

CHAPTER 4

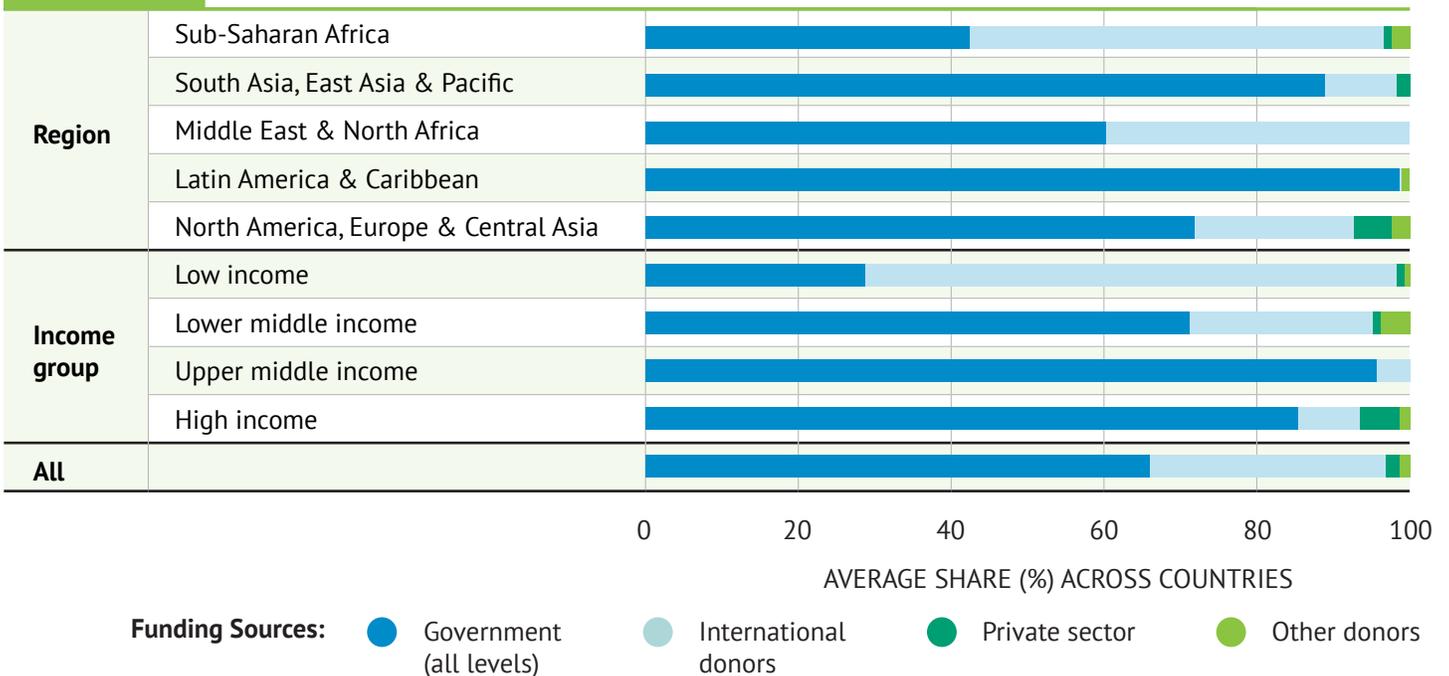
Funding and Costs

Many countries across all income levels contributed a sizable share of the funding for school meal programs in the country (Figure 15). (This discussion does not account for the contributions of students' families or other community members, though 86.5% of the school meal programs involve some community engagement, and this often takes the form of remuneration for cooks or in-kind donations of food or other supplies. In some countries, including Colombia, Switzerland, and the United States, contributions of local governments also were not captured.)²⁰

Across the 85 countries covered in this report, the summed total budget for school feeding activities in the most recently completed school year was USD 45 billion.²¹ Across countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the average share contributed by government was 42%. This was 60% in the Middle East & North Africa; 72% in North America, Europe & Central Asia; 89% in the South Asia, East Asia & Pacific region; and 99% in the Latin America & Caribbean region. In eight countries, including Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, the share contributed by government was 1% or less. At the other end of the spectrum, 33 countries (including some from every region) reported contributing 100% of the funding for their school meal activities.

