

Regional school nutrition guidelines for SADC Member States



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The importance of school nutrition programs in Africa

Today, African governments have largely recognized Home Grown School Feeding programs as an important “*strategy to improve education, boost local economies and smallholder agriculture and advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*”.¹ In addition, HGSF were incorporated in different continental strategic documents such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and in many countries’ national plans. Moreover, the African Union (AU) adopted the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) to operationalize the implementation of SDG4 “*to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*”.² School nutrition was therefore identified as a key element to advance the CESA’s Strategic Objective 2, which seeks to “*build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, to expand access to quality education*”.³

¹ WFP, FAO, IFAD, PCD, GCNF, NEPAD (2017). « *Home Grown School Feeding: Resource Framework. Synopsis* ». WFP, Rome.

² The African Union (2018). « *Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union* ». AU, Addis Ababa.

³ Ibid.

Throughout the continent, the implementation models of such programs might vary from one country to another and are often led by national governments and supported by international partners at the beginning, before being slowly transitioned to national government ownership. Even if the school nutrition programs are designed and implemented differently in Africa, the existence of some similarities in the beneficiaries, targeting criteria, complementary interventions, implementing actors and involvement of communities is undeniable.

1.2 Background on education and School nutrition programs in SADC region

In 1997, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States (MS) have adopted a harmonized protocol on education and training aiming at creating an integrated educational system to address issues related to access, equity, relevance and quality of education interventions. In order to implement some components of this protocol the CSTL policy framework was adopted in 2016 to ensure that SADC Member States were able to respond to the needs of growing numbers of vulnerable school going children and youth in the region. This is not only a guiding framework on how Ministries of Education across the region can foster collaboration with multi sectoral stakeholders, strengthen institutional frameworks and harmonize policies around quality education but it also outlines key interventions of care and support articulated around 12 pillars including nutrition support. Moreover, the SADC Food and Nutrition Strategy (2015-2025) is also highlighting the promotion of school nutrition programs in primary schools as a means to enhance

sustainable social protection.⁴

It is widely recognized that food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition are contributing factors to low enrolment, retention and school completion for learners. However, school nutrition programs have been recognized to be a remedy to address these issues. In fact, the strongest positive effects of school nutrition programs have been associated with education and learning outcomes. These positive outcomes are especially reflected in attendance, enrolment rates, reduced repetitions and drop out rates, improved retention, cognitive performance and completion.⁵

1.3 Rational and purpose of this document

Currently, most SADC Member States are implementing school nutrition programs or have had programs in past and even though their implementation models and package of interventions may vary, the overall primary objective is to contribute to improving learning outcomes. While many countries' school nutrition programs are primarily focused on improving learning outcomes, they are also increasingly expanding to consider other multi-sectoral benefits such as agriculture, health and nutrition and social protection. Additionally, although some countries have national standards on food modalities,

⁴ SADC (2014). « *The SADC Food and Nutrition Strategy (2015-2025)* ». SADC Secretariat, Gaborone.

⁵ The African Union (2018). « *Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union* ». AU Secretariat, Addis Ababa.

the content of the standards varies and do not necessary align with the objectives of the program or policy.

Therefore this guide can provide basic minimum principles to Member States that can be used when revisiting or updating their programs. Furthermore, since there is no regional school nutrition best practices document providing Member States a basis for optimizing the implementation of school nutrition programs and a common monitoring and evaluation framework, this guide will fill that gap.

Finally this document is a response to to the request made by Member States to have guidelines on school health and nutrition programs.

1.4 Structure of the document

This document is structured around the five quality standards (or policy goals that form the basis of an effective school nutrition program) recognized to develop school nutrition programs. These same quality standards were used in the questionnaire to assess the current state of school nutrition programs in SADC Member States. These standards are: the design and implementation, policy and legal framework, financial capacity, institutional coordination for implementation and community involvement. In addition this document includes a monitoring framework section to help streamline the data collection process in SADC Member States and allow the SADC Secretariat to assess the socio-economic benefits of these programs across the region.

Prior to developing this guide, an assessment report gathering information on school nutrition programs implemented across all SADC Member States together with observations on gaps was produced. After identifying the gaps, key recommendations on how to address these gaps were also made in the same report. Therefore, this document is built on observations and recommendations from the assessment report. To facilitate the use of this document by Member States, this document briefly explains each standard, break down key components of these standards where relevant, outlines basic principles or minimum elements to consider for each standard and highlights observations and recommendations from the assessment report. Moreover, links to additional resources that Member States can use if they would like detailed information on each section are provided. We hope that this document can help Member States understand or diagnose where the gaps are while reviewing their school nutrition programs, get actionable recommendations and use guiding principles to review the components that are not strong enough or to transition to Home Grown School Meal Programs. Since this document is covering all aspects of school nutrition, it is also our hope that the two Member States that do not yet have a nutrition program can use it to design their own nutrition programs.



