



Developing Sustainable Financing Strategies for National School Feeding Programs

Offer of support to countries

Sustainable Financing Initiative (SFI) for School Health and Nutrition

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to detail to national governments willing to develop sustainable financing strategies for national school feeding programs the offer of support that is provided by the Sustainable Financing Initiative for School Health and Nutrition (SFI) as part of the activities of the School Meals Coalition.

Rationale



Domestic financing is key to ensure predictable and sustainable school feeding programs.



Countries mobilize a diversity of financing options (general revenues, earmarked taxes, VAT), but they often lack a credible financing strategy to support ambitious political commitments.



90% of school meals programs worldwide are publicly / domestically funded - this figure falling to 38% in LICs.



International support to school meal programs in LICs is shrinking and remains fragmented.

For these reasons, SFI offers support to governments with the development of sustainable financing strategies for national school feeding programs.

Background

SFI is an initiative of the School Meals Coalition led by the Learning Generation Initiative at the Education Development Center (EDC). The School Meals Coalition was launched at the United Nations Food Systems Summit in September 2021. More than 92 countries from the global North and South together with 113 partners (including UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and academic partners) came together to improve and restore school meals programs as a transformational platform for food and education systems.



Objective of the support

By working collaboratively with governments and donors, SFI aims to help countries to identify the cost of high-quality school meals programs, develop multi-year financing strategies to implement the programs and facilitate dialogue for the adoption of the strategy. It also focuses on transitioning towards country ownership and domestic financing sustainability.

Offer of services

- **Conducting fiscal space analyses:** this will analyse financial performance, national resources, general and/or earmarked funding to specific sectors and to education and school feeding. It will examine the performance of public expenditure, national budget cycles and disbursement mechanisms, timeliness, and efficiency. It will assess the prioritization of government resources and potential for expanding the fiscal space and identify priority options for increased spending on school feeding.
- **Conducting full costing analyses:** This will calculate the full costs of a quality national school feeding program including food, management, procurement, monitoring, and capacity strengthening. Analyses will identify potential cost reductions and national resources to cover the costs of school feeding and the funding gaps that would need to be addressed by the government or partners.
- **Development and facilitation of national financing strategies:** This will identify sources of possible financing including revenues, innovative mechanisms and/or parental contributions to fill the funding gaps. SFI will engage with ministries of finance, planning, parliamentarians and their committees, and other relevant stakeholders to develop realistic options that will contribute to a sustainable financing strategy.
- **Facilitating dialogues and discussions around financing for school meal programs:** in order to raise the profile and encourage greater engagement on financing of school meals, the SFI can work with the government and local partners to facilitate stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue on school feeding financing, involving international and local donors.

To support the offer, SFI has a detailed methodology, guidance note and cost and financing tool to guide this work. The services to be provided will be tailored to the needs of the country.

Conditionality to receive support

Criteria for identifying countries for SFI support will include:

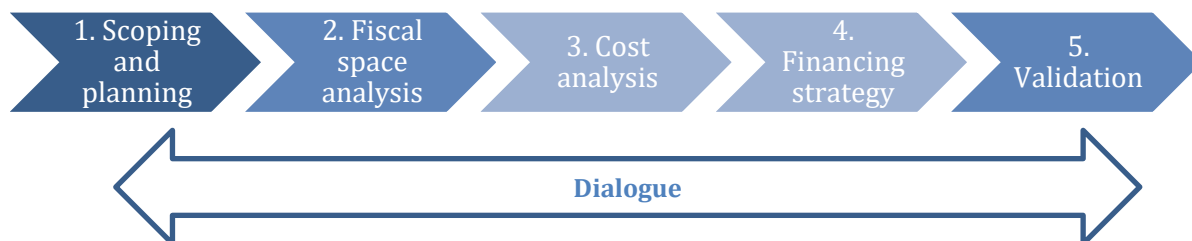
1. Membership of the School Meals Coalition and/or ongoing engagement with the coalition process or Secretariat to prepare for membership.
2. Clear political commitments to expanding school meals programs and transitioning towards country ownership.
3. National school feeding strategy/law but no precise financing strategy.
4. Indication of establishing a budget line or increasing the existing budgetary allocation to finance school meals from domestic resources.



