

# **Investing in Future Generations:** Human capital, sustainable food systems and climate change action through school meals



The **School Meals Coalition** (SMC) was launched at the United Nations Food Systems Summit in September 2021, with the aim to provide every child with a healthy and nutritious school meal by 2030. The Coalition is a member-state led growing network, supported by a Secretariat hosted by the World Food Programme (WFP). To date, **96** countries across the world have joined the Coalition together with **115** partners, including UN agencies, International Organizations, NGOs, parliamentarians, think tanks and academia, to improve and restore school meals programmes as a transformational platform for food and education systems.

Two years after its launch, the Coalition has achieved significant success. It is proving to be an innovative platform for multilateral action and a formidable tool for catalyzing national actions. Thanks to this momentum, there has been a sea change in the level of political will around school meals. Global investment in these programs has increased by USD 5 billion, from USD 43 billion in 2020 to USD 48 billion in 2022, reaching 418 million children, compared to 388 million before the pandemic<sup>1</sup>.

Under the high patronage of the President of the French Republic, the first School Meals Coalition Global Summit took place in Paris on 18 and 19 October 2023. Attended by 66 countries, 4 regional bodies and 65 partners, the summit presented an opportunity to showcase the mobilization and commitments of Coalition members in favor of school meals and to collectively set ambitious objectives for the years to come.

The summit underscored that the government's view school meal programmes as a powerful policy lever for transformation, extending beyond feeding children. School meals act as a gateway to a healthier and more inclusive and prosperous future. They yield multiple co-benefits and play a major role in addressing educational, social, economic and environmental challenges, while shaping healthy eating norms. The delivery of nutritious school meals for children serves as a safety net offering a strong lever to nourish the next generation, create jobs, drive economic growth, and foster longer-term development for countries across the world.

During the event, countries, regional bodies and partners presented their past and future efforts towards 5 main goals:

- Strong **country commitments** to expand and invest in school meals programs, making them available to all school children globally.
- **Regional bodies** showcasing leadership and unveiling regional visions and concrete national commitments that have emerged from a series of regional meetings held during 2023.
- Several **partners** to launch or kick start ambitious **initiatives** connected to food systems, climate and education.
- A clear **financing** action agenda aimed at improving the quality and sustainability of the programs.
- School meals positioned in the international agenda to contribute to some of the most pressing challenges of our time and the change in paradigm of economic development and wellbeing, including peace, social cohesion, and stability. **The meeting** served as a launching pad for the School Meal Coalition's engagement in **2024 and beyond**.

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1 - WFP. 2022. State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022. Rome, World Food Programme.

# 1. Country commitments

Countries showcased progress and announced new commitments to expand and invest in school meals programmes, with the vision of making them available to all schoolchildren globally. The target of the Coalition is to reach about 720 million primary school age children worldwide – with a current reach of 418 million, there are many children who still do not have access to these programmes.

During the meeting, Brazil joined France and Finland as a co-chair of the Coalition, and the SMC co-chairs welcomed **9** new country members and partners committed to achieve the Coalition's goals: Belgium, Italy, Latvia, Mongolia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Ukraine, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank.

When countries join the Coalition, they are encouraged to craft clear and ambitious national commitments aimed at both enhancing their own programs and assisting others in doing the same. These commitments can encompass various aspects, including expanding coverage and funding, instituting policies and standards, elevating quality, and fostering knowledge sharing and advocacy efforts.

At the Summit, **35** countries shared their progress so far and announced new commitments as part of the Coalition's efforts to reach 720 million primary school age children worldwide. Currently, **34** Countries have submitted their national commitments to the Coalition to expand and invest in school meals programmes, with their strategies for advancing national commitments in their respective contexts. There was a strong call for Coalition members and leaders to support each other in achieving these commitments. The interventions demonstrated that the Coalition is powered by national leadership and ambitions.



**H.E. Xiomara Castro Sarmiento,**  
President of the Republic of Honduras



*From left to right: **Valerie Guarnieri**, Assistant Executive Director, WFP / **Maria Laura da Rocha**, Secretary-General of Foreign Affairs, Brazil / **Ville Tavio**, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Finland / **Chrysoula Zacharopoulou**, Minister for Development, France*

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR?

The Summit spotlighted some remarkable examples of progress, showcased by a variety of countries as follows (alphabetical order).

### Armenia

- As of July 2023, Armenia assumed full national ownership of the school meals programme from the World Food Programme. The Government now provides healthy and nutritious food to all elementary schools in all 10 regions of Armenia except for the capital, Yerevan.
- Armenia established a specialized agency to ensure that the programme is run efficiently. Cooks who were getting symbolic compensation, are now part of the education staff.

### Benin

- The President personally committed to school meals. The Integrated National School Meal Programme is implemented through a partnership with WFP with domestic funds. The coverage has increased from 31% in 2016 to 75% today, reaching 1.2 million children. There is also multisectoral participation and local procurement is prioritized with 75% of food sourced locally.
- To ensure the sustainability, a draft law is being enacted which supports school meals with nutrition embedded in the programme, and an agency focused on School Meals has been created by a decree.
- Moving forward, the government committed to universal coverage in public primary schools by 2026, and has budgeted the resources required.

### Brazil

- Brazil considers the reinforcement of their national school meal programme, the largest in Latin America, as a fundamental element to lift the country out of hunger. In 2023, after 5 years of reduction, the federal budget to the states and municipalities for the national school meal programme increased by 40%, allowing 40 million children to benefit from the programme every day.
- Brazil also launched a large “No Hunger in Brazil” programme which coordinates non-conditional cash transfers, national procurement programmes and school meals. At least 30% of the food for school meals need to be sourced from family farming.
- International cooperation is another strategic area of work. Since 2008, the country collaborates with WFP, FAO and the UN to enhance South-South and trilateral collaboration with Africa, Latin America and Asia.

## **Ethiopia**

- The government is committed to ensuring the availability of food for students using the people-centered government policy and pursuing school feeding standards. As a result, drop-outs reduced from 1.2% to 0.3% and the grade repetition reduced to 0.8% within the last three years. Additionally, academic performance improved significantly in the schools.

## **Finland**

- Finland is the co-chair of the School Meals Coalition and hosted the first meeting of its Task Force in 2022. Finland is a firm supporter of WFP's programmes financially – it contributed a total of USD 3 million dollars towards school meal programmes in 2023.

## **France**

- As the co-chair of the School Meals Coalition, France spearheaded the Coalition with Finland.
- At the national level, school meals are seen as a key instrument of public health, education and social justice policy that also contributes to the economic empowerment of women and local economic development. More than 7 million meals are served every day. As a response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, free breakfast has been provided to 250,0000 children in 2022/2023. This programme will be expanded to oversea and fragile areas in France. In addition, children from disadvantaged families have been given access to school meals for one euro per day.
- France's recent legislation has made mandatory to use at least 50% sustainable or high-quality food products; including at least 20 % of organic products in school meal food supplies, and introduced one vegetarian meal per week in school menus.