FIGURE 15

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS



²⁰ Future rounds of the Global Survey of School Meal Programs © may capture the contributions of students' families in more detail.

²¹ For five additional desk review countries for which sufficient information on school feed budgets could be found, an additional USD 605 million is spent on school meal programs. These countries are Bolivia, El Salvador, Jordan, Nicaragua, and Peru.

Table 5 presents a summary of the budgeted cost per year per child receiving food. Note that this coarse measure does not account for the frequency with which children receive food, nor the quantity of food received. Across countries, the average amount spent per child was \$91 per year. This value was \$40 per year in low income countries, which is within the range of standardized costs estimated by Gelli et al. (2011). However, the average cost rises to \$44, \$124, and \$242 in lower middle income, upper middle income, and high income countries, respectively. In low income countries, larger operations tended to have lower costs per child. When accounting for the differences in operation size (in other words, when aggregating the numbers across countries rather than computing a cross-country average), the budget per child in low income settings was \$20 per year.²²

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Funding was characterized as “adequate” by about half of the programs (Figure 16), and as expected, this value increases with greater wealth. At 17% and 25%, programs in the Middle East & North Africa region and the Latin America & Caribbean region were least likely to regard their funding as adequate. As will be discussed in **Chapter 11: Successes and Challenges**, inadequate and unpredictable budgets were a common challenge for school feeding activities.

TABLE 5

BUDGET PER CHILD PER YEAR RECEIVING FOOD THROUGH SCHOOLS

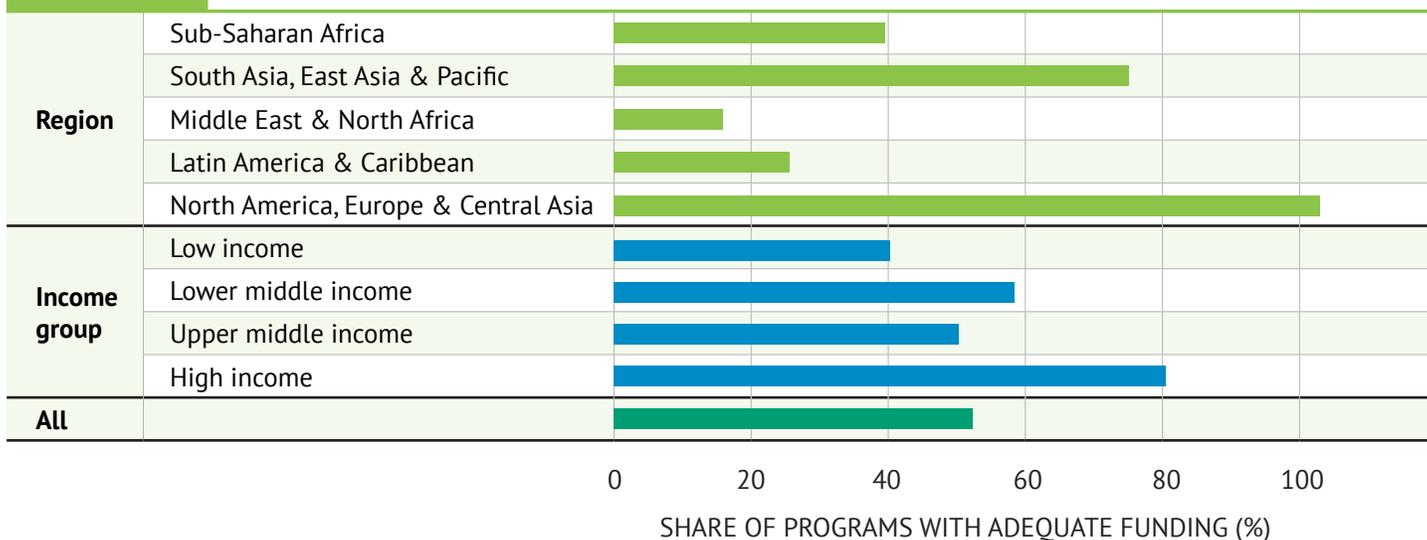
	Budget per child (USD) (average across countries)	Budget per child (USD) (weighted average across countries)
Region	Sub-Saharan Africa	41
	South Asia, East Asia & Pacific	136
	Middle East & North Africa	45
	Latin America & Caribbean	101
	North America, Europe & Central Asia	167
Income group	Low income	40
	Lower middle income	44
	Upper middle income	124
	High income	242
All	91	152