5. Country request/buy-in for SFI support.
6. Commitment of partnership and building in-country capacity to support sustainable plans.
7. Recognition that school meals financing is a cross-sectoral issue that includes social protection, agriculture, health, and others.

Approach

The approach comprises five phases with dialogue to be held with government and national stakeholders at each stage. The following section outlines the general actions and deliverables expected in each phase as well as roles and responsibilities. The process can be adapted, as necessary, depending on country context or government objectives. It is expected that the overall process will take approximately 6-9 months.



Phase 1: Scoping & Planning



- Identifying and meeting stakeholders who will be involved in the analysis (e.g. key ministries, experts) as well as stakeholders who will be part of the dialogue (other ministries and national institutions, donors, partners) to establish an Advisory Group.
Lead: SFI with support from WFP Country Office
- Identifying country focal points from the government and the WFP Country Office.
Lead: SFI with support from national government and WFP Country Office
- Identifying experts who will carry out the analysis.
Lead: SFI with support from national counterparts
- Developing and agreeing a scope document with the government for the formulation of the sustainable financing strategy for school meals programs with the government and other key partners. The work plan should include: scope, work plan, timeline, roles and responsibilities, deliverables, estimated costs, forum for discussion, process of review and validation.
Lead: SFI in collaboration with government and national counterparts



- Identifying data sources to undertake the analysis (e.g. budget, cost of school feeding programs), current school feeding programs, strategies or policies and other relevant background documentation.

Lead: SFI with support from national counterparts

Main outputs:

- ✓ Agreed scope document including workplan
- ✓ Experts identified and hired to carry out the work
- ✓ Country focal points from government and WFP Country Office appointed
- ✓ Advisory Group members identified including terms of reference
- ✓ List of data sources for school feeding policies, public expenditures and other relevant background documentation.

Time: 1-2 months

Phase 2: Fiscal space analysis



- Collecting data on public spending allocated to school feeding programs and other key sectors related to food, agriculture, health, nutrition, social protection and education from primary or secondary sources including allocated and disbursed expenditures for the last years.

Lead: SFI with support from focal points

- Conducting a fiscal space analysis including assessment of public expenditure performances, assessment of government resources prioritization, identification of financing options for school meals programs and estimation of potential increased in public spending. The analysis will also identify key policy challenges and potential institutional constraints.

Lead: SFI

- *Lead: SFI* Presenting and discussing the results of the fiscal space analysis with the Advisory Group and reviewing results as required

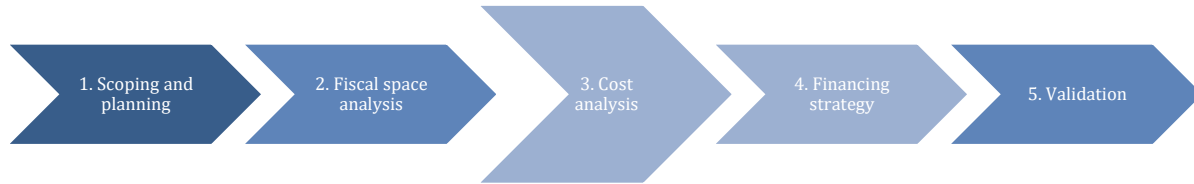
Lead: SFI with support from focal points

Main outputs:

- ✓ Public expenditure data collated and included within the SFI Costing and Financing Tool
- ✓ Fiscal space analysis
- ✓ Workshop/meeting to share and discuss the results with the Advisory Group