## **Honduras**

- The President of Honduras highlighted the implementation of a national policy that provides free primary schooling and school meals. Today, 95% of students in the public school system – 1.3 million children – benefit from free school meals, including children from indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities.
- The national programme is developed with a community focus, engaging families, teachers, municipalities, communities, and seeks to expand local procurement to integrate smallholders into the economy, establish sustainable food systems and promote rural development.

## Japan

- All primary and secondary schools receive school lunches. Japan believes in the importance of nutrition and healthy eating and of nutrition education.
- Japan provides support to other countries on food education and home-grown school meals. In Sierra Leone, it provides support to ensure that rice produced by local farmers is used in school meals.
- The country champions knowledge exchange and technical support initiatives with countries like Bangladesh, Malaysia, Mongolia, and Nigeria.
- Japan desires that all children can have access to school meals and will support efforts going to that direction. The 2023 Osaka G7 Communique mentioned the importance of school meals as a safety net, an illustration of Japan's commitment to raising international attention to school meals.

## Luxembourg

- Luxembourg launched its new strategy Supply for future, which seeks to increase the share of local products in school meals to 50%, the share of organic products to 40% and vegetarian options to 50%, by 2025.
- A digital platform that respects European legislations on tenders has been established to allow suppliers to work directly with school canteens, reducing distance between producers and canteens, food waste and plastic pollution.

## Libya

- The Ministry of Education in the Government of National Unity has succeeded in working with legislative authorities to allocate 200 million dinars in the 2023 budget for school meals, but due to the political divisions in Libya, it is still difficult to get that funding transferred to implement school meals.
- The Ministry has also established positions in the organizational structures for a nutrition specialist responsible for overseeing the quality and safety of meals and ensuring that providers are abiding by regulations and quality standards, in addition to holding educational sessions on healthy eating habits.
- The Ministry is now working with stakeholders to formulate a strategy for school meals based on local products to enhance national ownership and building the capacities of local actors.
- It is also working with partners to make meals available in schools, in particular for children in the most vulnerable and distant areas and conditions. Central kitchens will be established in Dirna, the area affected by hurricane Daniel in 2023, to feed more than 20,000 students.

## **Namibia**

- Namibia has been piloting an innovative Homegrown School Feeding programme that aims to diversify and enhance the nutritional quality of school meals. Implemented in 29 schools in 7 of the 14 regions in the country, it is focused on regenerative farming methods and approaches adapted to dry climate conditions, including school gardens, procuring from small holder farmers as well as climate smart approaches like drip irrigation systems. This pilot will inform the future of the national school feeding programme.

## **Nigeria**

- The government institutionalized the National Home-Grown School Feeding programme that benefits 10 million children, promotes local economic development and provides income support to women as well as engages more than 700 local governments. School meals are among the key strategies to achieve national development priorities and is fully funded by the national budget.

## **Sao Tome and Principe**

- Sao Tome and Principe is the first country in Africa to provide free universal school feeding to primary schoolchildren, financed exclusively by the state budget. Building on this achievement, the goal moving forward is to promote local procurement and provide meals to all preschool, primary, and secondary school students by 2030.

## **South Sudan**

- The Government has developed a national strategy, which established a 5-year outlook for the school meals programme and is transitioning from a school meal in emergencies intervention to a Home-Grown School Feeding programme, a model that proves to be more affordable and sustainable.

## **Sweden**

- School meals have been implemented in Sweden for the last 70 years. They are funded by municipalities and free for all students. Sweden is already implementing many eco-friendly policies and recently conducted an analysis of the costs and the benefits that have resulted from the introduction of these policies.
- A pilot project, “A new recipe for school meals” has been initialized in four municipalities to innovate within the school meals system and connect food system transformation with changes in education, local resilience, and public health, with a strong focus on multi-stakeholder engagement at all levels. New policies will be developed based on the results of the pilot.

## **Tajikistan**

- In 2022, the Government endorsed the development of the school meals programme and initiated fund allocations for a total amount of more than USD 1 million from the state budget for 2021 and 2022.

## **The Philippines**

- The Philippines has undertaken a historic expansion of the school meals programme as part of the efforts to invest in the holistic development of learners, including a doubling of the budget for school meals to more than USD 200 million, a doubling of the number of school days when meals are provided, the introduction of hot meals, and the revitalizing school gardens.

## **Timor Leste**

- Timor Leste serves school meals to 350,000 children through its national programme, which is linked to locally produced food. In 2023, the national school feeding budget increased to ensure the quality of the meals. Empirical evidence has already shown the positive correlation between school meals and learning outcomes.
- The country is about to launch a school meals manual developed with technical assistance from WFP to further strengthen the programme, with a strong focus on nutritional quality.
- Timor Leste also promotes school gardens, which are part of the school curriculum, and education awareness campaigns.

## **United States of America**

- During the pandemic, US Congress funded free school meals for children. Ten States have passed legislation supporting universal free school meals programmes and twenty States are working to get their legislation passed for similar programmes.
- Since 2020, USDA has provided nearly USD 3.8 billion to purchase domestic and unprocessed foods with a focus to expand purchases from small and under-served farmers.
- Since the end of the pandemic, school meals provided with support from the USDA McGovern Dole programme have been instrumental in drawing children back to school, and providing not only an incentive to attend, but also alleviating hunger and supporting their critical learning. Presently, there are 48 active McGovern Dole projects in 33 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.



From left to right: **Celine Jurgensen**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, France / **Maria Laura da Rocha**, Secretary-General of Foreign Affairs, Brazil / **Ville Taviö**, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Finland / **Henry Ori**, Minister of Education, Suriname / **Curtis King**, Minister of Education, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines / **Ihor Kuzin**, Deputy Minister of Health, Ukraine / **Eduards Stiprais**, Ambassador of Latvia to France / **Ulbayar Nyamkhuu**, Ambassador of Mongolia to France / **Rita Almeida**, Manager of the Education Global Practice in Europe and Central Asia, World Bank

## WHAT ARE THE NEW COMMITMENTS?

Countries also unveiled new commitments, not only to move their national programs forward but also to contribute to the Coalition's overarching objective of ensuring that every child in school has access to a daily nutritious meal. The following countries made new commitments to scale up their national programmes and reach more children with healthy meals. Countries of all income levels have demonstrated that progress is possible despite the challenges, collectively announcing increases in their domestic funding (see section 4. Financing Actions). In addition to the countries that announced new commitments at the Summit, listed below in alphabetical order, several countries were acknowledged for having made recent commitments to the Coalition, including Bangladesh, Iraq, Lesotho, Liberia, and Senegal.

