



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

Ministry Of Basic And Secondary Education

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We, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, on behalf of the Government of The Gambia, express our strong determination to scale up the Home- Grown school meals programme to bolster recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We underscore the urgency to act now to protect the most vulnerable children from hunger and malnutrition, leaving no one behind.

We recognize that school meals play an important role in food systems transformation as they combat child hunger, poverty, and multiple forms of malnutrition. They attract children to school and support children's learning, long-term well-being, and health. School meals promote gender equity by supporting girls and boys to attend and graduate from school and reducing the risk of child marriage, early pregnancies, and gender-based violence. They also contribute towards a holistic approach to child well-being through the integration of education, nutrition, health, and social protection interventions, and serve as platforms to teach children about healthy diets and sustainable lifestyles.

Children and their families are not the only ones who benefit. Scaled up, higher quality school meals programmes strengthen national and local food systems, markets, and economy, by using locally grown food where appropriate, and expanding opportunities for smallholder farmers, m and local catering businesses, many led by women. Overall, we recognize school meals as impactful and efficient interventions, bringing significant social returns for the resources invested in them.

We envisage a world where every child can enjoy a healthy and nutritious meal in school by 2030, supporting the full realization of their human potential. To achieve this critical goal, we commit ourselves to working together towards the full implementation of the following:

1. Set out a long-term plan with the aim to restore access to school meals for children who lost them during the pandemic, and reach those previously left behind, especially in countries most vulnerable to poverty and climate change.
2. Improve our approach in a collaborative way, sharing best practices and lessons learnt tailored to national and local contexts.
3. Invest in scaling up progress through a research consortium, multi-sectoral financing taskforce, advocacy and outreach taskforce and initiatives around best practices and accountability; and mobilize the means required to implement this agenda through partnerships.
4. Work collaboratively with all stakeholders across the sectors and at regional, national, and sub-national levels to realize these goals.

Specific to The Gambia in accelerating the achievement of its National Development Plan and the SDGs by 2030:

1. Increase and strengthen capacity at the national School Agriculture and Food Management Unit (SAFMU) and streamline the human resource complement and organizational structure and institute and maintain a national multi-stakeholder steering committee to effectively support quality school meals planning, implementation and monitoring for greater success.
2. The mandate and authority, technical and logistical capacities of SAFMU to be strengthened and the Unit transformed to a full standalone HGSF Government Agency or Authority, or a full Directorate at a minimum.
3. Re-introduce regular deworming under the school feeding programme to intensify the nutritional health of children through the national home-grown school feeding programme.
4. Support balance and sustainable diet with food items borne through organic processes through school farms and gardens and iron fortified rice in all school meals.
5. Through a proper and adequate targeting approach, empower the mothers' clubs to scale-up in reaching more vulnerable children with a daily nutritious school meal.
6. Create a fiscal space to maintain an incremental school feeding budget line that will always adequately support all vulnerable children at any given time.
7. Continuous improvement of our approaches, through a collaborative peer-to-peer network for cooperative of sharing best practices and lessons learned.
8. Continue to strengthen the imperative link between food safety, food quality and nutritional standards in the whole of society and for the education of mothers, children and adolescents.

9. Empower mothers' clubs and other relevant stakeholders to effectively implement home grown school feeding programs
10. Scale up home grown school feeding programs to cover all public schools in the Gambia by the year, 2030
11. Adopt a broad-based multisectoral approach for the implementation of the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme and create strong linkages between the production/supply side (Ministry of Agriculture and smallholder farmers) and the demands /school meals delivery side (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education), while endeavouring to support and enhance the capacities to deliver, of both sides of the equation.



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Louis Moses Mendy

Permanent Secretary