School feeding in Botswana. Source: NEPAD Website: <https://nepad.org/nutrition/good-practice/school-feeding-programme-botswana-focus-home-grown-green-consumption>

2. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

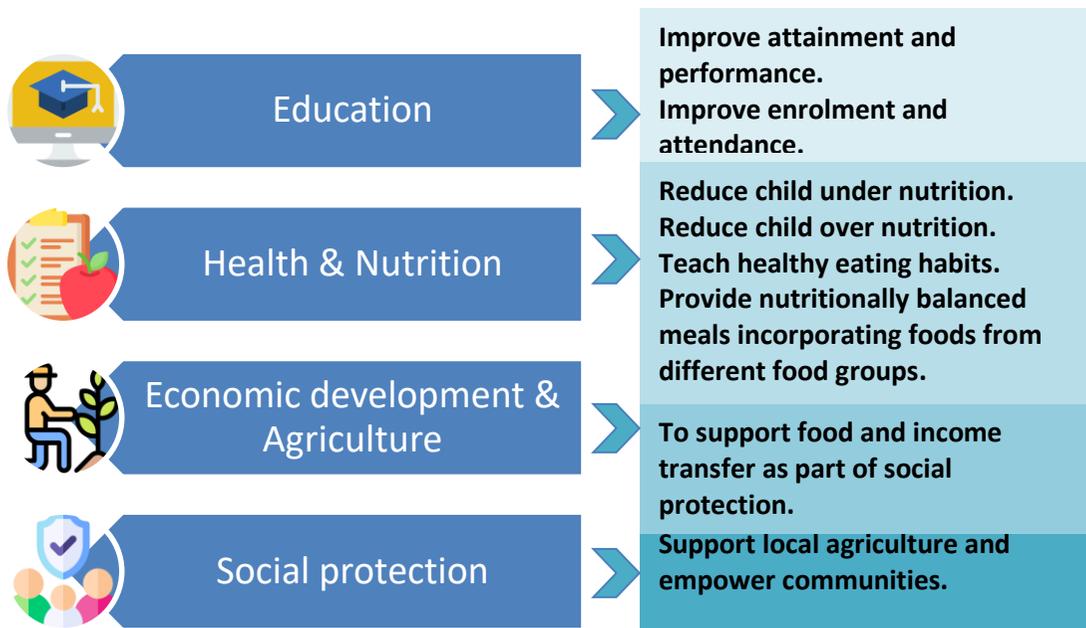
The design and implementation of the school nutrition program need to take into consideration the country's context and specific needs, which determine the beneficiaries, food basket, food modalities and source of food procurement.

COMPONENT 1: OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM



The objectives depend on the needs of the population and opportunities identified. The program objectives should be oriented towards achieving the identified needs of the targeted groups and the different sectoral benefits of the program (education, health and nutrition, economic empowerment and agriculture and social protection).

Suggested objectives per sector



Observations on the objectives of school nutrition programs in SADC

- Most Member States are not pursuing the same objectives when it comes to the implementation of school nutrition programs.
- Pursuing some common objectives under each sector education, health and nutrition, social protection and economic development for SADC MS could facilitate monitoring, evaluation and data comparison across the region.

Recommendations on program objectives

- SADC MS to select at least 1 or more of the suggested objectives from each section when re-designing or updating their school nutrition programs.
- Policy makers need to maintain flexibility in school nutrition program objectives because the countries' economic, social, political and environmental contexts are regularly evolving.

COMPONENT 2: COVERAGE AND TARGETING



- When designing a nutrition program, countries need to choose between universal and a targeted approach.
- The universal approach means that children throughout the country regardless of their socio status, gender or age will benefit from the program.
- The targeted approach is sometimes categorical/individual or geographical.
- Geographical targeting: children attending schools located in the geographical area selected will benefit from the program.
- Individual targeting: all children meeting the demographic factors pre-established benefit from the program.