### Armenia

- The Government is committed to expand coverage to the capital, Yerevan, and to ensure that middle and high-school students have access to nutritious food and school meals by 2030, through co-funding mechanisms.
- Armenia is also establishing education programmes that include healthy lifestyles in educational curriculums.
- In September 2023, Armenia received 100,000 refugees. Many of them are school-aged children who are being enrolled in schools and will receive school meals. The school meals intervention will enhance adaptability in crises responses.

## **Brazil**

- As a co-chair of the Coalition, Brazil will multiply its efforts to promote access to healthy and nutritious meals in school in all countries through international cooperation.
- During its forthcoming G20 presidency in 2024, Brazil will emphasize school meals as a crucial instrument to combat hunger and malnutrition and to address poverty and inequality as part of the broader dialogue on a Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty.
- Brazil intends to strengthen its international cooperation efforts and will champion a new initiative, titled “International Cooperation Strategy on School Feeding” aiming to spotlight and disseminate best practices for enhancing sustainable school feeding programs, notably through South-South and trilateral cooperation.
- The University of Sao Paulo, in collaboration with the Research Consortium, will lead a case study on the programme in Brazil and will set up a community of practice on the use of artificial intelligence for the design of school meals.

## **Burundi**

- Burundi is committed to pursue universal coverage in pre-school and primary school and to gradually expand coverage to 50% in 2027 and 100% by 2032 (from 24% today).
- Next school year, 2023/2024, Burundi will introduce breakfast on top of lunches, thereby providing two meals a day in schools.
- The Government aspires to increase local procurement using farmer cooperatives and to engage smallholder farmers to contribute to community development.
- To achieve these goals, the government will continue mobilizing support for school meals, both at national and international levels. It will foster partnerships for the School Meals Programme, including with the United States through the McGovern Dole project.

## **Cote D’Ivoire**

- The Government of Cote d’Ivoire considers its school meal programme as a tool to develop human capital. In Cote d’Ivoire, only 36% of primary schools are covered.
- The country shared they are working to revise the National School Feeding Strategy to incorporate a multi-sectoral approach and include other sections like health and agriculture. The value for money analysis conducted with the Research Consortium will be important to demonstrate the value of school meals and inform this process.

## Finland

- Finland will continue providing leadership to the Coalition Taskforce and Working Group, as well as its engagement in the Sustainable Financing Initiative & the Research Consortium of the Coalition.
- The country is strongly committed at high level to continue its advocacy work to generate interest and resources towards school meals. Finland will remain a firm supporter of WFP's programmes financially. It will also continue to provide technical expertise for countries wishing to develop their school meals programmes, for instance by implementing procurement criteria that include environmentally friendly cultivation methods, food safety, nutrition, animal welfare and health, and by promoting the involvement of pupils in the planning, implementation, and assessment.
- A website will provide information about Finnish school meals and links to partners and stakeholders.

## France

- At the national level, France will pursue its national ambition, including through the "1€ school meal" and "free school breakfast" initiatives, and will scale up its efforts to achieve quality and sobriety through a "French Canteen Team". From 2024, all children in primary school will be expected to prepare a meal for their classmates with the school cooks and learn about the importance of unprocessed foods.
- At the global level, France committed to continue promoting the Coalition's agenda, including during the IFAD-13 replenishment session in December 2023, the 2024 Paris Olympic Games for sustainable development, and by implementing the "Call for food security" launched with its partners in September 2023, during the UN General Assembly. French research organizations, including Institut Agro, CIRAD, IRD and INRAE, will help identify solutions to meet the coalition's objectives.
- France has increased its financial support to school feeding in vulnerable countries and is committed to at least maintaining the same level for 2024, including through its financial support to WFP and its action against hunger globally.

## Haiti

- From 2024 onwards, the coverage of pre-school children will increase from 30% to 50% and local procurement from 20% in 2020 to 60% in 2024, thanks to increased financing.

## **Honduras**

- Honduras affirmed its continued commitment to fighting hunger and childhood malnutrition, particularly in pre-school levels. The government will continue working with FAO to improve the quality of school meals, supporting an integral and multisectoral focus to guarantee the nutritional quality of meals.
- Honduras is strongly committed to meeting the goals of the Coalition and to join forces with the partners to ensure children have the food, health, and education they need to grow and develop in a world of peace, equality, and justice.

## **Kenya**

- Kenya plans to expand the school feeding programme from 1.8 million to 2.5 million children in 2023, and eventually 10 million children, and to this end, committed to doubling the national budget.
- Kenya committed to champion planet-friendly school meal programmes during the Africa Climate Summit. Under the leadership of President Ruto, the country has anchored school meals as a climate change intervention in national efforts and is integrating climate-friendly measures into its national school meal programme, including clean cooking initiatives.

## **Luxembourg**

- Luxembourg ambition is to provide free meals for all students as soon as possible.

## **Lebanon**

- Lebanon commits to provide school meals to schoolchildren in all public schools and in some private schools in vulnerable areas by 2030.

## **Mexico**

- Mexico plans to reach universal coverage of free school meals – from 6 million primary schoolchildren being served to 18 million children. The country is committed to move towards healthier, less processed and locally sourced meals and to promote healthy school food environments.

## **Nigeria**

- Nigeria announced a commitment to expand the National Home-Grown School Feeding programme universally with plans to reach 20 million schoolchildren, including children with disabilities, those in emergency situations, those studying in internally displaced educational sites, and those in military and paramilitary schools.
- Nigeria will expand its partnerships and will continue its regional leadership and calls other countries in the region to invest in school meals.

## **Republic Of Congo**

- By 2025, the Republic of Congo committed to a strategy for school meals that includes healthy, well-balanced, locally purchased meals including kitchen gardens for all schoolchildren. The Government has committed to increasing and making the budget multi-year to implement the strategy.

## **Somalia**

- Increasing access to education for all children is a priority for the country. The Government issued a national policy for school feeding and held a multisectoral round table which resulted in commitments to develop a roadmap to establish a national programme, with a national budget allocation in the next fiscal year. The vision is to strengthen linkages with local smallholder farmers to promote economic growth and to continue building partnerships.

## **South Sudan**

- The Government committed to further develop the policy on school meals, strategy and programme that will institutionalize the home-grown school feeding programme in the country.

## **Tajikistan**

- The Government commits to increasing the budget and coverage, aiming at reaching more than 50% of primary students with nutritious hot meals by 2027 and reaching 100% as soon as possible thereafter. It plans to double the budget allocated to school meals for the school year 2023/2024.
- It also commits to upgrade school canteens and logistics infrastructure in all schools, and to support sustainable links between producers and school catering.

## **Togo**

- The government of Togo enacted a school feeding policy in 2020 and created an inter-ministerial committee to implement it. The Government is committed to engaging local farmers in producing food for school meals and earmarking 40% of financial resources for local produce.

