

Preface

In late 2016, the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) set out to fill a void. While school meal programs large and small have been implemented for decades in most countries, these were not documented in a consistent and comprehensive manner. There was no global database, no global repository of countrywide program information, and no systematic global description of what was happening with these programs.

We began to talk with partners about the concept of a global survey in early 2017. The response was very positive. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Capacity Building and Development indicated an interest in knowing what was happening beyond their grant activities in countries where they were investing in school feeding. They also said they would consider funding the survey. The World Food Program (WFP) asked if they could work with GCNF to ensure that the survey results could be ready and available for an update of their publication “State of School Feeding Worldwide” (WFP, 2013). Other partners (e.g., non-governmental organizations, academia, and private sector players) expressed interest in having access to such data for research or advocacy purposes.

Bolstered by the positive reactions, we undertook the task of designing a global survey that would use a common vocabulary and a non-evaluative approach in order to produce a comprehensive description of all the core aspects of large-scale school meal programs around the world. The idea was for the survey to be repeated every two to three years in order to encourage improvements in countries’ data systems, to allow analyses of gaps and trends, and to help policy makers and program implementers to identify and advocate for needed improvements.

By early 2018, GCNF had drafted the core topics and questions for the survey, approached several universities to assess which ones could best assist in the survey design and implementation, and engaged more than 15 different organizations and individual experts in the field to review the proposed survey content.

We also enlisted teams of university students to dig through websites and documents that did exist regarding active school meal programs to put together the most up-to-date and comprehensive country-by-country profiles possible. This turned out to be a herculean and frustrating task, as documented by each wave of students enlisted and summarized in a report, “Filling the Knowledge Gap: The Global Survey of School Meal Programs,” by a University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy and Governance Capstone team, presented in early June 2019.

Work on the survey design was well underway by August 2018, when USDA agreement number *FX18TA-10960G002* was approved. Under the agreement, USDA reimburses GCNF for some specific costs associated with conducting two rounds of the survey (in 2019 and 2021). USDA's support ensured the survey's implementation and also gave priority attention to countries that received, or were eligible to receive, support for school feeding under the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program ("the McGovern-Dole Program") since 2013. The agreement included a matching requirement, requiring a commitment of a significant amount of additional funding from GCNF. GCNF has been able to meet the remaining needs thus far by tapping into a generous grant from the Stuart Family Foundation, funds generated from other donors to GCNF through its normal fundraising activities, and pro-bono services and reduced rates offered by some of the organizations and individuals involved.

The first round of survey data gathering, data cleaning, and analysis for the "McGovern-Dole countries" was completed in June 2020. The report—a key deliverable under the USDA agreement—was completed and submitted to USDA in mid-September, 2020.

This is the full report of the 2019 Global Survey of School Meal Programs ©. While this report summarizes the data received from around the world, it is still an overview. GCNF may pursue other research projects with the data and sincerely hopes that these first two reports will inspire others to request access to the data for additional studies.

We take this opportunity to extend special thanks to USDA Foreign Agricultural Service's Office of Capacity Building and Development, especially the entire Food Assistance Division and McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program team. Their early and ongoing support has been critical to the survey project.

We also extend our thanks to the World Food Program and its staff for their input to the draft survey, for help in translating the survey into multiple languages, and for the support of multiple WFP country offices and regional bureaus during the data collection phase.

We thank the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), especially Senior Research Fellows Harold Alderman and Aulo Gelli, for their help with the survey design, hosting of a survey-related seminar in 2019, and ongoing guidance and reviews.

We thank the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), especially its School Food and Nutrition Taskforce, for the thorough review of the draft survey and for ongoing support from their field and headquarters offices alike. Similarly, we thank the many partner non-governmental organizations, including Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children, and Nascent Solutions, who helped at country level to ensure that the survey was completed.

The University of Washington's (UW's) Evans School of Public Policy and Governance has assisted GCNF's survey work in a number of ways. Post-doctoral Research Associate Ayala Wineman has been with the project from very early stages. She was instrumental in fine-tuning the survey design and invaluable in the data cleaning, analysis and report writing stages. C. Leigh Anderson, Marc Lindenberg Professor for Humanitarian Action, International Development, and Global Citizenship and Founder and Director of the UW Evans School's Policy Analysis and Research Group has provided ongoing advice and support. Research Associate Federico Trindade gathered survey data from Spanish-speaking countries, and more than twelve UW Evans School graduate students assisted with early literature reviews, survey design, Chinese translation, and the very earliest stages of data gathering and cleaning. Students at Colby College, St. Mary's College, and Syracuse University have also contributed at various stages.

We also owe thanks for commenting on the draft survey questionnaire to: Boitshepo "Bibi" Giyose of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA, formerly known as NEPAD), Francisco Espejo (former head of School Feeding for WFP and of JUNAEB, the Government of Chile's school meal program directorate), Anne Sellers of Catholic Relief Services, Elizabeth Kristjansson of the University of Ottawa, Cindy Long and Yibo Wood of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, Lesley Drake of the Partnership for Child Development, and Christiani Buani and Bruno Magalhaes at WFP Centres of Excellence.

We owe huge thanks to the survey data gathering teams. The Africa team was headed by Alice Martin-Daihirou, based in Cameroon, assisted by Liliane Bigayimpunzi in Burundi, Priscilia Etuge in Cameroon, and Olivier Mumbere, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Asia, Eastern Europe, Middle East, Pacific, "and Elsewhere" team was led by Mamta Gurung Nyangmi, based in Nepal and consisted of Mary Bachaspatimayum in India, Melissa Pradhan in Nepal, Zhanna Abzaltynova in Kazakhstan, and Kholood Alabdullatif in Seattle. WFP's Bruno Magalhaes (based in Brazil) helped with Lusophone countries, and UW's Federico Trindade (in Seattle) helped with Spanish-speaking countries. Interns Josephine Laing and Yale Warner assisted our office in Seattle with data reviews and the production of country-specific reports; Yale continued to assist from Scotland.

We thank the Governments of Benin, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, and the United States for their patient and most helpful participation in the piloting of the survey in late 2018 and the work that followed.

The primary author of this report is Ayala Wineman. GCNF Program Officer Ryan Kennedy was of great assistance with the massive data cleaning effort, with the help of other staff members and multiple volunteers.

We thank the experts who reviewed this report, in particular: Senior Researchers at IFPRI Harold Alderman and Aulo Gelli; Nobuko Murayama, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Human Life Studies and Professor in the Department of Health and Nutrition, University of Niigata Prefecture in Japan; Lee Crawford Senior Research Associate at the Center for Global Development, and Boitshepo Giyose, Senior Advisor for Food and Nutrition Security at the African Union Development Agency (formerly NEPAD).

We thank the GCNF Board of Directors for their unflinching support and guidance, and the members of the GCNF Business Network and the Stuart Family Foundation for their generous support.

And finally, we thank the amazing network of survey focal points, implementing partners, and the whole myriad of people who worked hard to complete the 2019 survey and who work each day to ensure that schoolchildren are nourished, can learn, and thrive.

As noted in the Postscript to this report, the survey and the good work of all these actors can now serve as a baseline against which to examine the impact of, and actions in reaction to, the COVID-19 pandemic; the network of partners and focal points can serve as a resource to report, share knowledge, and mutually support efforts to mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic and its impact on school-age children.

It has been an honor to work with you all. We trust that this work has been of interest and benefit to you and your programs, and as we now prepare for a mid-2021 start for the second round of the survey, we look forward to working with you again.



Arlene Mitchell

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