Guiding principles on coverage and targeting

- **The targeting approach should be aligned with program objectives.**
- **Data that can be used for targeting are food insecurity surveys, annual statistics, school enrolment and attendance, gender parity, poverty levels and health and nutrition data, etc.**
- **Some other specific criteria to be used for targeting are: the need to have cooking infrastructure in place, having WASH facilities, land for school gardens, vulnerability status, remoteness of the community and employment status of parents and caregivers.**
- **Periodic re-targeting of the program based on updated data need to be conducted.**

COMPONENT 3: FOOD BASKET



- The food selected for the school nutrition program will determine whether the program can be linked to local agriculture production or not.
- A diversified and nutritious food basket can stimulate agriculture production and encourage diversification while contributing to increasing the consumption of locally produced food.

Guiding principles on food basket

- **Some criteria to take into account when designing a menu:**
 - **The nutrition requirements of target beneficiaries;**
 - **Food consumption patterns and traditions to determine the acceptability of foods by the targeted population;**
 - **Existing national food-based dietary guidelines;**
 - **Existing and potential foods produced by smallholder farmers;**
 - **Seasonality and prices;**
 - **Storage and handling requirements;**
 - **Vulnerability to safety and quality issues;**
 - **Preparation challenges.**

COMPONENT 4: FOOD PROCUREMENT



- Three food procurement models exist (centralized, decentralized and hybrid).
- In a Centralized model, all food procurement is operated at the national level.
- In a decentralized model, local structures are overseeing all food procurement aspects.
- In the hybrid model, responsibilities are divided between the central government and local structures

Observations on food procurement in SADC MS

- Not all countries are procuring food from smallholder farmers directly or have a deliberate strategy to do so.
- Some Member States are still importing significant quantities of food from outside.
- 3 Member States confirmed that they purchased more than 50% of food from smallholder farmers and the rest of the Member States are below that threshold or they do not engage farmers at all.
- A few countries reported that farmers are not always able to meet the demand for the entire school year.
- 6 countries reported that farmers receive support to increase their agricultural production and produce the quality and quantity required.
- Member States that do include smallholder farmers in the procurement system are not always tracking their economic empowerment or the impact on agriculture production through their monitoring framework. Sometimes such monitoring tools are inexistent.

Guiding principles on food procurement

- **Procurement processes need to be inclusive and use contractual modalities facilitating procurement of food from smallholder farmers.**
- **It is important to create linkages with sectorial interventions to overcome challenges in food system and facilitate farmers' access to inputs, credits and trainings**
- **Improve farmers' knowledge on agricultural innovations, post harvest storage, handling and food processing.**

Recommendations on food procurement

- SADC Member States that are purchasing less than 50% of their food from farmers or do not directly yet involve smallholder farmers in food procurement need to find ways to include them, increase purchase from them and gradually reduce import of food to strengthen local economies and boost agricultural production.
- It could be good to explore the possibility of allocating a certain percentage of food procurement to smallholder such as it is done in Brazil or create an enabling policy environment to ensure purchasing food from farmers is integrated in public procurement guidelines.
- Key Ministries need to provide more support and trainings to smallholder farmers so that they can meet the demand.
- To assess the returns of school nutrition food procurement on smallholder farmer's economic empowerment and agriculture production, Member States need to include some of the suggested indicators in this document to their monitoring framework.

COMPONENT 5: FOOD PREPARATION



- Parents or community volunteers often manage the preparation of school meals.
- Sometimes governments hire private caterers to reduce the burden on local communities and parents who are sometimes already contributing the programs.

Observations on food preparation in SADC MS

- Communities or parents involved in preparing school meals where there are no private caterers hired do not always receive incentives and this situation is creating frustrations.
- Private caterers receive some training on nutrition and food preparation but it is unclear whether this practice is widespread and what is the exact content of these trainings.

Guiding principles on food preparation

- **Involve communities and parents in establishing school meals preference to ease preparation.**
- **Ensure adequate facilities for safe food preparation and kitchen utensils are available.**
- **Understand traditional preferences and taboo around the food selected among the population targeted.**
- **Assess knowledge, attitude and practices of cooks, school staff and children regarding the food items selected and food preparation.**

Recommendations on food preparation

- It is important for Member States that are involving parents and local communities in meals preparation to provide some kind of incentives to cooks in order to reduce frustration.
- It would be worth creating harmonized trainings for both communities and private caterers who are involved in preparing food to increase their knowledge about around nutrition, food preparation, hygiene and safety.

COMPONENT 6: MEAL PLANNING



- Planning meals is sometimes a consultative process, which involves the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, School level committees and other key stakeholders.
- This process can also be delegated to the school level committee or nutritionist.

