

## Towards nationally-owned and operated school feeding programmes

Countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean are seeking to strengthen their school feeding programmes and transition to nationally owned and operated programming. A key first step in this is assessing their educational policies using the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER).



SABER is a multi-domain initiative developed by the World Bank to conduct in-depth analyses of interventions that quantitatively and qualitatively impact education results (1, 2, and 3). The SABER programme collects comparable data on the policies and institutions of education systems around the world and benchmarks them against good practice.

SABER's aim is to give all parties with a stake in educational results a detailed, objective, up-to-date, easy-to-understand snapshot of how well their country's education system is oriented toward delivering learning, based on measures that can be easily compared across education systems around the world. A key result of a SABER analysis has proven to be the drafting of road maps and action plans.

The World Bank is supported by technical partners to develop specific SABER domains. For school feeding PCD and WFP contributed to research and develop the conceptual framework. PCD co-led school health and nutrition networks of focal points were utilised to draft and test rubrics and questionnaires<sup>1</sup>. While rubrics help countries determine their level of policy implementation (figure 1), the questionnaire constitutes a comprehensive checklist of good practices that builds participants' capacity on essential components of a school feeding programme.



Figure 1: SABER development stages and levels of policy implementation

## Findings

SABER school feeding is built around the five internationally agreed standards of good practice deemed essential for effective programmes; policy frameworks, financial capacity, institutional capacity and coordination, design and implementation and Community roles—reaching beyond the school.

<sup>1</sup> SABER was piloted in March 2011 by 17 Sub Saharan Africa ministry of education school health coordinators

**Table 1: Current policy implementation levels in a total of 14 countries<sup>2</sup>**

POLICY / LEVELS	LATENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED
National and sector policies	2	7	4	1
School feeding policy	6	6	2	
Financial capacity	3	9	2	
Multi-sector committee	7	4	2	1
School feeding Unit	3	9	2	
School-level coordination	10	3	1	
Monitoring Evaluation	7	5	2	
Targeting <sup>3</sup>	6	5	2	
Food basket	10	3	1	
Procurement	10	2	2	
Community roles	5	8	1	

The SABER analyses and the subsequent drafting of country action plans are calling for an inclusion of school feeding in national policies and legal frameworks. Concrete steps are being taken to develop multi-sector policies with the aim to strengthen financial capacity. Such activities also include involving the private sector but it is generally agreed that a progressive transition from donor-supported projects to national programme is needed. Of all five school feeding policy standards, programme design is in a large majority of countries at a latent stage. National standards and guidelines need be developed. The food basket does not generally meet international recommended daily allowances as also reported by Alyar et al. (6). Tools such as the School Meal Planner (SMP) are gaining increased interest to design nutritious and locally adapted available meals. Efforts are being made to understand how local communities and farmers can be more involved for sound sustainable programmes.

**Table 2: Policy gap findings of the countries who have undertaken SABER**

POLICY GOALS	FINDINGS
<b>Policy Frameworks</b>	
<i>Overarching policies for school feeding</i>	
<i>National-level poverty reduction strategy or equivalent national strategy</i>	<p>School feeding is not generally mentioned in national-level poverty reduction strategy (PRSP) or equivalent national strategy as a main objective. For example, Benin is one of the rare case examples and the mention in the 2007 PRSP led to an increase in school feeding programmes implemented in public schools.</p> <p>Sectoral policies and strategies (education sector plan, nutrition policy, social protection policy) in many cases identify school feeding as an education and/or social protection intervention with varying definitions of objectives and sectoral responsibilities. A systematic review of education sector plans of 42 sub-Saharan African countries conducted by PCD in</p>

<sup>2</sup> Senegal, Benin, Tunisia, Bolivia, Sierra Leone, Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, The Gambia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Ethiopia and Haiti

<sup>3</sup> The Gambia did not provide a score for this indicator

	2015 (5) shows that 95% of the plans specifically mention school feeding and nutrition.
<b>Financial capacity</b> <i>Governance of the national school feeding programme - stable funding and budgeting</i>	
	National budget lines for school feeding are reported in 71% of countries that have so far participated in SABER workshops. However, funds allocated are in many cases insufficient to meet demands. Disbursement modalities vary with countries directly transferring funds to decentralised units or schools and others through WFP or other partners. For example, The Republic of Congo transfers funds to WFP and a US based NGO IPHD. There is a significant portion of school feeding programmes funded by partners and fund mobilisation is latent or emerging.
<b>Institutional capacity and coordination</b> <i>School feeding coordination - strong partnerships and inter-sector coordination</i>	
<i>Multi-sector committee</i>	Interestingly, the preparation for SABER workshops is helping countries setup task forces that are becoming formalised and operational multi-sectoral steering committees. For example, following their national SABER workshop, Madagascar officially setup a steering committee with the following members: ministries of education, health, finances, agriculture, water, labour, the office of nutrition, the World Bank, WFP and FAO.
<i>School feeding Unit</i>	School feeding units exist in education ministries, however in many cases they are not adequately staffed. The level of responsibility varies from a division to a directorate. In the Republic of Congo, for example, they are planning to setup a national agency housed at the highest level of government.
<i>School-level coordination</i>	At the school level, coordination units when in place do not have a clear mandate and the resources to be fully effective. In rare instances such as in Namibia mechanisms for managing school feeding at the school level are uniform through a national reference manual that has been revised in 2013 and is in place in most schools.
<b>Design and implementation</b> <i>Quality assurance of programming and targeting, modalities, and procurement design, ensuring design that is both needs-based and cost-effective</i>	
<i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	For most countries, there is little or no policy implementation when it comes to school feeding monitoring and evaluation, the food basket modalities and procurement. If school feeding data is collected it is generally housed within partners' systems and not fully incorporated in general M&E systems.
<i>Targeting</i>	Targeting is in most cases directed toward vulnerable communities and zones and mapping relies in many cases on WFP or partners vulnerability assessments.

<b><i>Food basket</i></b>	The need for national standards is generally recognised but little is being done. Tools such as the School Meal Planner (SMP) have been developed by partners to help diversify the school meal menu to include locally produced foods and to meet energetic needs.
<b><i>Procurement</i></b>	Various models are being considered to facilitate local procurement and home grown school feeding but in many countries national standards need to be developed as. In Benin it is reported that food deliveries often do not meet demand and they are dependent on WFP storage facilities and trucks.
<b>Community roles—reaching beyond the school</b> <b><i>Community participation and accountability - strong community participation and ownership (teachers, parents, children)</i></b>	
	Different forms of school management committees or SMCs are reported, especially where school feeding is provided. However, these committees often do not have defined roles and responsibilities and therefore are largely ineffective. Participation of parents is generally judged non satisfactory although in some cases they provide in-kind contributions such as food, fuel and labour.

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