



Policy Goals

Status

1. Policy Frameworks

Although not specifically mentioned in the Armenia Development Strategy, school feeding is included in the Mid-term Expenditure Framework 2016–18 and mentioned in the draft Education Development Programme, 2016–25. There is no national school feeding policy but a Sustainable School Feeding Strategy.



2. Financial Capacity

School feeding is included in the national planning process, and the national funding is stable through a budget line but unable to cover all needs.



3. Institutional Capacity and Coordination

The minister's decree of June 24, 2015, N613-A/Q establishes the Inter-ministerial Working Group. The Implementation Unit within the Ministry of Education is mentioned by strategy and is to be staffed with professionals. A regional-level coordination group was established in November 2013 in Vayots Dzor Province (province). However, the policies on institutional capacity and coordination should be revised to lead to an effective implementation.



4. Design and Implementation

A School Feeding Monitoring and Evaluation plan is not integrated into national systems. The national program has defined targets. Issues still remain with food safety and compliance with international nutritional requirements. The current system does not facilitate purchases from small farmers.



5. Community Roles—Reaching beyond Schools

School management committees exist. However, their roles are not clearly defined in any guidelines.



Introduction

This report presents an assessment of school feeding policies and institutions that affect young children in Armenia. The analysis is based on a World Bank tool developed as part of the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) initiative that aims to systematically assess education systems against evidence-based global standards and good practice to assist countries reform their education systems for proper learning for all.

School feeding policies are a critical component of an effective education system, given that children's health and nutrition impact their school attendance, ability to learn, and overall development. A school feeding program is a specific school-based health service, which can be part of a country's broader school health program, and often a large number of resources are invested in a school feeding program. SABER–School Feeding collects, analyzes, and disseminates comprehensive information on school feeding policies around the world. The overall objective of the initiative is to help countries design effective policies to improve their education systems, facilitate comparative policy analysis, identify key areas to focus investment, and assist in disseminating good practice.

In late 2013, the World Food Programme (WFP) launched a Revised WFP School Feeding Policy that incorporates SABER–School Feeding. The revised policy requires every WFP country office with a school feeding component to undertake a policy dialogue with the Education Sector in the country as part of capacity building activities. WFP decided to use SABER–School Feeding as one of their policy tools to guide the policy dialogue and to assess in a more systematic way the transition of school feeding programs to national ownership and/or the strengthening of national school feeding programs.

WFP Armenia will integrate the result of this analysis to refine the current implementation of the school feeding program and in the design of its new project from July 2017 onwards.

Armenia in Brief

With an estimated per-capita gross national income (GNI)¹ of \$3,898, Armenia is a lower-middle-income country that experiences food deficits and is vulnerable to external shocks. Border closures with neighboring Turkey and Azerbaijan since Armenia's independence from Soviet Union in 1991 have constrained economic development within this landlocked state.

Despite 3.2 percent GDP growth in 2013, followed by 3.5 percent in 2014 and 3 percent in 2015, growth has not been inclusive in Armenia. Positive results from agriculture, mining, and tourism were diminished by sluggish manufacturing and other services. A rising state debt and slowdown of economic growth has strained the government budget, hindering implementation of adequate social safety nets and reducing investment in the education sector to just 2.5 percent of GDP and in health to a mere 1.5 percent, making the investment in health one of the lowest in the region. The national social protection system would require extensive reforms because benefits are not well targeted, with significant inclusion and exclusion errors and numerous overlaps among the different safety net schemes. The Armenian economy, in particular for the poorest and most vulnerable people, is still highly dependent on agriculture as a source of income and livelihood. Also, remittances from migrant workers, which play an important role in Armenia's economy, dramatically decelerated in 2015 as the Russian economy plunged into recession as a result of lower oil prices and western sanctions.