Observations on meal planning in SADC MS

- Copies of the menu are not always available and therefore the information provided on menu composition could not be verified.

Guiding principles on meal planning

- **Ensure that the menu is diverse, promote good dietary practices among pupils and adapted to local food habits.**
- **Ensure it contains locally produced food and fresh food such as vegetables and meat.**
- **Use menu development and meal planning tools.**
- **Provide trainings to cooks on the composition of nutritionally balanced meals.**
- **Regularly review menu composition and collect feedback from schoolchildren, cooks and school level committees.**

Recommendations on school meals planning

- It could be useful for some Member States to review their menu composition and rotate it on a regular basis to avoid monotony and ensure that children receive the

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some focal points do not rotate the menu enough and they have also indicated that children do not always like the food that is provided. • Where the menu does not change often, children do not always like the food. • Parents are not always consulted during the design of the menu. | <p>nutrients they need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One best practice could be for Member States to rotate the menu on a quarterly basis or twice a year to avoid overwhelming school level implementing committees or nutritionists. • Consultation of parents and pupils in designing the menu is important to ensure it is in line with locally acceptable diets and availability of food. |
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COMPONENT 7: ADAPTATION STRATEGIES



- Having a clear adaptation strategy in place ensures that countries are able to continue to provide school meals during school holidays or emergencies and the nutritional gains made are not lost.

Guiding principles on adaptation strategies

- While designing adaptation strategies, countries implementing nutrition programs need to contextualize and adopt the [Multilateral Checklist for School Re-openings and School-based nutrition in the context of COVID-19](#), which is covering school meals, school nutrition services, school nutrition education and school food environment.
- Some key principles in the checklist are:
 - Conduct education sessions with food handlers on proper hygiene and food safety practices in line with the modality for delivery that has been selected.
 - Encourage nutrition and oral health checks as part of regular health screening.
 - Update if required and reinforce curriculum content, messages and learning plans on healthy diets and good nutrition.
 - Update, monitor and enforce compliance with policies/guidelines to regulate the school food environment.
- Key considerations to take into account during the design of an adaptation strategy are:
 - The adaptation strategy for emergency school nutrition programs should shift from an activity centred to a beneficiary centred intervention focusing on child protection, food security, child nutrition and educational access.
 - Coverage should include in-school and out-of-school children which encompasses children who should normally be in school and those who are younger.
 - Modalities of emergency school feeding should be restricted to in-school meals and in-school snacks and take home rations when in-school meals are not possible.
 - Cash transfers to household needs to be dissociated from emergency school feeding programming but included in complementary household level interventions.
 - Targeting and coverage considerations in emergency school feeding programming must be based on WFP's Humanitarian Protection Policy,

which states non-discrimination as an explicit principle.

Observations on adaptation strategies in SADC MS

- Very few countries have a clear adaptation strategy to cope with emergency and ensure that meals are continuing to be provided during school holidays or other emergency situations.
- It is extremely important to ensure that all SADC Member States have a strategy in place to ensure continuity and avoid that the gains made are lost when new emergencies arise.

Recommendations on adaptation strategies

- All Member States should have adaptation strategies in place to ensure school meals are provided during emergencies and school holidays.
- Member States can use the guiding principles provided above during the design of these strategies or to update the content of their strategies.
- SADC Member States that have adopted new measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic so that vulnerable student groups continue receiving school meals could include these measures in their adaptation strategy.

COMPONENT 8: COMPLEMENTARY INTERVENTIONS



- When school feeding programs are designed and implemented along with other complementary interventions, it successfully contributes to addressing the nutritional and health needs of school-going children.

Guiding principles on complementary interventions

- Popularize FAO's approach to school-based food and nutrition education (SFNE), which is targeting children, adolescents, families and the broader school community.
- Integrate SFNE into school curriculum and relevant policies.
- Ideal content of the food nutrition education (food groups, importance of diverse diets, food hygiene, gardening, nutrition, etc.).
- Use school gardens as learning platforms.
- Develop and contextualized teaching and learning materials for these complementary interventions (posters, school books, etc.).
- Strengthen capacity of school educators to implement these complementary interventions.
- Having an enabling school food environment will render the implementation more effective.
- These complementary activities should be culturally appropriate, practical and have an adequate duration in class to ensure assimilation of content by pupils.
- Design sound monitoring framework for evaluating school based food and nutrition education interventions.
- Ideal package of complementary interventions could be: nutrition-education, deworming, WASH, school gardens, weight and height measurements, eye testing, HIV prevention and reproductive health.