Note: Monetary values are converted to USD using the exchange rate from the reporting period (the most recently completed school year, often 2018/19). These have not been converted into purchasing power parity international dollars. The values for the Latin America & Caribbean region are very similar when we include budget information from several additional desk review countries, including Bolivia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru.

²² As a simple example, if country A budgets \$100 to feed 100 children, and country B budgets \$500 to feed 1,000 children, the cross-country average budget per child is \$0.75. However, when we aggregate the numbers across these two countries, \$600 is budgeted to feed 1,100 children. Thus, the aggregated or weighted budget per child would be \$0.55.

FIGURE 16

SHARE OF PROGRAMS THAT REPORT ADEQUATE FUNDING



One of the more striking findings to emerge from the 2019 Global Survey of School Meal Programs © is the correlation between school feeding coverage rates and having school feeding as a national budget line item (correlation coefficient=0.2, P=0.077). School feeding is a line item in the national budget in 66 (80%) of the 83 countries with school meal activities that responded to this question. This value was 65% in low income countries. Across the countries with no line item, 15% of primary and secondary school-age children received food through their schools (accounting for differences in population size), while across the countries *with* a line item, this value was 26%.

There was a strong correlation between coverage rates and having school feeding as a national budget line item:



26%

of primary and secondary school-age children received food through their schools in countries with a line item



15%

of children in this age group received food through their schools in countries with no line item

The average school feeding budget per year per child was \$160 in countries with a line item and \$41 in countries without a line item. On average, these governments also were responsible for a greater share of the total budget (73% in countries with a line item and 37% in countries without a line item). While these differences partly reflect the correlation between having a line item and a country's income level, the same pattern is evident within the set of low income countries. This underscores the importance of government commitment to school feeding, with policy implications for policy makers aiming to increase the rate at which students receive food through their schools.

Across the programs captured in this report, funding for the program was part of the national budget in 62% of the cases. It was most common (at 65%) for the Ministry/Department of Finance to decide on the amount of funding within the national budget, although it was also common (at 50%) for the Parliament/Congress/Legislative body to make this decision. The Office of the President/Prime Minister was involved in 26% of the cases.