## Ukraine

- The country initiated a reform of school feeding in 2020, which started with an audit of the school feeding system. The legislation was updated and school infrastructure was improved. Progress was disrupted by the war, but the reform did not stop. In 2023, 700,000 children from vulnerable groups are receiving free school meals, especially in conflict areas, and factory kitchens are being established. Ukraine offered to share this experience.
- The Government of Ukraine committed USD 39 million to renovate school kitchens in 2024, understanding the importance that they play for children affected by the crisis.

## United Arab Emirates (UAE)

- The UAE launched their School Meals Initiative, aimed at providing free nutritious school meals to all students in public schools within the next two years, moving from 0% to 100% national coverage.
- The government aims to have 70% of certain food items sourced locally and to establish a quota that will see at least 30% of the workforce associated with the programme being from low-income communities around the schools.
- UAE is hosting the COP28 in December 2028, which will have particular focus on food system transformation, including school meals. The UAE issued the Emirates Declaration on Resilient Food Systems, Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Action, and invited all country members to endorse it.



Panelists from left to right: **Awut Deng Acuil**, Minister of Education, South Sudan / **Musa Mohammed Almagrif**, Minister of Education, Libya / **Mariam Almheiri**, Minister of Climate, United Arab Emirates / **Ville Tavio**, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Finland

## 2. Regional bodies and initiatives

During the event, regional bodies took the stage to showcase their leadership and unveil their regional visions, presenting concrete actions and commitments that have emerged from a series of regional meetings held throughout 2023. Five regional bodies and groupings announced common actions in support of the scale up school meal programmes, including the launch of regional networks.

Representatives from the African Union, ECOWAS, the Regional School Meals Coalition Network in East Africa and the Latin American and Caribbean region discussed how they have been developing a shared regional vision and corresponding actions that could improve the quality and scale of school meal programmes, showcasing their leadership and how the Coalition has gained traction at regional levels. They demonstrated the power of regional peer networks and how they provide a platform for countries to learn from each other to address respective challenges and to jointly advocate for school meals, inspiring countries in Asia to advance regional coordination and learning. Discussions in the European Union are also starting in order to advance stronger and aligned commitment for school meals. Efforts and experiences of countries that are leading and championing regional peer to peer networks to strengthen school meals, like Brazil, Cambodia, Mexico, Rwanda, Spain and the Philippines, were evidenced.

### African Union (AU)

- Announced that African governments have made significant strides in school meal programmes through both financial and political efforts, with national financing now accounting for 85% of funding across countries from different income levels. These efforts have led to improved access to meals, enhanced quality of education, better health in schools, and improved nutrition.
- Highlighted the knowledge exchange that occurs every year with the support of the African Union in the African Day of School Feeding<sup>2</sup>. Countries, with support from AUDA/NEPAD, promote the development of Home-Grown School Feeding strategies to multiply programmes' impacts.
- However, only 31% of primary children were reached in 2022. The AU called its member countries to develop sustainable financing plans, ensure that their national policies prioritize school feeding, and foster collaboration across sectors. It also called SMC partners to support regional networks and exchange.
- The AU announced that school feeding will be showcased as part of the 2024 Year of Education in Africa and proposed a global or continental event.

### Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

- ECOWAS highlighted its focus on school meals as demonstrated in the technical regional meeting that took place in October 2023 in Dakar, Senegal, where countries exchanged experiences. Identifying new sources of funding and partnerships will be critical to scale programmes.
- As a follow up, ECOWAS announced the intention to host a sub-regional meeting at the ministerial level in 2024 involving Ministers of Education, Agriculture, Economy and Finance, and Gender to maximize the use of acquired experience and explore further partnerships and commitments.

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2 - During finalization of this report it was learnt that the 2024 African Day of School Feeding will take place in Burundi

## East African Community

- The inaugural meeting of the East African Community (EAC) regional school meals network was hosted by Rwanda in June 2023. The Network provides a platform for policy dialogue, peer learning and knowledge sharing, and demonstrates the strong country commitment to provide school meals. Shared challenges include financing and efficient use of available resources, and evidence to support advocacy. Each of the nine participating countries has appointed a focal person to ensure ongoing policy development and experience- sharing.

## Latin America and the Caribbean

- A regional meeting for Latin American and Caribbean countries took place in Brazil in August 2023, where 23 governments discussed the way forward for their national and regional commitments to school meals. Strategic priorities moving forward include 1. Maintaining political commitment and identifying innovative funding mechanisms for these programmes 2. Reinforcing policies to increase local procurement and food security impacts 3. Reinforcing the coordination between institutions in charge of school meals.
- Mexico will host 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the regional Forum of School Meals in July 2024.

## Asia

- The Philippines talked about the momentum to establish a regional network for school meals and announced that together with Cambodia and WFP, they will host the first regional meeting in Asia in early 2024 and another one in 2025.

## Council of the European Union (EU)

- The Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union announced that they will advocate for greater commitment of Member States to effectively guarantee all children and adolescents the right to at least one healthy and nutritious meal a day, as an instrument to fight child poverty, food insecurity and social exclusion, building on the European Child Guarantee. As a first step, Spain is convening a meeting on the topic in November 2023.



**Fernanda Pacobahyba**, Vice-Minister of Education, Brazil



*Panelists from left to right: **Jose Carlos Cardona Erazo**, Minister of Social Development, Honduras / **Fatou Sow Sarr**, Commissioner for Human Development, Social Affairs and Gender, ECOWAS / **Claudette Irere**, Minister of Education, Rwanda*

### 3. Partners initiatives

Partners –including municipalities and parliamentarians, as well as international and civil society organizations – discussed how they are supporting governments to achieve their goals and implement their laws and policies related to school feeding, and how they support more equal and inclusive education and societies. They announced ambitious initiatives connected to food systems, climate, education, and nutrition.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) led by World Vision and Plan International convened during the summit to strategize their support to governments, considering ideas like providing seed funding, policy advocacy, toolkits, case studies, technical assistance, capacity building, and building partnerships, as well as mobilizing accountability mechanisms at both grassroots and global levels. They issued a Joint [Civil Society Call to Action](#) for equitable access to healthy and nutritious, sustainably sourced school meals, that includes the need to secure adequate funding, enhanced quality and strong nutrition standards, and independent accountability.

The event also highlighted the significant role parliamentarians and local governments play in the Coalition. The International Parliamentary Network for Education (IPNEd) announced they will issue a toolkit to enhance parliamentary engagement on school meals and a new initiative “Cities Feeding the Future” was launched by the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. In many countries, these programmes are managed at the Municipality level within the local budget. Their management can positively impact urban food systems and citizens’ wellness.

The different initiatives of the School Meals Coalition, especially the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition and the Data and Monitoring Initiative, as well as partners and UN agencies also highlighted their efforts in supporting governments within the school health and nutrition ecosystem. This illustrated how research, analyses and data management is feeding into policy adoption, which in turn is feeding into more political will for practical, scalable solutions towards the school meals agendas.