Observations on complementary interventions in SADC

- All SADC Member States are conducting nutrition education together with a few other complementary activities.
- It is not the same complementary activities that are implemented everywhere and some countries are not teaching agriculture and gardening, which can be a good and fun way to improve knowledge about healthy dietary practices among pupils.
- Some Member States have a structured approach to teach nutrition education where it is both part of the curriculum and part of the school-feeding program with materials specifically designed for conducting these complementary interventions.
- Not all Member States are conducting nutrition education on a weekly basis.

Recommendations on complementary interventions

- SADC Secretariat could encourage Member States to adopt some core complementary topics to include in nutrition education such as school gardens, importance of diverse diet and food hygiene.
- Incorporating the topic in both school feeding program and curriculum together with having specific materials designed for conducting the complementary interventions will help propagate the message effectively.
- A few emerging and important topics covered by some Member States such as reproductive health, menstrual hygiene, HIV prevention and water purification could be adopted by other Member States in the process of re-designing or updating their programs and as a results it could contribute to improving health in schools.
- Other Member States should gradually expand the scope of complementary activities

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not every country is assessing the benefits of these programs on school going children, which represents a missed opportunity. | <p>towards a more integrated school health and nutrition program where activities such as height measurement, hand washing with soap, weight measurement; eye testing, etc. can be implemented along with the school meals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the impact of complementary activities such as nutrition education would be important to monitor change in behaviours and level of assimilation of content by pupils. |
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Additional resources for this section

- [Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union](#) P90, P105 (Menu design)
- [HGSF resource framework 2018](#)
- [Mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and nutrition of schoolchildren](#)
- [Framework for reopening schools June 2020](#)
- [Safe back to school: A Practitioner's Guide](#)
- [Multilateral checklist for school re-openings and school based nutrition in the context of COVID-19](#)
- [Rethinking emergency school feeding: A child-centred approach](#)
- [FAO school food and nutrition framework](#)

3. POLICY AND LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

Strong policy and legal frameworks are important to ensure a successful implementation of the school nutrition programs. Other factors contributing to successful implementation of these programs are the political will; stable funding along with a sound institutional coordination mechanism.

COMPONENT 1: SCHOOL NUTRITION POLICY AND CONTENT

- The school nutrition policy generally emphasizes on some of the following aspects:
 - Purchasing food from smallholder farmers;
 - Transitioning to a home grown school feeding program;
 - Other school feeding complementary interventions such as nutrition education, hygiene, etc.



Guiding principles on school nutrition policy and content

- **The school nutrition program is mentioned in sector education policies or other government strategic documents as an education or social protection intervention.**
- **These policy documents outline objectives and sectorial responsibilities for the school nutrition program.**
- **Alternatively, a stand-alone school nutrition policy is developed and outlines the objectives, the design, institutional roles and responsibilities, funding and path to sustainability of the program.**
- **A stand-alone school nutrition policy needs to be linked and aligned with other related programs and policies in education, health and nutrition, agriculture and social protection.**

Observations on policy framework in SADC MS

- A few Member States do not yet have a stand-alone school nutrition policy framework in place and their programs are supported by other government strategic documents and policies.
- Transitioning to home-grown school meals programs and inclusion of smallholder farmers in procurement are not always emphasized in the Member States' school nutrition policies.

Recommendations on policy framework in SADC MS

- Member States that do not yet have a school nutrition policy need to develop one to strengthen the implementation of school nutrition programs.
- School nutrition policies need to emphasize on the inclusion of smallholder farmers in public procurement process for school food in countries pursuing that specific objective or at least the transition to home-grown school feeding programs.

COMPONENT 2: NATIONAL STANDARDS ON FOOD MODALITIES AND RESTRICTIONS

- Nutrition guidelines and standards help ensuring that the food provided to children meet the nutritional quality and it is in line with the recommended food groups to be included in the menu and the right quantity for each food group.



Guiding principles on food modalities and restrictions

- The development of standards should take into account the capacity of those who will implement them and therefore be easy to use.
- Food modality standards should be context specific, in alignment with locally available food and respond to the school meals program objectives.
- Standards may contain the food groups, number of meals provided, minimum portions, frequency, restrictions and promote dietary diversity.
- Standards should be realistic and age group appropriate, especially in high socio-economic and vulnerability contexts.
- The restriction section might contain rules on content of sugar in food, provision of sweets, processed food, sugary drinks or limitation on consumption of food with low nutritional value.
- The national food standards should also be in line with the Codex Alimentarius, which outlines guidelines on food safety.