Progress toward poverty and hunger reduction remains below the global average improvement rate, with one person in three living in poverty and 60 percent of the

¹ The World Bank estimates this at USD 3880 for 2015 (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD>).

population consuming fewer than 2,100 kcal/day.² Although consumption poverty fell by 2 percent, the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) increased from 16.2 to 17.7 percent in 2014.³ Lack of education (years of schooling and school attendance) and health-related issues (child mortality and nutrition) accounted for 90 percent of the MPI. With 30 percent of the population living below the poverty line, social vulnerability increased, reversing the previous decade's progress toward the Millennium Development Goals. Regional disparities further exacerbate inequalities in access to basic social, health care, and educational services. Food insecurity amounts to 15 percent of the population, with an additional 30 percent at risk of food insecurity, should any shock arise. Food insecurity at the household level in Armenia is a consequence of lack of access to nutritious food and is highly correlated with poverty, itself primarily driven by lack of sufficient employment opportunities, highlighting the need for policy and institutional reforms.

According to the World Bank analysis, Armenia is listed in the top 60 countries exposed to multiple hazards (Dilley et al 2005). The country is highly prone to a wide variety of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides, avalanches, mudslides, strong winds, snowstorms, and frost and hail, that place 80 percent of its inhabitants at high risk of exposure to catastrophic events.⁴ Repeated exposure to natural disasters has caused significant economic losses. In any given year, there is a 20 percent chance that a major disaster will result in losses of 12.7 percent of the country's GDP.

Education and Health in Armenia

Education

Although the school enrollment rate is generally high, the country has failed to meet four out of five national targets toward achieving universal primary education.

There is an alarming trend of declining enrollment and increasing dropout rates in schools, especially from upper grades. The proportion of students who completed primary school from grade 1 to 4 and reached grade 5 has declined steadily since 2005 (from 98 to 94 percent), with the dropout rate reaching 6 percent in 2014.⁵ This is mostly due to deteriorating social conditions prompting a sharp drop in the share of expenditures on education in total household expenditures, from 4.2 percent in 2008 to 0.5 percent in 2014.⁶

The annual state budget expenditure on education to GDP is estimated at 2.5 percent in 2015 after climbing from 2.71 percent in 2005 to 3.84 percent in 2009.⁷ Three main challenges affect the education system at various levels: the 6 percent dropout rate from primary school grades 1 to 4, low-quality education, and inequalities in enrollment.

Health

Armenia is facing a high prevalence of noncommunicable diseases, which are dominated by cardiovascular diseases (heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (chronic obstructed pulmonary disease and asthma), and diabetes. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that they are the cause of 92 percent of all deaths and that Armenians have a 30 percent probability of dying from them between the ages of 30 and 70. A triple burden of malnutrition—coexistence of undernutrition, overnutrition, and micronutrient deficiencies—is the country's growing challenge, with 19 percent of children stunted and 15 percent overweight or obese though with substantial micronutrient deficiencies. Total expenditure on health as a percentage of GDP in 2013 was estimated at 4.5 percent, up from 6.42 percent in 1995. In comparison

² National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia.

³ Oxford Poverty & Human development Initiative (OPHI). MPI Country briefing.

⁴ ISDR, 2009. Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, UNISDR

⁵ UN, Millennium Development Goals: Armenia Progress Report 2015.

⁶ ILCS 2004, 2008, and 2011–14.

⁷ UNESCO Institute for statistics, Country Profiles: Armenia.

France and Germany spent 11.6 and 11.75 percent, respectively, in 2009.⁸

The Case for School Feeding

School feeding programs, defined here as the provision of food to school children, can increase school enrollment⁹ and attendance—especially for girls.¹⁰ When combined with quality education, school feeding programs can increase cognition¹¹ and educational success.¹² With appropriately designed rations, school feeding programs can improve the nutrition status of preschool- and primary school-aged children by addressing micronutrient deficiencies. Combined with local agricultural production, these programs can also provide small-scale farmers with a stable market. School feeding programs can provide short-term benefits after crises, helping communities recover and build resilience, in addition to long-term benefits by developing human capital.¹³ School feeding programs can be classified into two main groups: in-school feeding (when children are fed in school) and take-home rations (when families are given food if their children attend school regularly). A major advantage of school feeding programs is they offer the greatest benefit to the poorest children. Several studies¹⁴ have indicated that missing breakfast impairs educational performance.