The Summit evidenced that several partners and networks are working with governments to leverage school feeding programmes to transform food systems and/or to enhance the quality and nutritional value of the meals and optimize the impact for learners.



Panelists from left to right: **Joseph Nhan O'Reilly**, Executive Director, IPNEd / **Neema K. Lugangira**, Member of Parliament of Tanzania



Panelists from left to right: **Heidi Kessler**, Executive Director, Global Child Nutrition Foundation / **Kathleen A. Sherwin**, Chief Strategy and Engagement Officer, Plan International

## CITIES

### City of Milan, Italy

- The City of Milan announced the launch of “Cities feeding the Future”, an initiative aimed at supporting local governments in starting or improving their school meal programmes over the next three years. This initiative will be led by the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact in partnership with the School Meals Coalition and will focus on four pillars: championing, capacity building, advocacy and national dialogues, and research.
- As part of this initiative, they suggested to establish a group of School Meals Champion Mayors to help accelerate progress by sharing knowledge, best practices and challenges.

### City County of Nairobi, Kenya

- The Nairobi programme will be scaled from 100,000 children covered today, to 250,000 from January 2024, using a central kitchen model. Ten green kitchens have already been established. The model allows the large-scale and efficient preparation of nutritious, diversified and safe hot meals. The sector employs 1500 people.
- The city is encouraging shifts in the use of clean fuels in a bid to make school meals climate-friendly.
- The French Government committed Euro 1.4 million to support Nairobi’s School Feeding Programme.
- Nairobi is also deploying digital technology via smart watches to track children’s participation in the programme. These give students a sense of identity as well as trust in government.
- The Governor of Nairobi stressed that there is an opportunity for school meal programmes to engage more local governments as implementing agencies.

### City of Copenhagen, Denmark

- Copenhagen announced its support to the “Cities feeding the Future” initiative and shared its target to use 90% organic produce in public meals, including school meals (currently at 87%), reduce food waste and packaging, use green logistics and improve biodiversity through an ambitious food procurement policy, which is linked to food education components for students. In addition, children aged 11 or 12 years must attend cooking lessons once a week for a minimum of one year.
- The School Meals Programme currently employs 1,100 staff and organizes an annual dinner party to celebrate these staff and recognize outstanding performance of schools.

## City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- The City of Addis Ababa joined the SMC and the “Cities feeding the Future” initiative. The municipality’s school meals programme, which is institutionalized with an allocated budget, has expanded and today provides meals to more than 700,000 schoolchildren twice a day.
- The evidence-based Education Policy reforms included the use of school land for farming and school food supply, which has provided job creation opportunities for the community. The reform has improved school leadership, students’ school attendance and performance, as well as economic development in the city.

## City of Montpellier, France

- The objective of the City of Montpellier is to make healthy, nutritious, and sustainable foods available to the largest number of people possible using food pricing, menu diversity and a bold food procurement policy. Today, it distributes 15,000 meals using 5 -7 tonnes of food daily to schoolchildren and hospitals.
- The City is committed to use 100% organic and/or local product by 2026 (presently at 52%). It ensures daily vegetarian options in school to set an example and rolls out education activities. The municipality also works directly with producers to help structure local value chains, using very small tenders and criteria that focus on best food quality rather than best prices.



Panelists from left to right: **Sakaja Arthur Johnson**, Governor of Nairobi, Kenya / **Anna Scavuzzo**, Deputy Mayor, Milan, Italy



**Adanech Abiebie**, Mayor of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

## PARLAMENTARIANS

### Interparliamentary Network for Education (IPNED)

- IPNED's announced the intention to publish a toolkit for parliamentarians on school feeding, offering guidance on key aspects of parliamentarians' work: advocacy/ positioning in the government and parties' agenda, legislation, financing, and holding governments accountable for school meal policies and programs.

Parliamentarian from Tanzania and Ghana discussed how they support the goals of the Coalition from the majority party or the opposition.

- The parliamentarian of Tanzania stressed the vital link between nutrition and human capital development and showcased the role of parliamentarians in advocating for nutrition and school meals, passing legislation, ringfencing financing, and ensuring the oversight on government budgets. She described personal initiatives, such as collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture to develop National School Meals Guidelines, securing Tanzania's joining of the School Meals Coalition by advocating with H.E the President of Tanzania, and founding an NGO to implement school feeding with a focus on school gardening and community mobilization.
- The parliamentarian of Ghana, where the government fully funds a national school meals program, announced that the minority members in the parliament are initiating a private members' bill to enact a law to create an agency responsible for the school meals programme, with budgetary allocations, to make the programme more efficient. He committed to continue advocating with the Government of Ghana to join the School Meals Coalition.

## NGOs and NETWORKS

### Plan International

- Plan International announced that over 100 civil society organizations, including Plan International and World Vision, issued a call to action to hold governments accountable for effective school meal delivery. The call to action aims to unite civil society, and prioritizes the welfare of children, with a focus on those who need it the most. They encouraged other civil society organizations to join the call to action.

### World Vision

- Expressed commitment to the cause of school meals in the context of global turmoil, announcing that World Vision delivers one million school meals annually, making them a significant program in their portfolio.
- Highlighted specific initiatives in countries like Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Rwanda, emphasizing the role of school meals in community development.

## **The Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF)**

- GCNF hosts the Global Child Nutrition Forum, a multi-day conference, to facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges on relevant school meal program issues.
- The next forum will be held in late 2024, as an official part of the School Meals Coalition calendar, and will offer an in-depth look at the host country's program through school visits. The forum will help governments implement their commitments and serve as a platform for sharing operational strengths and learning. The content will be informed by the Global Survey of School Meal Programs, which collects data directly from governments. The new round of data collection will start in November 2023.

## **Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement**

- Called for a greater focus on healthy diets and a more systemic, multi-sectoral approach to delivering school meals, using a life-cycle approach, which requires collaboration across sectors that links health, education, food systems, social protection, and water and sanitation to create a school environment where children can thrive.
- Announced collaboration with France, the host of the next Nutrition for Growth Summit, to ensure that countries embed nutrition over cross-sectoral areas, including through school meals, as well as make multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder commitments.

# **UN AGENCIES**

## **United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**

- FAO and partners are developing a methodology to use data on schoolchildren's diets and nutrition vulnerabilities to make decisions on what school meals should provide in a specific context. The methodology will also integrate aspects of the school food system including food supply and environmental footprint, where possible. FAO emphasized the need to make sure that school meals are nutritiously adequate but also feasible and coherent with other school food environment and public procurement policies.
- FAO will open a call for 'young school food advocates' to help advance this agenda within and among their peers in schools.
- FAOs stands ready to support governments in optimizing the nutrition impact of their programmes through the implementation of robust nutrition standards and food and nutrition education, efficiently linking school meals with local production through sustainable and inclusive procurement, and developing school food and nutrition policy and legal frameworks.

