linked to local agriculture. In **Plurinational State of Bolivia**, in addition to supporting and complementing the SFP in different areas of the country, including purchase of local products, the WFP has a package of interventions for the development of technical and institutional capacities. In **Peru**, work is in progress to improve the nutritional intake of meals, including the promotion of school feeding approaches linked to local agriculture. In addition, school feeding studies and technical analyses and impact assessments are carried out to inform and improve the decision-making process. In the **Dominican Republic**, technical support is provided in the areas of health and nutrition, FNE, and the government in the development of a national strategy for nutrition education at schools. In Cuba, in addition to complementing the government programme, the WFP works strengthening the agricultural value chain of beans to improve local production and ensure the link between producers and the SFP.

Box 2

The WFP toolkit

The SABER for School Feeding (SABER-AE, acronym in Spanish) initiative, developed by the World Bank, the WFP and the Partnership for Child Development - PCD, which is adopted as part of the WFP School Feeding Policy, is part of a broader effort by the World Bank to share best practices and establish benchmarks in various components of the education systems. The purpose of SABER-AE is to help countries identify strengths and gaps in their school feeding policies and institutional frameworks and to develop roadmaps for improving their national systems. With the support of the WFP, SABER-AE has been used in more than 30 countries around the world, including countries in the region such as Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and Peru.

The National Cost Analysis is a tool developed by the WFP that provides an in-depth analysis of all school feeding costs, offering a stable basis for identifying gaps and opportunities and defining possible cost scenarios according to the different modalities, optimizing the benefit for students and improving the return on social investment. This analysis helps prepare informed policy and strategy planning, cost optimization, implementation models, as well as subsequent analysis, research and documentation. Honduras carried out this analysis where the WFP works with the government on the consolidation and expansion of innovative school feeding models linked to local agriculture.

Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) is an economic model that forecasts short and long term SFP costs and benefits, providing a cost-benefit ratio. This tool is based on an economic model developed in 2010 by WFP and the Boston Consulting Group, in consultation with the World Bank. This initiative was already carried out in Plurinational State of Bolivia and Peru.

²<http://www.stop-hunger.org/home/partners.html>

Supply chain analysis provides a complete picture of the SFP supply chain to identify inefficiencies, gaps and opportunities for improvement. This tool was also used in Panama to analyse the SFP supply chain in remote and hardly accessible areas.

Others: As part of the partnership with the Stop Hunger² initiative, the WFP has a wide range of experts and technical assistance tools in various areas, including the analysis of the SFP's local supply chain at different levels, improving food quality and safety, as well as nutrition, communication and sustainable infrastructure development.

2.2.4 Supporting regional cooperation on school feeding

Regional cooperation on school feeding began in LAC more than fifteen years ago. The first regional school feeding network was established in Latin America in 2005 with the support of the WFP: the Latin American School Feeding Network (La-Rae). This network supports the school feeding programmes through knowledge sharing and learning and promotes cooperation among countries. From its origin, La-Rae promoted the integration of nutrition into the regional school feeding agenda. This has inspired the most recent regional school feeding networks in Africa and Asia.

The WFP Centre of Excellence Against Hunger was created in 2011 as a result of the joint commitment between Brazil and the WFP to stimulate South-South cooperation and build up efforts to end world hunger. As a result of a partnership to support governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America to forge their own sustainable solutions, the WFP Centre of Excellence is a global centre for South-South cooperation, to build up knowledge, develop capacities and a political dialogue on food and nutrition security, social protection and school feeding.

Thanks to its broad presence and networks in the region, the WFP, along with its partners, also facilitates the successful Regional School Feeding Seminars. For ten years, Regional Seminars organized by La-Rae, WFP and host governments have provided a unique opportunity to share experiences, discuss successful approaches and common challenges, and foster South-South Cooperation for more sustainable and effective

SFAPs. More than 18 countries and many international and regional partners and experts participated in the 2014 seminar in Mexico and the 2015 seminar in Peru. The VIII School Feeding Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Mexico City in 2017 and had a very broad and high-level participation.

Finally, WFP emphasizes the joint work with governments and partners to generate evidence at the global and regional levels as a strategy to share knowledge, identify strategic areas of work and opportunities for improvement and report on decision-making at all levels.

- Nourishing the Future: Nutrition-Sensitive School Feeding Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean, published by the WFP in 2017, was the first comprehensive study on school feeding carried out in the region with a coverage of 16 countries (WFP and La-RAE 2017).
- In the Regional Study on Reactive Social Protection against Emergencies in Latin America and the Caribbean, published by WFP and Oxford Policy Management (OPM) in 2017, school feeding was one of the programs analysed for potential use and expansion in response to emergencies (WFP and OPM 2017).
- The study on the Cost of the Double Burden of Malnutrition, carried out with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), analysed the cost of the double burden of education in Chile, Ecuador and Mexico; the cost is clearly reflected in the repetition and dropout rate (WFP and ECLAC 2017).

