

## **School Health & Nutrition Technical Assistance Facility**

### **Background**

To galvanize global, regional and national efforts to support the achievement of priority education reforms, the Global Partnership for Education taps into and deploys the vast expertise of the partnership and helps reinforce countries' capacity for system transformation. This is why, during its 2020-2025 strategic cycle, GPE launched the technical assistance initiatives, a new mechanism to bring expertise, tools and solutions to reinforce partner country capacity for system transformation. Through this mechanism, countries can access on-demand technical assistance to tackle complex cross-sectoral challenges impeding the achievement of education outcomes.

There are currently five technical assistance initiatives focusing on climate-smart education, gender equality, safe learning, school health and nutrition, and technology for education, each coordinated by a GPE partner or partners.

The School Health & Nutrition Technical Assistance Facility aims to enhance countries' capacities to set up and maintain nationally owned school meal programmes, as well as ensuring cross-sectoral ownership and sustainability.

Kenya and Lesotho have been identified as pilot countries and will receive support over 12-18 months starting in mid-2024. The World Food Programme, as the Secretariat of the School Meals Coalition and a GPE-accredited grant agent, is the leading partner carrying out the programme.

Through the Technical Assistance Facility, countries can access the technical capacities, partnerships, and tools available across the School Meals Coalition ecosystem anchored in a country-led, multistakeholder consultative approach. WFP will act as a country-level network connector for school health and nutrition programmes, helping to leverage the expertise of the Coalition and bringing a multiplicity of relevant actors into the picture.

The desired impact of the Facility is that countries have increasingly sustainable, gender-responsive and nationally owned school meal programmes, providing schoolchildren with safe, diverse, nutritious foods that are locally purchased. Specifically, this initiative aims to contribute to one or several of the below outcomes:

- Countries have increased sustainable financing to implement school meals policies and programmes.
- Countries have improved (costed) policy and legal frameworks for national school meal programs providing schoolchildren with safe, diverse, nutritious foods that are locally grown and purchased.
- Countries have improved the implementation of locally grown and purchased school meal programs that enable multisectoral coordination, complementary activities, and monitoring.
- Evidence and learnings from other countries are increasingly used to strengthen and consolidate national school meals programmes.

Following progress in these pilot countries, additional funding has been allocated to expand technical assistance to other countries, which are yet to be selected.

## **Pilot countries: Kenya and Lesotho**

In Kenya, the Facility will provide technical assistance to the government to support the implementation of priorities outlined in the operational plan for scaling up the national school meal programme. This comes as Kenya has committed to expand the planet-friendly school meal programme to universal coverage - from 2.6 million to 10 million learners by 2030. As part of this, the Facility will support the government by convening the first-ever national chapter of the School Meals Coalition, which will serve as the country's primary coordinating body for school meals; support the transition to clean cooking approaches; and contribute to sustainable financing strategies. This mechanism will bring together various government sectors, development partners, civil society and foundations to collaborate in supporting the government's ambitious scale-up effort, with strong anchoring in the ongoing education policy dialogue and ongoing efforts.

In Lesotho, the Facility will support the country's national commitments to the School Meals Coalition, recognizing school meals as a key policy tool for advancing human capital, socio-economic development, sustainable food systems, education, child nutrition, health, and gender equality. Following multistakeholder consultations and a two-day workshop led by the Ministry of Education in September, a list of five key priorities has been proposed for potential inclusion in the Facility. These priorities focus on supporting the National School Feeding Programme's sustainable financing, implementing the 2024 National School Feeding Policy, strengthening institutional and multisectoral coordination led by the Ministry of Education, updating menus and recipes, and mapping farmers and suppliers. Implementation is set to begin in January 2025 and will continue through August 2026.

## **A new way of supporting governments with technical assistance**

This GPE effort will also serve as the inception phase of a larger initiative spearheaded by a group of partners including WFP, GPE, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Novo Nordisk Foundation. Working within the School Meals Coalition ecosystem, and with a larger allocation of funding, it will provide strategic technical assistance and catalytic financial support to transition countries to self-reliant, sustainable school meal programmes, to reach an additional 150 million children by 2030. The Technical Assistance Facility will inform the design, testing and learning phase of this larger initiative that is set to launch in 2025.

Building on the School Meals Coalition's success in fostering country-to-country collaboration, this multi-stakeholder collaboration will break down silos and create an innovative and vibrant network of support. Each country's engagement will be tailored to specific contexts while adhering to core principles: it will be government-driven, evidence-based, and system-focused.

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