### **International Fund for International Development (IFAD)**

- IFAD supports the goals of the Coalition and has been working in the school meals system, which is a keyway to build economies of rural communities including livestock. Currently, IFAD is supporting Home-Grown School Feeding Programmes in 19 countries, connecting rural communities to schools through food supply.
- Discussions on school meals programmes in the context of the ongoing consultation on the 13th replenishment of IFAD core resources were welcomed.

### **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

- The Transforming Education Summit in 2022 mobilized 167 countries to transform education systems including school meals. The Greening Education Partnership (GEP) was launched to respond to the global climate and environmental crisis. School meals play an integral role in supporting its objectives, particularly the three priorities of greening schools, greening curriculum, and greening communities. Through the education system, countries have the chance to prepare every learner to tackle climate change and promote food system transformation, healthy diets and sustainable development, and more cross-sectoral action is needed.
- COP28 will be the first COP that has a dedicated 'Education Day', which is heralded by Japan and the United Kingdom. As the GEP roadmap will be presented, it provides an immediate opportunity to create a joint roadmap with actionable targets and align the work of the SMC and GEP.
- The mid-term opportunity is to reshape the SDG 4 by building cross sectoral alliances for change in the education and other sectors, enabling education solutions to wider challenges.

### **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

- UNICEF committed to continue supporting governments and partners with implementing integrated programmes that drive change in education, school health and nutrition, with a focus on disadvantaged and marginalized children.

### **World Food Programme (WFP)**

- School meals will continue to be a flagship program for WFP, and the organization will support at least 70 countries with technical and operational support for their national programs, enabling them to reach at least 100 million children.
- As the global leader on school meals, WFP will collaborate with partners across different sectors to ensure school meals programmes are integrated with investments in quality education, malnutrition prevention, strengthened food systems and climate action.
- It will continue hosting the Coalition's Secretariat, providing a dedicated team to support the co-chairs, the member states, and the Coalition's initiatives and partnerships.
- Finally, it will track global progress by managing the Coalition's database, issuing the State of School Feeding Worldwide report every two years, and supporting all the outcomes of this Summit.

## ACADEMIA

### Research Consortium For School Health And Nutrition

- The aim of the [Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition](#) is to collect and share evidence from existing literature and on-going programmes and convert that evidence into policy guidance that is useful for governments and partners. This work is done through an independent global network of universities, researchers, and practitioners in the form of Communities of Practice. The Consortium currently has six communities of practice and works with partners like the Brazil Centre of Excellence against Hunger, CERFAM and IPNEd.
- The “Good Practices” community of practice aims to understand the reality of national programmes. The case studies produced by the community of practice provide information about the most important features of national programmes in 25 countries. The conclusions are summarized in the annual Research Consortium Statement. The Consortium called all interested member countries to develop a case study with the Community of Practice.
- Cambodia will be the first South-East Asian country to conduct a case study with the community of practice of the Research Consortium. Because of competing priorities for the education sector, the Ministry of Education needs evidence on the impacts on learning, to make a case for school meals and support its advocacy for increased budget for school feeding, hence the important role of the Research Consortium in supporting evidence-based research.
- New research and initiatives led by nutritionists on school-age children confirms the importance of good nutrition during the vulnerable phases of development throughout the “8,000 days”. The reporting gap in literature relating to school-age children and adolescents is related to the lack of measurement tools/indicators for this age group.
- The Nutrition Measurement Community of Practice of the Consortium builds upon this momentum to develop the evidence to support implementation of relevant nutrition and diet indicators targeted to school-age children. The Consortium first established the BOND-Kids project with the United States NIH and USDA, which generated the evidence needed to develop these indicators. The next step is to translate this evidence into indicators, beginning in Africa. The CoP is currently engaging with nutrition networks to identify the needs and how existing gaps will be closed.
- The Consortium presented an evidence-based white paper on [“School Meals and Food Systems: Rethinking the consequences for climate, environment, biodiversity, and food sovereignty”](#). The paper shows that school meals provide a unique opportunity to address multiple food system challenges and offers practical areas for action that are already implemented by countries such as Brazil, Germany, Kenya and Sweden. Some of the changes are cost-neutral or cost-saving, for instance measures to reduce food waste, or more fuel-efficient cooking. The Consortium can support countries costing planet-friendly changes in programmes. The Consortium invited participants to provide feedback to the working paper and to endorse its recommendations ahead the COP28, where the findings will be presented.

## Data and Monitoring Initiative

- The goal of Data and Monitoring Initiative is to establish and institutionalize a global data base for school health and nutrition as a global public good. As a result of the Transforming education submit last year, member states decided to revise SDG 4 targets and target indicators and for the first time, agreed on having a school meal indicator. The Initiative will develop this indicator and the process for collecting the data.

## PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS

### Dubai Cares

- Dubai Cares is hosting the second edition of the RewirEd Summit at COP28 on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2023. Dubai Cares, along with RewirEd Summit's strategic partners such as the SMC and WFP, will convene the education and climate sectors together to align strategies and agendas and collectively drive action through global and national commitments, innovative practices, and scalable solutions for school meals.

### Rockefeller Foundation

- The Rockefeller Foundation's support to the SMC is part of their Good Food Strategy. Influencing food production and the diets of large parts of the population can begin with changes in school meals menus and processes. The foundation has been investing in helping many countries introduce innovations to their programmes, starting with the United States. In Rwanda, they support the introduction of whole grains for 3,000 children. The programme now reaches 60,000 children with hopes to reach 4 million children in the future. Within a few years, use of whole grains will allow getting more food and nutrition to children, using 30% lesser fertilizer and land and this change is budget neutral.
- Rockefeller Foundation has also been working with National Council for Nomadic Education (Naconek) and accompanying the government of Kenya to scale the school feeding programme to 10 million children in a sustainable way, and build its capacity to make the programme as efficient as possible.
- As governments are increasing their investments in school meals, they called for an initiative to accelerate the capacity of the SMC to assist governments and enable them to build national capacities to implement large scale programmes, with support from philanthropies.

*Panelists from left to right:*  
**Stefania Giannini**, Assistant Director General for Education, UNESCO / **Johan Krafft**, Director-General of Ministry of Rural Affairs, Sweden / **Roy Steiner**, Senior Vice President, The Rockefeller Foundation



## 4. Financing Action

At the Summit, countries highlighted the importance of matching policy commitments with adequate funding, and illustrated how they are doing so in specific contexts.