These regional publications show evidence of the global efforts of the WFP.



3. WFP and FAO joint work: three examples in LAC



In many countries in the region, FAO and WFP work hand in hand and join efforts to support governments to achieve nutrition-sensitive, of quality and more sustainable SFP. In general, the two agencies work towards the same objectives by sharing numerous strategic and programmatic aims. Inter-agency efforts have contributed to strengthen technical support as well as institutionalization and consolidation of SFP in the region. The responsibility for implementing the SFP, which traditionally falls on the Ministries of Education, has been transformed by integrating other strategic partners, such as governments, the academia, civil society and cooperation agencies, among others. The following paragraphs present three examples of the WFP and FAO joint work in Colombia, Honduras and the Dominican Republic.

3.1 Joint work in support of the Colombian Ministry of Education for the revision of the National School Feeding Guidelines

Since 2016, WFP and FAO have been supporting the Colombian Ministry of Education to revise the Guidelines of the National School Feeding Programme.

In September 2016, a national workshop on these guidelines was held in Bogota. This was the first meeting that gathered key stakeholders at central, regional and local levels: representatives of the Ministry of Education, WFP, FAO, and other national and international organizations, regional education secretaries, representatives of local governments, local organizations, among others. Key challenges were identified, and a work plan was drawn up regarding local procurement. Technical working sessions were set up to review the guidelines, including a session on nutrition and a specific session on local procurement. The WFP and FAO worked hand in hand and in support of the Ministry to discuss the redefinition of the guidelines and the necessary adjustments, through technical support and by sharing other regional and global experiences.

WFP and FAO joint work brought about key changes in the guidelines and a clearer redefinition of local procurements for school food supply. WFP and FAO presented an annex on the subject which was approved by the Ministry and consolidated into the guidelines after a careful evaluation in 2017.

In September 2018 the Secretary of Education of the District of Bogota organized the first International School Feeding Forum. The objective of the forum was to share experiences and knowledge on school feeding in LAC, analyse the factors involved in the process and propose work recommendations to improve management. Among the stakeholders who participated in the forum were representatives of the WFP and FAO, who shared their experience in the implementation of technical cooperation programmes and projects in the countries of the region.

In addition to this successful experience of working together, the WFP and FAO have had other experiences of collaboration, including field experience. For example, FAO promoted school and community gardens in areas where the WFP implemented school feeding programmes linked to local agriculture. In general, the work on school feeding linked to local agriculture has been focused on the coordination of each agency working area, where the WFP tends to focus more on the link between local agriculture and schools, and FAO works more on productive areas.

The objective also is to reach agreement on the same strategic line, both in school feeding and in other areas of work by joining efforts and geographical approach.

In 2016, the District's Secretariat of Education also signed a Technical Cooperation Agreement with FAO, which defined two lines of action, first, an Analysis of the comprehensive food services sector that offers hot meals in schools in Bogota where the study provided public policy recommendations for the Programme at district level, that can be repeated at the national level.

The second line of action was the implementation of a Healthy Food Environments Strategy in Educational Institutions at district level in five localities of the city. The objective of the Strategy is to ensure that the school environment facilitates the adoption of healthy food choices that positively influence the health and nutritional status of the school population. The Strategy developed a pedagogical component in healthy lifestyles with the participation of the entire educational community, students, teachers, parents and those in charge of school shops. The Strategy also included the implementation of the school garden as a learning platform for the food and nutritional security of the educational community.

3.2 WFP and FAO support to the Government of Honduras to pilot, consolidate and scale up innovative school feeding models linked to local agriculture

In Honduras, both FAO and WFP began encouraging local purchases from small-scale farmers and family farmers as early as 2009. Through the Purchase for Progress (P4P) project, the WFP promoted the connection between small producers of basic grains and the SFP, expanding the local purchase to local fresh produce. The FAO Sustainable Schools pilot in Honduras began in 2009. Although the piloted and implemented models had different approaches, components and structures, both agencies have worked in the same direction towards supporting the Government of Honduras in piloting and consolidating different local purchasing models. The result of this work, hand in hand with the Government, is that today more than 300,000 children in different departments of the country receive a ration of fresh products purchased locally and that complement the basic ration of dry products provided by the SFP with fresh products such as fruits and vegetables, eggs and dairy products, purchased directly from small farmers' cooperatives, rural banks, and family farming. This economic transaction between local farmers and the school has opened an enormous opportunity for public procurement, not only for SFP, but

also for regulating the participation of small producers in the procurement processes of other institutional markets.

Similarly, WFP and FAO are supporting the Technical Unit for Food Security and Nutrition (UTSAN, acronym in Spanish) in strengthening the Food and Nutrition Education Strategy. Through a participatory process, the UTSAN's education and health technicians, as well as key stakeholders at the territorial level, will set up the goals and impacts to be achieved with the implementation of the FNE strategy. They will also design the FNE actions to be carried out at school and community level. These activities will also consider the design of a complex monitoring and impact assessment system with the subsequent establishment of a baseline to quantify changes in behaviour and performance of students and other members of the school community.