Present data suggest that almost every country is seeking to provide food to its schoolchildren. Therefore, especially for low- and middle-income countries where most food-insecure regions are concentrated, the key issue is not whether a country will implement school-feeding programs, but rather how and with what objectives.

Social shocks caused by recent global crises led to an enhanced demand for school feeding programs in low-

income countries because they can serve as a safety net for food-insecure households through an income transfer. In response to this amplified request, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank jointly undertook an analysis titled *Rethinking School Feeding*.¹⁵ This initiative sought to better understand how to develop and implement effective school feeding programs as a protective safety net that is part of the response to the social shocks, as well as a fiscally sustainable investment in human capital. These efforts are part of a long-term global goal to achieve *Education for All* and to provide social protection to the poor.

School Feeding Program in Armenia

The school feeding program in Armenia aims at improving children's access to primary education acting as a nutrition-sensitive safety net and establishing foundations for a gradually sustainable national school feeding program, embedded in national policies, strategies, and budgets. With the two main components—direct food provision and technical support to the government—the school feeding program is fully aligned with two priorities of the 2014–25 Armenia Development Strategy: development of human capital and improvement of social protection. It contributes to operationalizing the second Sustainable Development Goal (SDG2) (Zero Hunger) in Armenia and is part of the 2016–20 UNDAF.

The project began in 2010 providing school meals in the most food-insecure areas, gradually increasing the coverage throughout all provinces to support the government of Armenia in mitigating the severe economic and social impacts of the global financial crisis.

Meals are provided five days a week over the 180 days of the school year, constituting a predominant source of

⁸World Health Organization Global Health Expenditure database.

⁹ Ahmed (2004); Gelli, Meir, and Espejo (2007).

¹⁰ Jacoby, Cueto, and Pollitt (1996); Kristjansson et al. (2007); Powell et al. (1998).

¹¹ Jukes et al. (2008); Kristjansson et al. (2007); Whaley et al. (2003).

¹² Adelman et al. (2008); Ahmed (2004); Tan, Lane, and Lassibille (1999).

¹³ WFP (2013).

¹⁴ Pollitt, Cueto, and Jacoby (1998); Simeon (1998); Simeon and Grantham-McGregor (1989).

¹⁵ Bundy et al. (2009).

vitamins and proteins for many Armenian children. In Armenia, the hot meal modality has proven successful, prompting WFP to further invest in kitchen equipment to enable hot feeding in schools where only dry feeding was possible before. The food basket includes buckwheat, rice, pasta, wheat flour, vegetable oil, and pulses, providing an aggregate of 700 kcal/child/day.

WFP partners with the Social and Industrial Food Service Institute (SIFI) for national capacity building in school feeding. This specialized nongovernmental organization (NGO) has been central to revamping school feeding in Russia and provides effective support to develop and operationalize a national school feeding program in Armenia. Technical support worth more than \$2 million was directed at capacity building for central, regional, and local government authorities, school headmasters, national strategy development, and implementation over the past six years.

The government has been funding food transportation, storage, and handling costs of the WFP-administered project through an established trust fund since 2013.

Beginning in the 2014–15 school year, the government has taken over school feeding in three provinces—Ararat, Vayots Dzor, and Syunik—reaching out to all 21,500 primary school children in those provinces. The national school feeding programme in Armenia has a universal targeting criteria, by which all children enrolled in primary schools receive food ration equivalent to USD 0.25 cents per child per day.

One of the main learning points of the handover experience was that, thanks to WFP’s investment in capacity building, 50 percent of the schools in 3 provinces managed to transition from a dry (biscuits and juice) to a hot feeding modality.

Currently WFP and the government continue to support school feeding for 81,500 out of 148,481 primary school

children in Armenia, accounting for approximately 55 percent of children countrywide. At the same time, WFP continues providing technical assistance to the government to further improve the quality of the national project as well as to redefine a realistic gradual handover plan taking into account national capabilities and lessons learned.

