



# School Meals Coalition Global Summit

Paris, 18 - 19 October 2023

## MAIN MESSAGES

The first School Meals Coalition Global Summit will take place in Paris, France on 18 and 19 October 2023. The theme of the summit is: **Investing in Future Generations: Human Capital, Sustainable Food Systems and Climate Change Action Through School Meals.** Head of states, ministers, local governments, law makers, development partners, and academia from across the world will converge in Paris to discuss their commitment to ensure that every child, by 2030 can receive a nutritious meal in school. They will show how they are using school meals as an effective policy lever for socio-economic transformation.

### TOP LINE MESSAGES

**Now is the time to invest more in school meal programmes to tackle the unprecedented challenges the world is facing.** Amid recurring extreme weather events, soaring learning poverty, conflict, economic shocks, and a tight fiscal space, scaling up school meals can help fight these challenges. Healthy school meals can support goals in education, food security, nutrition, health, social protection, gender equality and transformation, agri-food systems, and climate action. They promote social equity, human capital development and intergenerational fairness.

**There has been unprecedented progress in supporting children with school meals.** According to the latest available data, 418 million children are currently being reached with school meals worldwide and there has been a USD 5 billion increase in domestic financing for the programmes (from USD 45 billion in 2020 to USD 48 billion in 2022). In comparison, before the COVID-19 pandemic, 388 million children received school meals yearly. Low-income countries have increased domestic investment in school meals by 15% and 4 million jobs have been created, mostly for women. Progress has been driven by national political leadership at the highest levels, channelled through the School Meals Coalition.

**We have come a long way, but millions of the world's most vulnerable children are still denied access to the school meals that could transform their lives.** To achieve our global target of ensuring all 724 million primary school children receive nutritional school meals by 2030, we must reach the 430 million children that currently do not have access to these programmes. The first School Meals Coalition Global Summit is an opportunity for governments, donors, partners, lawmakers, municipalities, civil society, academia, and other stakeholders to discuss how they will work together to make this goal a reality.

### WHY SCHOOL MEALS?

**School meals are a single investment with the power to multiply socio-economic and political benefits.** The single intervention of school feeding can have effects across at least four different sectors - agriculture, education, health and nutrition, and social protection - with US\$9 in returns for every US\$1 invested.

**There is more to school meal programmes than a plate of food.** Healthy school meal programs help to end child hunger and poverty and tackle multiple forms of malnutrition. They attract children to school and support children's learning, nutrition, health, and long-term well-being. School meals can promote gender equity by supporting girls and boys to attend and graduate from school.

**School meals are a unique opportunity to tackle the multiple challenges facing food systems.** As a policy lever for food system transformation, school meals can stimulate economic growth and improve local food systems through promoting the production of diverse local foods to improve food security and nutrition, create jobs, and foster climate action in schools and local communities. They can make a substantial contribution to children's diet quality and right to adequate food.

**These programmes are not a silver bullet or the only solution, but they can help accelerate progress.** Investments in quality education and in nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life need to be done in tandem because school meals are not the only thing a child needs to learn and thrive. Similarly, there is plenty of complexity in food system reform and investments across a range of sectors is needed. But school meal programmes have an unrivalled potential to cut through that complexity, operate across policy siloes, and – above all – drive results.

#### **WHAT IS THE COALITION AND HOW IS IT MOVING ON THIS AGENDA?**

**The School Meals Coalition is a growing network of Member States and their partners focused on one goal: ensuring that all children receive a nutritious meal in school by 2030.** The Coalition helps countries to achieve their commitments. In a networked way, the Coalition breaks with the traditional logic of “north” and “south”, “donor” and “recipient” and recognizes that every member and partner have something to contribute and to learn. Together, they create the conditions for this new form of multilateralism that is based on country solutions to global problems; grounded in evidence; and intent on breaking siloes between sectors and partners, to make progress on some of the most important priorities of our time.

**Governments are at the center of this agenda and are mobilizing like never before.** Without political will, investment, and implementation in each country there is no hope of progress. Children everywhere, and especially the most vulnerable and in the toughest situations, deserve at least one meal in school, which is for some, the only meal of the day. Governments need to continue prioritizing these programmes, ensuring they are equitable, gender responsive and focused on vulnerable groups, while they hold each other accountable for the commitments they make in the School Meals Coalition.

**Civil society organisations are stepping up their essential role in supporting school meals development globally through collective advocacy, providing technical assistance, capacity sharing and fostering partnerships.** Long-term strategic support is essential to galvanise civil society organisations collaboration at local, national, and global levels to support governments deliver on their school meal commitments.

**Donor countries and international financial institutions are needed to help governments, especially low-income ones, close the gaps.** The case for a rapid expansion of school meals is well established and many of the world's poorest countries have demonstrated their increasing investments. However, slower growth, debt problems, and limited flows of aid and development finance have limited the fiscal space available. Small amounts of well-coordinated, strategically oriented aid from donors can make a big difference. A more ambitious, more robust, and better structured financing effort is needed.