Last year in Helsinki, the 2022 [School Meals Coalition Leaders' Declaration](#) spoke clearly to the need for “international financial institutions and multilateral development banks to launch initiatives which mobilize concessional, non-concessional and innovative financing for school meal programmes, considering high and self-reinforcing rates of return of cross-sectoral home-grown school feeding investment”. In Paris, a range of innovative financing options including debt swaps and blended finance leveraged through the multilateral development system were discussed, as well as current initiatives by international finance institutions in low and middle-income countries.

## COUNTRIES

### Benin

- The government committed to universal coverage in public primary schools by 2026, and has budgeted the resources required.
- In addition, the government is leveraging blended finance. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) has committed to support Benin with USD 25 million to strengthen the programme and achieve its commitments.

### Brazil

- School meals are a guaranteed right in the Brazilian constitution. There are financial allocations earmarked for the programme, making it free of charge for 40 million students per day. The law stipulates that at least 30% of the resources should be allocated to food being produced by family farms.

### Burundi

- The Government is planning to progressively increase the annual budget dedicated to the programme. In 2023, the Government almost doubled the budget increasing it from USD 2.5 million to USD 4.5 million.

### Cambodia

- Cambodia has made great progress on the school meals programme and announced that in the coming years the country will increase its national budget to strengthen the programme and provide quality and nutritious school meals. It will implement school meals as part of the broader social protection programme and integrate it into the national nutrition policy.

## European Commission

- The European Commission is committed to invest in school meals and create healthy school environments. It collaborates with European countries like France, Germany and Spain across the regions to promote home grown school meals, by connecting with local value chains, the provision of diversified and nutritious food, and climate change integration, including in Central African Republic, Haiti and Malawi.
- The European commission announced a USD 10 million contribution to the WFP-supported school meal programme in Afghanistan.

## Germany

- Germany expressed continued commitment to the Coalition and announced a 22 million euros project to accelerate school meals programmes, support the transformation of food systems and improve food value chains in Sierra-Leone and Laos over five years, in partnership with WFP. This collaboration is expected to generate evidence and frameworks that other member states can benefit from.

## Haiti

- Haiti has two innovative funds that will be instrumental to achieve the country commitments to increase coverage.
- First, the National Education Fund backed by Parliament, which includes school meals and is financed by remittances from the diaspora and a share of the revenue from phone calls coming from the diaspora.
- Second, the Multiplier financing mechanism of GPE, which acted a lever to mobilize additional funding and reduce debt interest rates. The USD 19 million (of which USD 11 million to school feeding) from GPE are complemented by funding from the Inter-American Development Bank, Education Above All Foundation and the United States Department of Agriculture McGovern-Dole Programme.
- School meals programmes support other efforts to strengthen education outcomes, in particular the Education loss compensation programme funded by Education Cannot Wait and other partners, aimed at improving school attendance.

## Kenya

- Kenya doubled the national budget from USD 15 million to more than USD 30 million in 2023 to accompany the scale up of the national programme.
- The county governments are also making commitments. The Government of Nairobi City County has put down €11 million this year just for the school feeding program and the national government is matching.

## Rwanda

- The school feeding programme in Rwanda is guided by the 2019 National Comprehensive School Feeding Policy, which expanded the programme to primary schools. Rwanda currently feeds about 3.8 million school children compared to 600,000 children in 2021. The scale up has been matched by an increase in the budget for school meals, which tripled to reach USD 90 million – compared to USD 27 million in 2020. This required to rethink the financing strategy.
- The Sustainable Financing Initiative provided technical support to develop a financing strategy to implement the policy. Operational guidelines have been developed and used as an effective costing tool to inform multi-sectoral policy decision making. One of the aspects considered was the nutritional value of the meals.
- The programme is funded through government subsidies and parental contributions. In primary schools, the government subsidy represents about 90% of the cost, and parents contribute 10%. In secondary education, government provides 85% of the funding (5% in the case of boarding schools, where three meals are provided).
- Rwanda is exploring innovative climate financing instruments with the support of the Sustainable Financing Initiative.

## Sri Lanka

- The Government of Sri Lanka is committed to expand the coverage of free midday meals from 1 million students to all the 1.6 million primary students by 2024 and to achieve universal coverage by 2030. To that end, it is committed to increase the national budget from USD 61 million to USD 204 million.
- The Government plans to introduce new act to establish a School Nutrition Fund to ensure the continued allocation of dedicated resources from the national budget.

## United States of America

- The Biden Administration is committed to expanding free, healthy school meals for an additional 9 million children by 2032.
- USDA is also focused on expanding local and seasonally available food to their school meal programs through the “Farm to School program”, which provides over 1 billion dollars annually to nearly three quarters of the school districts.
- The Government of the United States announced investing nearly a half of a billion dollars (US\$455 million) in food security, including US\$230 million for multi-year school meals programming in 7 countries through its McGovern–Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. The United States remains committed to ensuring the programs consider gender differences and are accessible, nutritious and inclusive.

# INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS

## Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)

- IsDB, a multilateral development bank, announced the Human Capital Development Initiative project, a blended finance mechanism of USD 2.5 billion focused on investing in the future of learners. This project, implemented in partnership with WFP, will use a multi-sectoral approach to investing in school meals, covering not only health and nutrition, but also agriculture, food security and out-of-school children who have been marginalized.
- They highlighted the need for donor support to soften the lending to Member countries, as done in Benin.

## Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

- In 2023, IDB stepped up investment in education to USD 1 billion and plans to prioritize education within the Social Sector in their institutional strategy.
- IDB also re-engaged in the financing of school meal programs, joining the School Meals Coalition, and collaborating with WFP to publish the first report on the State of School Feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean. Priorities for investment include helping countries increase the number of feeding days, and technical assistance to enhance quality and efficiency.
- An example of blended financing is the collaboration with GPE to support countries with multiplier financing mechanisms. They are currently working with Haiti to secure USD 44 million in grants.
- The bank is engaged in innovative financing debt swaps facilities to support countries including Ecuador to refinance their debts for other development initiatives.

## Dubai Cares

- Dubai Cares announced a feasibility study for a social impact bond model for education linked to school feeding. The project involves the Government of Senegal, WFP, the Credit Agricole, and Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation.
- The overall ambition is to develop implementable models around Home-Grown School Feeding by better connecting school feeding programs and local agricultural value chains. The strengthening of these value chains will support resilience amongst target beneficiaries and their markets. Through blended funding, the Social Impact Program will be able to contribute to transforming the education sector in Senegal.

## Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

- School feeding is a priority in the ECW Strategic Plan 2023-2026. ECW works with governments and partners to ensure that school feeding is part of a holistic approach to education that support the learning of all children and particularly those most at risk of being left behind, including children affected by conflict and disasters, and girls. ECW invested 15 million dollars in school feeding over the past four years.

## Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

- GPE is supporting developing innovative mechanisms for education, such as the Multiplier financing mechanism, in addition to supporting programmes through their traditional funding mechanisms.
- They launched the School Health and Nutrition Technical Assistance Facility, in partnership with WFP, which aims to strengthen countries capacity to achieve sustainable nationally owned school meals programmes that are gender responsive, providing school children with safe, diverse, nutritious food that is locally purchased. The technical assistance facility will help countries improve their policy and legal frameworks, develop sustainable financing strategies, improve local purchases of locally-grown food, and will strengthen the evidence base.



Panelists from left to right: **Ferdinando Regalia**, Social Sector Manager, Inter-American Development Bank / **Laura Frigenti**, CEO, Global Partnership for Education



**Tariq Al Gurg**, CEO and Vice-Chairman, Dubai Cares

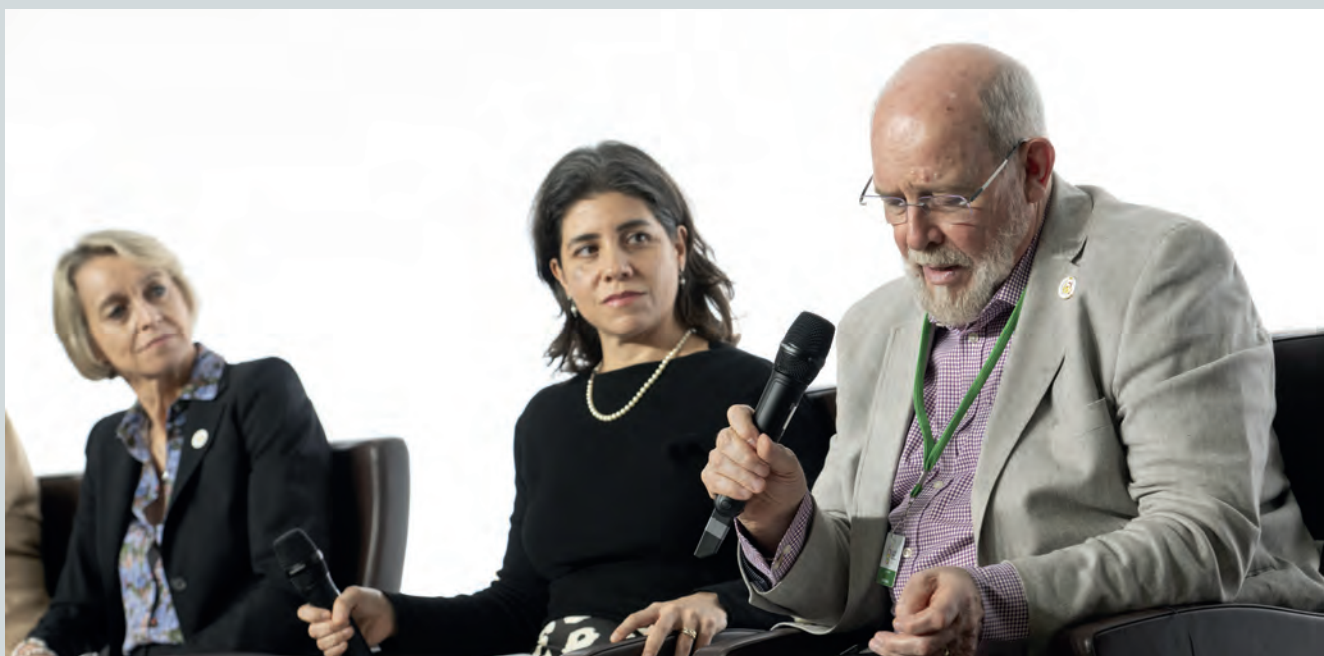
## SMC INITIATIVES

### Research Consortium

- The Value for Money community of practice studies the returns of investments across multiple sectors for specific programmes in specific countries, to support evidence-based advocacy and policy making. The example of Cote d'Ivoire was showcased at the Summit.

### Sustainable Financing Initiative

- The Sustainable Financing Initiative works with countries on costing and financing strategies, through research and analysis, direct country support and by raising the school meals' financing on the global agenda.
- The work is guided by the three main conclusions of the landscape analysis conducted by the initiative: countries or government do not have a clear financing plan for their school feeding programmes; there is a need to reinforce the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder nature of programmes in the advocacy and funding strategies – beyond education; and the international community has a role in closing the financing gap in low-income countries.
- The SFI highlighted the potential of looking at taxation systems, to identify if more domestic revenue could be generated, and exploring innovative ways to mobilizing funding, such as earmarking taxes for school meals as done in India and Bolivia. Considering how to improve programme efficiency is also key. On the international side, there is a need to increase the share of aid that goes to school meals, with new solutions such as debt swaps for school meals and climate-related funds.



Panelists from left to right: **Liesbet Steer**, Director, Sustainable Financing Initiative / **Carmen Burbano de Lara**, Director, WFP's School Meals Division and the Secretariat of the Coalition / **Donald Bundy**, Director, Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition

## Moving into the future

While the Coalition has already achieved major results, achieving the global target of ensuring all primary schoolchildren receive nutritional school meals by 2030 requires continued political commitment and additional resources and funding at all levels. Solutions to increase fiscal space of and support to low-income countries will be given special attention in 2024, notably through the Sustainable Financing Initiative of the Coalition.

This first School Meals Coalition Global Summit built on previous global dialogues including the Food Systems Stocktaking event in Rome in July, the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi and UNGA in New York in September, and G7 and G20 discussions. It highlighted the pivotal role that school meal programmes play in tackling global challenges for children and providing a platform for food systems transformation and the promotion of healthy diets. The evidence presented provided a better understanding of how school meal programmes can drive systemic change around the world, advancing human capital development, sustainable food systems and planet-friendly responses, and demonstrated the importance of government leadership and partners' support. The role of school meals in building trust in state institutions, restoring state legitimacy, and fostering stability was highlighted.

Participants agreed on the need to continue exercising political leadership to raise the importance of school meals in global discussions over the next two years, including at COP28, Nutrition for Growth, and the United Nations Summit for the Future, as well as political discussions within the G7 and G20, among others.

Recognising the importance of regional and global discussions on school meals a series of Coalition events were announced:

- Spain announced they will host a conference in November 2023, as part of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, involving 27 countries, to establish a common direction in ensuring all children receive at least one nutritious meal daily in Europe.
- UAE will host the COP 28 with a high-level segment on school meals during the education day.
- The Task force of the School Meals Coalition will meet at the Ministerial level in Kenya in 2024.
- ECOWAS will host a regional ministerial meeting in West Africa in 2024.
- Mexico will host the 10th edition of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Forum for School Meals in July 2024, together with a regional meeting of the SMC.
- The Philippines announced that together with Cambodia and WFP, they will host the first school meals regional meeting in Asia in early 2024, and a second one in 2025.
- Brazil announced they will host the next global summit of the coalition in 2025 and will work towards fostering south/south cooperation and peer learning.