Observations on standards for food modalities in SADC MS

- Content of the standards on food modalities varies and does not necessary align with the objectives of the program or policy.
- Some countries that have standards on food modalities do not have rules regulating the provision of certain types of food and beverages in place.

Recommendations on standards for food modalities and restrictions

- Member States need to design national standards for food modalities and those that already have standards should ensure it is aligned with the program or policy objectives.
- The SADC Secretariat could provide support to countries that do have national standards in place to link them with the objectives of their programs, during the re-design phase.
- It would be worth including some rules regulating the provision of certain types of food and beverages when updating the standards or when developing food modality standards for countries that do not have such rules in place yet.

Additional resources on this section

- [FAO school food and nutrition framework](#)
- [FAO. Nutrition guidelines and standards for school meals: A report from 23 low and middle-income countries](#)
- [Legal Guide on school food and nutrition \(FAO\)](#)
- <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/65>

4. FINANCIAL CAPACITY

A stable source of funding is important for the sustainability of the school nutrition program.

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| <p>COMPONENT 1: EXISTENCE OF A NATIONAL BUDGET FOR THE PROGRAM</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School nutrition programs should have a budget line allocated to the programs that is disbursed regularly and timely. | <p>Guiding principles on financial capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Important factors to take into consideration when exploring the financial arrangements of the school nutrition programs are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ To identify which Ministry and specific unit will plan and budget for the school nutrition program.○ Establish financial accounting and reporting system to ensure transparency.○ Create resource mobilization plans.○ Enact co-financing mechanisms to ensure other line ministries contribute to the school nutrition budget through policies.○ Deepen cross-sectoral relationships to secure funding commitment.○ Expand co-financing mechanisms to local communities and private sector through in-kind donations or cash contributions.○ Explore the possibility of contextualizing some innovative co-financing mechanisms existing on the African continent and documented in the Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union document. |
| <p><u>Observations on financial capacity in SADC MS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Late disbursement of funds seems to be an issue and the budget provided is not always sufficient to cover all needs of the programs.• One Member State is still fully dependent on external funding for the entire school nutrition program. | <p><u>Recommendations on financial capacity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Member States need to review the budgets allocated to school nutrition programs to ensure it is sufficient to cover all programmatic needs and it is timely disbursed.• The only Member State that is fully relying on external support for funding the school nutrition program would need support to increase government's financial participation in the program. |

COMPONENT 2: COSTS OF SCHOOL MEALS



- Investing in school meals should be seen as a long-term investment in human capital development for countries.
- To determine the costs of school meals per year per child, four costs categories are taken into consideration (commodities, transport, operational and overhead costs).

Observations on costs of school meals in SADC MS

- Costs of school meals are still very high in some countries and the average cost in SADC region is \$87 per year per child.

Guiding principles on costs of school meals

- **Analyze and understand the factors that drive costs and costs categories for countries undergoing through redesigning their school nutrition programs.**
- **Conduct CBA where needed to review the costs of school meals.**

Recommendations on costs of school meals

- Countries undergoing through the redesign of their programs could learn from other countries with lower costs and how to estimate programmatic costs and keep these cost low while ensuring that children are still benefiting from nutritious meals.
- SADC Secretariat could request cooperating partners to provide technical assistance to countries that are undergoing through a revision of their costs to conduct a rapid cost benefit analysis (CBA), which is a good way to quantify the benefit ratio of these programs.

Additional resources on this section

- [Sustainable School Feeding Across the African Union](#)
- [WFP, HGSF: A framework to link school feeding with local agricultural production](#)
- [Cost Benefit Analysis](#)
- [HGSF resource framework 2018](#)

5. INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION



The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) tool indicates that the effectiveness of implementation of school nutrition programs is strengthened when there is a clear institution mandated and accountable for the program. It also needs to be complemented by a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism or steering committee encompassing key ministries such as education, health, agriculture and local government and establishing clear linkages between school health, nutrition and social protection programs.

Guiding principles on institutional coordination

- When designing a school nutrition program, it is important to clearly identify a national institution (home for the program) accountable for the implementation.
- The institution selected has the overall responsibility for program implementation.
- The institution selected must have a specific unit with adequate human resources encompassing cross-sectoral expertise.
- Then decentralized implementation structures need to be identified as well.
- Roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders at every level involved in the school nutrition program implementation must be clearly outlined in the policy framework.
- Some key functions of the lead institution are policy and standards setting, planning and budgeting, funds management, oversight of monitoring and evaluation and coordination.