Five Key Policy Goals to Promote School Feeding

Five core policy goals form the basis of an effective school feeding program. Figure 1 illustrates these policy goals and outlines respective policy levers and outcomes that fall under each goal.

The first goal is a national policy framework. A solid policy foundation strengthens a school feeding program’s sustainability and quality of implementation. National planning for school feeding as part of the country’s poverty reduction strategy (or other equivalent development strategies) conveys the importance the government places on school feeding as part of its development agenda. For most countries implementing their own national programs, school feeding is included in national policy frameworks.¹⁶

The second policy goal for school feeding is financial capacity. Stable funding is a prerequisite for sustainability. However, where the need is greatest, programs tend to be the smallest and the most reliant on external support. Funding for these programs can come from a combination of sources, such as the government, UN agencies (i.e., WFP), nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. When a program becomes nationalized, it needs a stable and independent funding source, either through government core resources or development funding. In the long term, a national budget line for school feeding is necessary for an effective and stable program.

The third policy goal is institutional capacity and coordination. School feeding programs are better executed when an institution is mandated and

¹⁶ Bundy et al. (2009); WFP (2012).

accountable for the implementation of such a program. Effective programs also include multisectoral involvement from sectors such as education, health, agriculture, social protection, and local government, as well as a comprehensive link between school feeding and other school health or social protection programs and established coordination mechanisms.

The fourth policy goal is sound design and implementation. To maximize effectiveness, school feeding programs should clearly identify country-specific problems, objectives, and expected outcomes. The country's context and needs should determine the program's beneficiaries, food basket (menus), food modalities, and supply chain. Countries and partners should work toward creating a delicate balance among international, national, and local procurement of foods to support local economies without jeopardizing the quality and stability of the food supply.

The last policy goal is community roles—reaching beyond schools. School feeding programs that are locally owned, incorporate contributions from local communities, and respond to specific community needs are often the strongest. These programs are most likely to make a successful transition from donor assistance to national ownership. Community participation should be considered at every stage, but without overburdening community members.

Use of Evidence-Based Tools

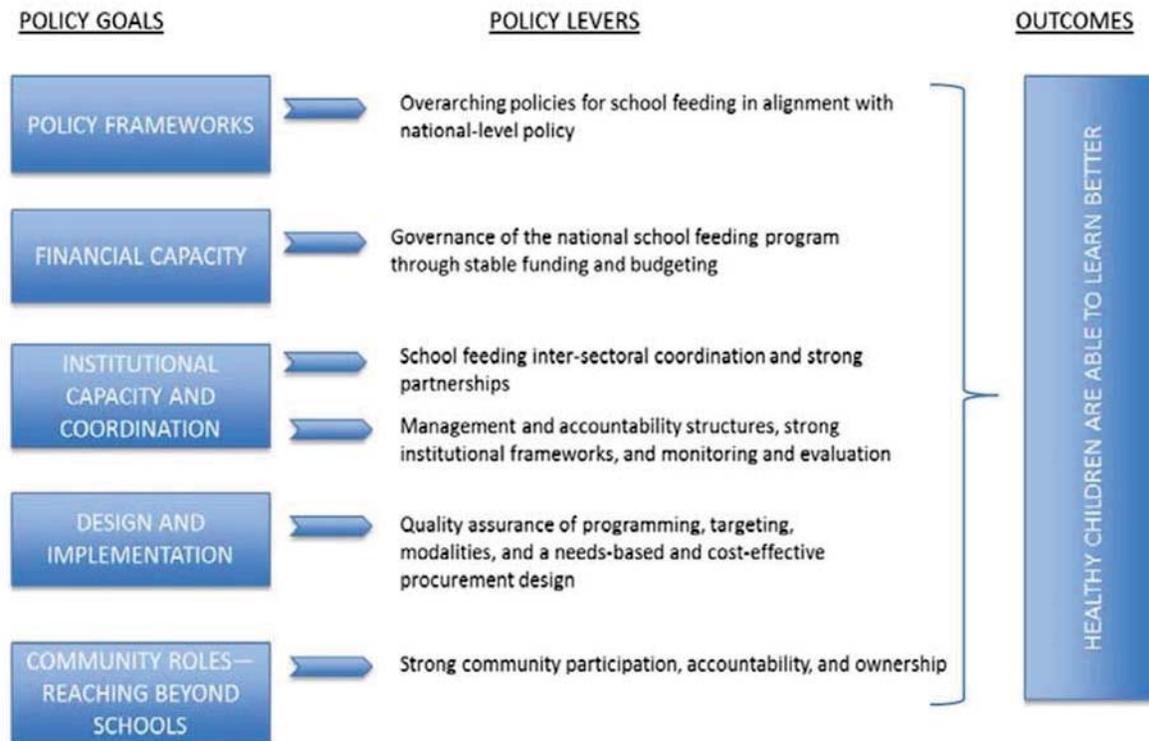
The primary focus of the SABER–School Feeding exercise is to gather systematic and verifiable information about the quality of a country's policies through a SABER–School Feeding questionnaire. This data-collecting instrument helps to facilitate comparative policy analysis, identify key areas to focus investment, and disseminate good practices and knowledge sharing. This holistic and integrated assessment of how the overall policy in a country affects young children's development is categorized into one of the following stages, representing the varying levels of policy development that exist among different dimensions of school feeding:

- Latent:** No or very little policy development
- Emerging:** Initial/some initiatives toward policy development.
- Established:** Some policy development

Advanced: Development of a comprehensive policy framework

Each policy goal and lever of school feeding is methodically benchmarked through two SABER analysis tools. The first is a *scoring rubric* that quantifies the responses to selected questions from the SABER–School Feeding questionnaire by assigning point values to the answers. The second tool is the *SABER–School Feeding framework rubric* that analyzes the responses, especially the written answers, based on the framework's five policy goals and levers. For more information, please visit the World Bank's website on SABER–School Health and School Feeding and click on the [“What Matters” Framework Paper](#) under Methodology.

Figure 1: Policy Goals and Policy Levers for School Feeding



**Policy Goal 1:
Policy Frameworks in
Armenia**



Policy Lever

- Overarching policies for school feeding in alignment with national-level policy

A policy foundation helps strengthen the sustainability and accountability of a school feeding program as well as the quality of its implementation. Nearly all countries with national ownership of programs have well-articulated national policies on the modalities and objectives of school feeding.¹⁷

Pursuant to Article 74 of the constitution of the Republic of Armenia, the government program shall be approved by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. The currently adopted program prioritizes a higher level of military security and welfare. It does not specifically mention school feeding but addresses overarching issues of education, social protection, job creation, health, and agriculture, which can contribute to a national school meal program.

The draft 2016–25 State Education Development Programme prioritizes the improvement of quality education with multiple components, including the setup of child-centered environments through the introduction of education-support services, extracurricular activity classes, school feeding, efficient rules, and regulations of entities, and point (h) of Article 2 calls for a continuation of the school feeding project.

Armenia has moved to develop a “Sustainable School Feeding” strategy based on the concept note “Sustainable School Feeding” approved by Session No. 52 of December 27, 2012, of the government of the Republic of Armenia. The main objective of the strategy is to develop a sustainable school feeding system that will provide healthy food to primary school children in all

provinces to improve health, reduce poverty, and increase attendance for universal primary education.

Although the strategy calls for the establishment of a solid legal-normative framework for the implementation, currently no school feeding policy is in place. Responsibilities for coordination are divided between various ministries with no clear roles. The food basket in the pilot project of three provinces is based on a variety of modalities, ranging from hot, nutritious meals to juice and biscuits every day. Cost analysis for a gradual government funding as well as monitoring and evaluation (M&E), linkage to local agriculture, and community involvement are not detailed.