3.3 Joint work to develop the new National Strategy for Food and Nutritional Education, within the framework of the SFP in the Dominican Republic

In 2016, WFP and FAO began to work with the Cabinet of Social Policies of the Dominican Republic to develop the *Road Map towards SDG 2*, which was finalized early in the year 2017. One of the key aspects proposed in the Road Map was the need to develop an FNE strategy within the SFP framework, providing life-cycle food guides for the population receiving health services from the public facilities network, including schools.

In view of this need, WFP and FAO continued to work together to support the Ministry of Education and the National Institute for School Welfare (INABIE, acronym in Spanish) in the development of a new *Communication and Education from School Strategy for a Culture of Food, Nutrition and Health in the Dominican Republic*. The strategy benefited from previous work and documentation that both FAO and WFP had carried out in this area in recent years. In addition, technical meetings and a workshop were held with other institutional stakeholders whereby the strategy was developed and approved by the Ministry of Education in 2017 (WFP and INABIE 2017).

Among the activities identified in the strategy, it is particularly important to carry out a *Formative Research*, with the aim of finding out what behaviours and performance need to be considered to design an FNE campaign at schools. In keeping with the same, WFP and FAO continue to work hand in hand with INABIE and the Ministry of Education. It is also important to continue monitoring and evaluating the impact of this intervention, which

in the short term will make it possible to observe changes in eating habits and healthy lifestyles, and in the medium and long term will contribute to achieving the goals proposed in SDG2, zero hunger, ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition in the country. In this process, the complementarity and articulation of the SFP with other social protection programmes, such as the Progressing in Solidarity Programme (PROSOLI, acronym in Spanish), which currently have a major impact on the achievement of Goal 2.1: End Hunger and Achieve Food and Nutritional Security (Agenda 2030), will be significant.





4. Conclusions and future opportunities

The SFP are powerful tools and core strategies of social policies that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and can be decisive in the face of the serious health and nutrition problems facing the LAC region today, jeopardizing the achievement of the goals proposed by the 2030 Agenda.

The specialized support of FAO and WFP has contributed to the strengthening of countries' strategic and technical capacities at both the central and local levels. This cooperation has resulted in the strengthening of the institutional framework and governance of SFP, and the recognition of the contribution of these programmes to the commitments undertaken by governments regarding food, nutrition and health. FAO and WFP have promoted and continue to promote the exchange of experiences, knowledge and lessons learned in the implementation of SFP in almost all countries of the region.

Specifically, some of the activities to be developed in an articulated and coordinated manner include:

- The FNE, supporting public bodies in charge of social policies to promote healthy eating habits and lifestyles both inside and outside schools.
- The development and strengthening of regulatory frameworks to define and propose models adapted and agreed to the reality of each country.
- Development and support for regional and sub regional space for dialogue on school feeding, through the organization of events and through a joint visibility strategy.
- Synergy for the creation of institutional markets for SFP by strengthening the technical capacities of family farmers and linking them to the planning of healthy menus.
- Generation of evidence, technical documents, lessons learned and best practices in school feeding and nutrition to serve as the basis for decision-making and improvement of SFP.

Despite the important results achieved in the last decade, it is now more necessary than ever to continue investing in SFP to consolidate the good work done so far and to meet new challenges. For the future, FAO and WFP will identify the following opportunities and priority areas of work:

- Continue to invest in improving the quality, sustainability and nutritional sensitivity of SFP, through technical assistance and sustained capacity building tailored to the needs of countries and at all levels. This includes maintaining a strong strategic focus on micronutrient deficiencies, obesity and overweight, and the double burden of malnutrition, harness the potential of the SFP platform to promote healthy lifestyles for schoolchildren, their families and communities and foster food and nutrition education and change in behaviour.
- Continue to invest in programmes linked to local and family farming, with the dual objective of improving nutritional content and dietary diversity for schoolchildren and improving economic opportunities for producers.
- Continue to support the institutions and governance of SFP, advocating for a stable political and financial commitment. This is essential to ensure sustainability, quality, and coverage throughout the school year, positioning the SFP on the political agendas and strategic priorities of governments.
- Continue to strengthen evaluation and monitoring systems, improving and innovating specific systems and indicators, and identifying gaps and opportunities. This is key for programmes to expand and respond to new challenges, gaps, etc.
- Continue to invest in the consolidation of regulatory and strategic frameworks, framing and consolidating school feeding within the broader social protection systems.
- Continue to generate and share knowledge and lessons learned and create a school feeding community of practice. Continue to promote studies, publications, systematizations, and events such as regional seminars and exchange between countries. Continue to promote South-South cooperation as an opportunity for intra- and inter-regional improvement. Foster innovative strategic alliances with the academia and the private sector in order to put the technology and innovation at the service of SFP.
- Promote gender, youth and community development, among other cross-cutting aspects, using the SFP platform with the aim of fostering local ownership of SFP.



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