Observations on institutional coordination in SADC MS

- Specific units dedicated to implementation and coordination of the nutrition programs are understaffed and do not always have or benefit from cross-sectoral expertise.
- In some cases there is no high-level support from key Ministries such as Agriculture, Social Welfare and Health.
- Working groups or steering committees where all actors involved in the implementation of school nutrition programs regularly meet to exchange on progress do not exist in all Member States.

Recommendations on institutional coordination

- There is a need to obtain high-level support from other key Ministries to avoid working in silo and optimize the impact of these interventions.
- There is a need to appoint experts to increase the staffing capacity of the school nutrition program units.
- The roles and responsibilities for these supporting Ministries need to be defined to improve accountability.
- School nutrition-working groups should be established in all MS.

COMPONENT 1: MULTI-SECTORAL STEERING COMMITTEE



- The steering committee acts as an oversight committee ensuring all actors are accountable for the program components and activities together with strengthening internal control mechanisms.

Key functions and composition of the steering committee

- It brings together representatives of public sector, national and international NGOs, CSOs and development partners.
- Key roles and responsibilities of the steering committee are advisory on various functions such as policy formulation, setting standards, resource mobilization, trainings, oversight, targeting, procurement and monitoring.

COMPONENT 2: NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION UNIT



- This is the unit that is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the program.

Key functions and composition of the school nutrition unit

- Ideally the unit should have an expert in education, agriculture, health and nutrition together with a Project Director and an M&E specialist.
- Along with the Ministry in charge of implementation, the unit should:
 - Manage overall design and implementation of the program and its results;
 - Mobilize and distribute appropriate resources;
 - Align with broader development strategies and sectoral policies;
 - Oversee monitoring and evaluation;
 - Identify capacity gaps;
 - Set priorities, targets and guidelines
 - Identify key implementation functions;
 - Providing overall supervision.

COMPONENT 3: SCHOOL LEVEL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES



- These structures facilitate coordination and collaboration at the local level.

Key functions and composition of the school level management structures

- It can be composed of local government representatives, school management committees, representatives of Parents-Teachers Association, Civil Society and Farmers Associations.
- This structure oversees and monitors the day-to-day implementation of the program at the lowest level.
- It provides feedback to the National school nutrition unit on what can be improved.

Additional resources on this section

- [HGSF resource framework 2018](#)
- [WFP, HGSF: A framework to link school feeding with local agricultural production](#)
- [Global school feeding sourcebook p31](#)
- <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/26517/114317-WP-PUBLIC-SABER-SchoolFeeding-Manual.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

6. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION



The participation of communities in the implementation of school nutrition programs whether it is through provision of in kind contributions or other forms of support has an impact on the sustainability of such programs and facilitates the transition from externally supported programs to national ownership.

Guiding principles on community participation

- The participation of the community in the design, implementation and monitoring is important to create local solutions to overcome challenges and facilitate empowerment.
- The school nutrition policy can outline the roles and responsibilities of the community together with feedback mechanisms for the community to hold the government accountable.
- Some of the community's responsibilities are:
 - Organization and preparation food;
 - Provision of cooking utensils such as condiments and firewood;
 - Provide support to school level committee or nutritionists to prepare locally appropriate menus;
 - Monitor food preparation and food storage;
 - Produce vegetable and fruits for the school nutrition program.
- It is important not to overburden communities with too much responsibility, which could distract them from their day-to-day activities.
- PTA committees can facilitate the dialogue between the school and communities.

Observations on community participation in SADC MS

- Most Member States do have a strong community participation in the implementation of school nutrition programs.

Recommendations on community participation

- Member States need to continue strengthening the involvement of communities in the implementation of school nutrition programs.

Additional resources on this section

- [Global school feeding sourcebook](#) p53-55
- <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/26517/114317-WP-PUBLIC-SABER-SchoolFeeding-Manual.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- [HGSF resource framework 2018](#)

7. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING



Strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks are key to successfully assess returns on these programs but due to budget constraints, the monitoring aspect is sometimes overlooked and thus limiting the possibility of making necessary changes for optimizing the program at minimum costs early on. Socio economic returns of school nutrition programs on education, health and nutrition, agriculture and social protection are immense and there is a growing amount of evidence to help practitioners assess these benefits. This section provides common indicators that can be included in Member States M&E framework to harmonize data collection and assess the returns of school nutrition programs by the SADC Secretariat.