1. Policy Frameworks Are Established		
Indicators	Score	Justification
1A. National-level poverty reduction strategy as well as education sectoral policies and strategies identify school feeding as an education and/or social protection intervention, with clearly defined objectives and sectoral responsibilities	Established 	Although school feeding is not specifically mentioned in the Armenia Development Strategy, the government has an approved sustainable national school feeding concept note and strategy: School feeding is included in the Midterm Expenditure Framework 2016–18; it is also mentioned in the draft Education Development

¹⁷ WFP (2012).

		Programme, 2016–25
<p>1B. An evidence-based technical policy related to school feeding outlines the objectives, rationale, scope, design, and funding and sustainability of the program and comprehensively addresses all four other policy goals</p>		<p>There is no national school feeding policy but a Sustainable School Feeding Strategy that provides objectives, targets, main stages, and sectoral obligations; however, these need to be further strengthened using the results of the latest WFP assessments</p>

**Policy Goal 2:
Financial Capacity in
Armenia**



Policy Lever

- Governance of the national school feeding program through stable funding and budgeting

Stable funding is necessary for the long-term sustainability of a school feeding program, especially one that transitions from being donor-funded to government-funded. School feeding programs supported by external partners generally rely on food aid, government in-kind donations, and/or government cash contributions. For the program to be sustainable and nationally owned, the school feeding program should have a budget line and be part of the government’s budgeting and planning process.

School feeding is included in the national planning process and funded by the state budget, from which approximately \$123,000 is allocated to the central government (Ministry of Education and Science) and about \$1 million to regional districts or local governments (Ararat, Syunik, and Vayots Dzor). The approximate budget allocation for the entire school feeding program is estimated at \$6.4 million. The allocation from the state budget to the school feeding program represents approximately 20 percent of the entire school feeding budget, communities contribute 16.5 percent, and WFP provides the largest portion of the overall budget with a 63.5 percent contribution. Contributions from the private sector are not known. The allocated budget per child per year is estimated at \$50.

The figures indicate that the state budget allocated for school feeding is not sufficient to cover all expenses. It is also fixed over the year and does not account for inflation and rising electricity and gas prices. Not all of the ministries (other than the Ministry of Education and Science) involved in the program have a budget allocated to school feeding. The overall budget for school feeding in Armenia is not conducive to diet diversity. Capacity building could be further strengthened to ensure budgets and plans are well elaborated.

One important element of the program is that funds are currently being disbursed to the implementers in a timely and effective manner and there is funding predictability for the next three years. The financial system in place is clear, and there are laws and acts and oversee it.

2. Financial Capacity Is Emerging		
Indicators	Score	Justification
2A. National budget line(s) and funding are allocated to school feeding; funds are disbursed to the implementation levels in a timely and effective manner	Emerging 	School feeding is included in the national planning process, and the national funding is stable through a budget line but unable to cover all needs. There are budget lines at regional and school levels, and the funds are disbursed to the implementation levels in a timely and effective manner. Not all ministries involved in the program implementation have a budget line or funds allocated.

**Policy Goal 3:
Institutional Capacity and
Coordination in Armenia**



Policy Levers

- School feeding intersectorial coordination and strong partnerships
- Management and accountability structures, strong institutional frameworks, and monitoring and evaluation

Implementing a school feeding policy requires significant institutional capacity because the program is a complex school health intervention. The policy should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and actors at all levels. Methodically increasing government capacity to manage a school feeding program is important to the program’s long-term sustainability. A national institution that is mandated and accountable for the implementation of the school feeding program is considered to be a best practice. This institution should have a specific unit that has adequate resources and knowledgeable staff to manage the school feeding program. Moreover, policies that detail accountability and management mechanisms can help ensure program quality and efficiency, especially if the school feeding program is decentralized.

The Ministry of Education and Science carries the mandate of managing and implementing the national school feeding program. There is, however, no specific school feeding unit with a clear mandate.

The Interministerial Working Group had been established by the decree of the former Minister of Education and Science on June 24, 2015. As a result of the change of the Minister of Education and Science in February 2016, as well as due to the restructuring of the government by the split of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations into two separate ministries in March 2016, the Interministerial Working Group has been dissolved and will be reestablished by a new Minister’s Decree to reflect these changes.