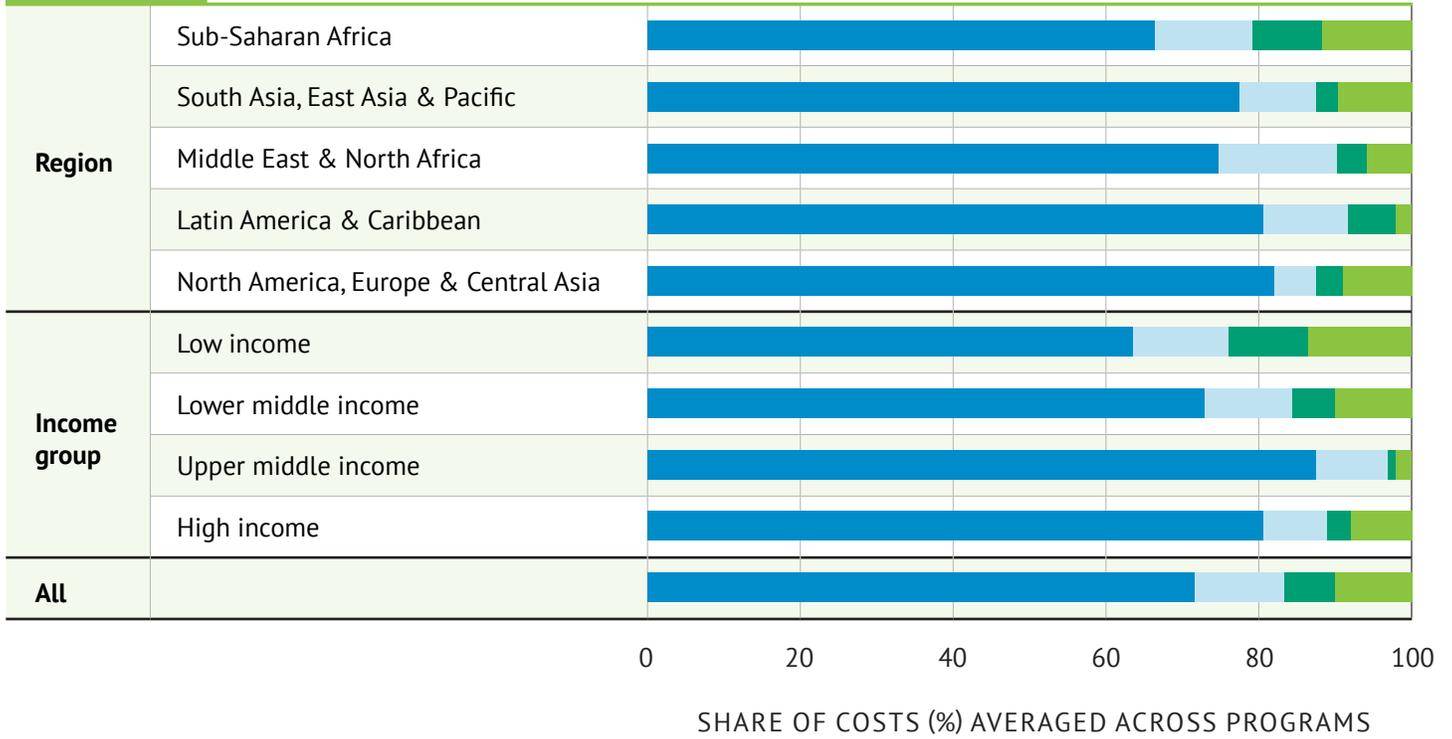
Some support for school feeding programs also came from student families, as was the case in 92% of the programs captured in this report. Among these, it was rare for families to pay the full price for a meal (at 9.5%), or even a partial price (at 17%), although this was more common in high income countries. For example, student families in Hungary, Tunisia, and the United States sometimes pay the partial or full price, depending on ability; all participating students in the public school canteens program in the United Arab Emirates seem to pay the full price²³; and school lunches in Saint Lucia were made available at a low price for all students. However, especially in lower income countries, families commonly contributed through in-kind donations, including the provision of home-grown food items, the donation of fuel wood, and the allocation of labor for cooking. Families also sometimes contributed to the cooks' salaries.

On average, among the 89 programs that were able to report a breakdown of their expenditures, 72% of costs went toward food; 11% toward handling, storage, and transportation; 7% toward one-time fixed costs (such as kitchen construction); and 10% toward other expenses (Figure 17).

²³ In the United Arab Emirates, government support for the school canteens program includes paying half of the canteen workers' salaries and funding nutrition awareness activities, though the price of meals is otherwise not subsidized.

FIGURE 17

DISTRIBUTION OF COSTS IN SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS



Spending on:
 ● Food costs
 ● Handling, storage, and transportation
 ● One-time fixed costs
 ● All other costs