Time: 1-2 months

Phase 3: Cost analysis



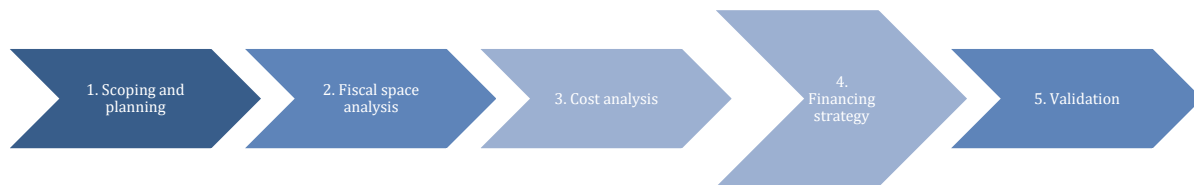
- Defining with the government the scope and variable to develop scenarios (e.g. number of children, type of schools, age of children, geographical areas, expected year to year growth, duration of the program).
Lead: SFI in collaboration with government
- Collecting data to conduct cost analysis: unit cost of a school meal; cost of transport, storage, infrastructure, management, monitoring, reporting and training.
Lead: SFI with support from focal points
- Collecting data on national capacities to cover the costs and identification of funding gaps.
Lead: SFI
- Conducting cost analysis of school meals program using the *SFI Costing and Financing tool* developed by SFI.
Lead: SFI
- Presenting and discussing the results of the fiscal space analysis with the Advisory Group and reviewing results as required.
Lead: SFI with support from focal points

Main outputs:

- ✓ SFI Costing and Financing Tool updated with cost analysis of school meals program
- ✓ Workshop/meeting to share and discuss the results with the Advisory Group

Time: 2 months

Phase 4: Financing strategy



By using the *Guidance for the development of a national school feeding financing strategy*:

- Estimating the funding gap to fund the school feeding program.



Lead: SFI

- Identifying options to close the funding gap: efficiency gain, national sources (e.g. governments, private sector, community, parental contributions), external sources (e.g. donors, multilateral development banks), cross-sectoral financing opportunities, innovative mechanisms

Lead: SFI

- Defining activities to implement the financing strategy.

Lead: SFI in collaboration with government

- Presenting and discussing the results with the Advisory Group and reviewing results as required.

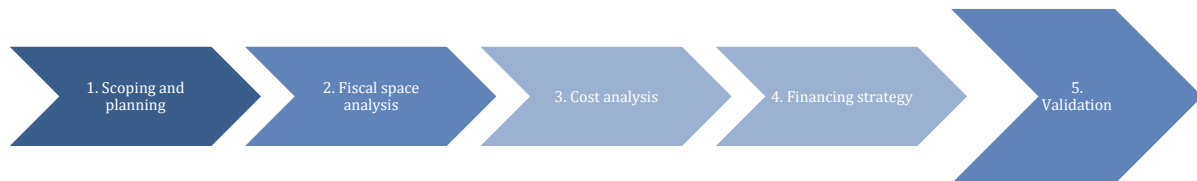
Lead: SFI with support from focal points

Main outputs:

- ✓ SFI Costing and Financing Tool updated with cost analysis of school feeding program, funding gaps and scenarios to close the funding gaps
- ✓ Sustainable financing strategy
- ✓ Workshop/meeting to share and discuss the results with the Advisory Group

Time: 1-2 months

Phase 5: Validation



- Supporting the government with the presentation and discussion of the results with the Advisory Group and other key government institutions and stakeholders with the objective to validate the results

Lead: SFI in collaboration with government

Main outputs:

- ✓ Results discussed and validated in ad hoc or existing forum for discussion or policy decision with government institutions and national stakeholders

Time: 1 month



The process will also be informed by research that SFI is undertaking on donor and innovative financing at the global level. The country work will also contribute to the research carried out at global level.

Role of WFP country office

- Identify a focal point so SFI can keep the WFP office up to date
- Broker initial introduction with the government
- Identify key stakeholders to engage with and where to find key information
- Suggest local finance experts (if known)
- Review draft deliverables
- Participate in key meetings

Contact

Interested in the SFI's support? Contact Katherine Kullman, International Project Manager for School Health and Nutrition at kkullman@edc.org.