The Interministerial Working Group comprised representatives from the ministries of education, health, agriculture, social affairs, and territorial administration. No clear representatives were from the local agriculture initiatives, however.

Formal coordination mechanisms exist, but they are not fully functioning for school feeding. So far, schools have certain mechanisms to manage school feeding such as laws on procurement and financial procedures where coordination is clearly defined, but there are no clearly defined mechanisms to cover other aspects such as trainings and sectorial guidelines.

In one of the three regions, Vayots Dzor, a coordination council was established in 2013 because the provincial authorities wanted to move from dry to hot feeding modality. In the two other districts, coordination councils are not yet used.

3. Institutional Capacity and Coordination Are Emerging		
Indicators	Score	Justification
3A. Multisectoral steering committee coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy	Latent 	Minister’s Decree of June 24, 2015, N613-A/Q established the Interministerial Working Group. However, it does not have any coordinating functions, decision power, action plan, or terms of reference. The group meets irregularly and does not coordinate the lower levels.
3B. National school feeding management unit and accountability structures are in place, coordinating with school-level structures	Latent 	A Project Implementation Unit within the Ministry of Education is mentioned by the sustainable school feeding strategy and is to be staffed with professionals. However, it is not yet in place.
3C. School-level management and accountability structures are in place	Emerging 	The Regional level Working Group mentioned in the school feeding strategy was established in November 2013 only in Vayots Dzor

		Province. However, there is yet no coordination between the national and provincial levels.
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implementation should be conducted. From Vayots Dzor province the pilot project is supposed to be gradually introduced to other provinces. As stated in the national strategy, primary grade students should be provided with milk and biscuits five days a week before noon throughout the school year (168 days).

**Policy Goal 4:
Design and Implementation in Armenia**



The programme currently does not have nutritional objective and as such is not perceived as bringing significant nutritional impacts. This is partly due to the overall country’s reluctance to introduce food fortification/supplementation. Moreover, the current food basket is not sufficiently diversified to provide nutritionally balanced meals, and initiatives are in place to link the school feeding program with local producers and agriculture development. Several studies will have to be conducted to assess menu development, nutritional content, and local availability as well as cost and sustainability.

Policy Lever

- Quality assurance of programming and targeting, modalities, and procurement design, ensuring design that is both needs-based and cost-effective

A well-designed school feeding policy that is based on evidence is critical to the implementation of a quality school feeding program. The policy can include details on targeting the correct beneficiaries, selecting the proper modalities of food delivery, and choosing a quality food basket. Over time, the school feeding policy may be redesigned or modified according to reassessments of the school feeding program.

National standards have been established for procurement and logistics that could be eventually adapted to a home-grown school feeding program. The country’s national production capacity should be determined to scale up the share of local purchases from small-holder farmers.

A government-led strategy for the M&E of a national school feeding program is the cornerstone for the development of a sustainable school feeding program. Currently no national M&E mechanism dedicated to school feeding exists. Tools should be further developed as well as processes, analysis, and reporting. With the foreseen expansion of the program, indicators will have to be reviewed and a systematic baseline evaluation set to fully report on the advantages of school feeding. The strategy calls for the project’s M&E to be implemented by the Centre of Educational Projects under the Ministry of Education and Science through technical support from UN WFP and its cooperating partner, the Social and Industrial Feeding Institute (SIFI) of the Russian Federation. It would be advisable to have representatives from all interested ministries as well as from local authorities, educational institutions, and parents.

Monitoring of the food supply is currently conducted with the contracts, and the State Food Security Service is in charge of controlling and certifying food quality and safety. The annex to the protocol decision No. 33 of the 2013 session in point 10.5 links procurement with local agriculture. It is estimated that currently 70 percent of the supply is procured locally with up to 10 percent from small farmers.

It has been reported that a situation analysis assessing the needs for school feeding and context of

Looking forward, special attention should be given to the development of new ways for the agriculture and education sectors to work together, including the construction of a coherent evidence base from which specific outcomes could be derived.