Guiding principles on monitoring, evaluation and reporting

- **Governments should lead the design of Monitoring and Evaluation framework with the support from key Ministries' experts, academic institutions and key cooperating partners.**
- **The four following key aspects need to be taken into consideration during the design phase:**
 - **The information needed and rational (objectives, outcomes, indicators and outputs);**
 - **Tools and systems to be used for data collection;**
 - **Accessibility of the data and storage;**
 - **Information sharing and use.**
- **For developing the above aspects all key stakeholders involved in the design phase will need to follow these steps:**
 - **Aspect 1: First, analyse the program logical framework to identify the right results and indicators;**
 - **Aspect 2: Secondly, design the monitoring tools and data flows that are tailored to the information needed;**
 - **Aspect 3: Thirdly, assess existing capacity within respecting implementation units to manage the systems and tools;**
 - **Aspect 4: Finally, analyse how the information collected will be used and disseminated.**

Observations on Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in SADC MS

- Very few Member States focal points were able to share the monitoring framework. This may be an indication that implementers do not always know where to find the tool and it might not be properly used to update and review the program.
- All countries are not tracking the same indicators and some countries' M&E systems are only focusing on one sector (education or health/nutrition).
- Components that are incorporated in the M&E framework vary and

Recommendations on M&E framework

- Common outcome indicators to include in the M&E framework by all Member States to assess returns on different sectors are suggested below:
 - Under education, Member States could consider attendance and enrolment.
 - Under health and nutrition, awareness and consumption of locally available, nutritious and diverse food among school children and awareness of good hygiene practices among school children could be considered.
 - Under economic development and agriculture, Member States could collect data on agriculture production and job creation.

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| <p>they do not all include program indicators, baseline data or targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not many countries have integrated school nutrition indicators in the EMIS system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposed M&E Framework below for SADC Member States does not suggest a specific indicator under social protection because none of the Member States is currently collecting this data.• Harmonizing the data collection frequency for Member States will be important, maybe data could be collected on yearly basis since it is what some countries in the region often do.• Member States need to include some of the school nutrition indicators in their Education Management Information System to facilitate analysis, ensure it is stored in one place and it is available to policy makers when needed.• SADC Secretariat could create a depository system where all the Member States' data on school nutrition programs is regularly stored to facilitate institutional memory and sharing. |
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Additional resources on this section

- [HGSF resource framework 2018](#) (P86-92)
- <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/26517/114317-WP-PUBLIC-SABER-SchoolFeeding-Manual.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (P32-34)

8. PROPOSED SADC MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

| Outcome 1 | Indicators | Means of verification | Frequency | Assumptions |
|--|--|--|------------------|---|
| Improve enrolment and attendance of primary school learners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of school aged children enrolled each year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMIS School enrolment registers | Annual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of adequate infrastructures to support increased enrolment Enrolment will not affect the quality of education |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of children attending more than 80% of school days a year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School attendance registers | Annually | |
| Outcome 2 | Indicators | Means of verification | Frequency | Assumptions |
| Increase awareness and consumption of locally available, nutritious and diverse food among school children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of lessons on nutrition education are provided in a year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School lessons registers | Annually | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversification of food grown locally |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of countries that have nutrition education incorporated in their curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School curriculum | Annually | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All countries will incorporate nutrition education in their curriculum |
| Outcome 3 | Indicators | Means of verification | Frequency | Assumptions |
| Increase awareness of good hygiene practices among school children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of lessons on hygiene/health are provided in a year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School curriculum School lesson registers | Annually | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most countries will transition towards a more integrated school nutrition program and include health and hygiene in their complementary interventions |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of countries that have hygiene incorporated in their curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School curriculum School lesson registers | Annually | |
| Outcome 4 | Indicators | Means of verification | Frequency | Assumptions |

Increase agriculture production
(Not applicable to all Member States)

| | | | |
|--|---|----------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of farmers who have increased their agricultural outputs by commodity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys among farmers supplying food to schools | Annually | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmers procuring food to the program will benefit from technical assistance on agricultural production from relevant ministries and partners. Member States will create an enabling environment facilitating the integration of farmers in the school nutrition program and thus creating a stable and predictable market for their production. |
|--|---|----------|---|

Outcome 5

Increase employment in the community and beyond

| Indicators | Means of verification | Frequency | Assumptions |
|--|--|-----------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of jobs created because of the school nutrition program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys in all schools benefiting from the program GCNF country reports | Annually | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased investment in school nutrition programs will lead to more jobs created at the school and community level. |