

CHAPTER 10

Program Sustainability

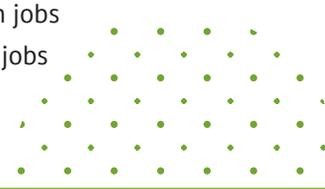
Across the programs captured in this report, there were some promising indications of program sustainability, with secure funding streams and growing government engagement or ownership of the program. Many of these points were noted in earlier sections. At the same time, there were also indications that programs in lower income countries are vulnerable to shocks, such as conflict or weather events, and were not yet able to meet their targets, such as the number of students receiving food through schools.

The share of funding for school meal programs provided by national, regional, and local governments varies across income groups. The average value is 29% in low income countries, though this increases to 71%, 96%, and 86% in lower middle income, upper middle income, and high income countries. Even among low income countries, there was strong dispersion in the share of government funding; just over half of low income governments in the data set provided up to 25%, while 12.5% contributed over 75% of the budgeted cost of school meal programs in their country. Another indication of program stability is the inclusion of school feeding as a line item in the national budget, and this was the case in 80% of the countries with school feeding activities covered in this report. For example, school feeding was included as a line item in eSwatini, where the stability of a consistent budget was specifically cited as a strength of their school meal program.



Government involvement, particularly in a managerial role, in school feeding is another indicator of program sustainability. As noted in **Chapter 5: Management and Implementation**, most countries reported having a national school feeding policy, law, or standard, and it was fairly common for some level of government to manage a school feeding program, including in low income and lower middle income countries. Within this subset, the national government was involved in 46% of programs, regional governments were involved in 23% of programs, and local governments in 25% of programs. At the same time, implementing partners were also very involved, managing (whether solely or jointly) 42% of the programs operating in lower income settings.

When school meal programs create jobs in the communities in which they operate, it can be considered an indicator of program sustainability, increasing the likelihood that the program will be maintained and supported by government. Across the 85 countries with large-scale school feeding activities that responded to the survey, over four million jobs were noted as being linked to school meal activities. Given the under-reporting of jobs numbers, this is surely an under-estimate.



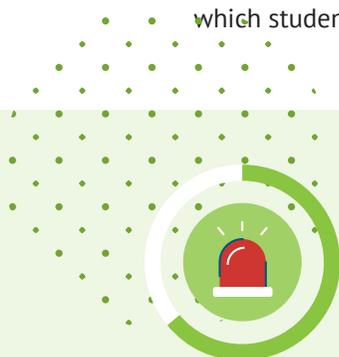
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Another indicator of program sustainability is the procurement of food through avenues other than in-kind donations (Bundy et al. 2009, p. 45). As discussed in Chapter 3: Food Basket and Food Sources, 85% of programs acquired some food items through purchase, whether domestic or foreign. At the same time, 56% of programs and 64% of countries received some food through in-kind donations. In low income settings, 70% of programs and 92% of countries received in-kind donations. This may be less sustainable than a market-based procurement strategy, as it leaves the programs vulnerable to foreign aid shocks or at the mercy of private sector donors.

A large majority of the school feeding programs reported that they either achieved their targets or “mostly achieved” their targets across several goals (Table 12). The other options were to report that the goals were “slightly achieved” or not achieved. Thus, 87-88% of programs mostly achieved their goals for the numbers of students and schools receiving food, and 88% mostly achieved their goals for the ration size given to each student. However, 29% of programs were not satisfied with the level of food basket variety, and it was more likely for programs to miss their food diversity targets in low and lower middle

income countries, especially in the Middle East & North Africa. Programs in this region, some of which reported serving date-filled bars/pastries as an in-school snack, were also least likely to meet their target for ration size. This indicates that programs are not entirely stable and/or have room to improve.

Compared to one year earlier, 70% of these countries reported either having maintained student numbers or experienced growth in the size of their school meal programs in the most recently completed school year. This, too, can be considered an indication of program sustainability. However, several countries in West and Central Africa also experienced marked declines in the number of students reached. These countries identified insecurity, violent conflict, and weather shocks as impeding their ability to reach students and maintain their access to food through the schools. For example, the Republic of the Congo reported that a recent financial crisis had led to insufficient funding for the school feeding program. Both the financial situation and a bout of post-electoral violence meant that the frequency with which students received food was reduced.



63.5% of the surveyed countries were affected by some type of emergency in the most recently completed school year.

Across the countries covered in this report, 63.5% reported that they were affected by some type of emergency in the most recently completed school year. Twenty-six percent were affected by a slow-onset emergency, such as drought, and 27% were affected by a natural disaster or conflict (Table 13). Among the countries with emergencies, 32% reported that the emergency did not impact the school feeding programs. However, emergencies caused a decrease in the number of students receiving food in 33% of the cases; a decrease in the feeding frequency in 31% of the cases; and a decline in the level of food basket variety in 20% of the cases. It should be noted that emergencies can also result in an increase in the number of students receiving food wherever the school feeding program serves as an effective safety net. Thus, the coverage rate increased after floods and tornados in Uruguay; after drought in northern Uganda; after an influx of immigrants in Colombia; and after conflict in the Central African Republic. In Botswana, a drought and an economic crisis meant that fewer children were fed through their schools, but those who were affected received more robust rations.

Some countries reported that emergencies have impacted their targeting approach or the modalities through which food is delivered, and 18% of countries that experienced an emergency noted that some school feeding operations ceased in response. Sixty percent of the 63 countries that responded to this section of the survey reported that they have preparation measures in place related to school feeding for future emergencies.

TABLE 12 ACHIEVEMENT OF TARGETS IN SCHOOL FEEDING

		SHARE OF PROGRAMS (%)					
		Feeding frequency	Level of food basket variety	Number of school levels receiving food	Number of schools receiving food	Number of students receiving food	Ration size
Region	Sub-Saharan Africa	76	64	82	80	85	86
	South Asia, East Asia & Pacific	96	75	91	92	88	91
	Middle East & North Africa	80	57	60	86	71	71
	Latin America & Caribbean	100	100	86	100	100	100
	North America, Europe & Central Asia	100	100	92	100	100	100
Income group	Low income	80	65	80	78	81	86
	Lower middle income	82	65	89	89	89	89
	Upper middle income	94	93	88	94	95	94
	High income	100	86	83	100	100	91
All	85	71	84	87	88	88	

TABLE 13 PREVALENCE AND IMPACT OF EMERGENCIES

Type of emergency	Prevalence across countries (%)	Impact of emergency/emergencies	Countries that experienced a decrease (%)
Natural disaster	27	Number of students	33
Conflict	27	Frequency of school feeding	31
Slow onset	26	Level of food basket variety	20
Economic crisis	15	Size of rations	16
Health epidemic	8		