4. Design and Implementation Are Emerging		
Indicators	Score	Justification
4A. A functional monitoring and evaluation system is in place as part of the structure of the lead institution and	Emerging 	A School Feeding Monitoring and Evaluation plan is not integrated into national systems: Data collection and

used for implementation and feedback		reporting need to be improved
4B. Program design identifies appropriate target groups and targeting criteria corresponding to the national school feeding policy and the situation analysis	Established 	The national program has defined targets; all children in grade 1 to 4 and standards and methodology are developed
4C. Food modalities and the food basket correspond to the objectives, local habits and tastes, availability of local food, food safety, and nutrition content requirements	Emerging 	There are still issues with food safety and compliance with international nutritional requirements; not all schools are currently providing hot meals, and dry foods do not provide complete and diversified menus
4D. Procurement and logistics arrangements are based on procuring as locally as possible, taking into account the costs, the capacities of implementing parties, the country's production capacity, the quality of the food, and the stability of the pipeline	Emerging 	The current system does not facilitate purchases from small farmers to encourage local agriculture production; standards for procurement and logistics should be separated

Policy Goal 5: Community Roles— Reaching beyond Schools in Armenia



Policy Lever

- Community participation and accountability

The role of the community should be clearly defined in a school feeding policy because community participation and ownership improves the school feeding program's chances of long-term sustainability. If the government places the responsibility of sustaining the school feeding program on the community, the school feeding policy should detail the guidelines, minimum standards, and support for the community to implement the program. The school feeding policy can also include mechanisms for the community to hold the government accountable.

At the school level, there may be a school management committee composed of parents, teachers, and students that acts as a liaison between the school and community and that manages the school feeding program. Care should be taken not to overburden the community, because in some cases the community may introduce fees to support the local school feeding program, which can negatively impact enrollment rates. Community-assisted school feeding programs are usually most successful in food-secure areas.

The roles and responsibilities of the community through school feeding management committees are not clearly defined in the policies and strategies. However, the national strategy calls for the participation of parents and communities. This participation is expected in cash and in-kind and labor, and effective mechanisms are cited with the WFP project.

Community involvement in the school feeding program is reflected through in-kind food and financial facilitation. The government can be involved to further support community engagement, including village and council leaders.

A brief outline for the composition of management is also proposed in the strategy as composed of community, sanitary-hygienic and quality oversight

bodies, school managements, and parent associations. The main constraints to community participation are listed as lack of resources, limited legal framework, and lack of initiatives and structure. Currently no formal training is provided for school committees.

5. Community Roles—Reaching beyond Schools Are Emerging		
Indicators	Score	Justification
5A. Community participates in school feeding program design, implementation, management and evaluation, and contributes resources	 Emerging	School management committees exist, and almost all necessary stakeholders are involved. However, the roles are not clearly defined in any guidelines, forms; or legislative acts. Reporting templates exist for accountability mechanisms but can be developed further.

To view the scores for all indicators and policy goals in one table, please refer to Appendix 1.

Conclusion

Based on the above findings, school feeding in Armenia can be seen as moving toward a nationally maintained school feeding program. Still, areas are identified that could be strengthened to allow moving forward. Although some sectorial policy documents refer to school feeding, the recognition of school feeding benefits remains unaddressed in government policies. In terms of funding, a significant effort has been made by the government of Armenia to include national school feeding program expenditures for the three provinces in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework of budget allocations to finance school feeding for the next three years. Still, allocations remain for only three out of 10 provinces. The funding allocation is fixed over the year and does not account for inflation and rising electricity and gas prices. Additionally, no suitable mechanism accounts for coordination and implementation of the national school feeding program. Interministerial coordination is of utmost importance, and the Interministerial Working Group should be revived and have a clear work plan and objectives. The necessity to create a unit specifically dedicated to school feeding with qualified personnel remains one of the priorities because it is a critical element for the program's sustainability. Moreover, special attention should be given to small local producers and the implementation of mechanisms to increase local production purchases (home-grown school feeding model). Action must be taken to promote the participation and contribution of communities in implementing school feeding programs. The following policy options represent possible areas where school feeding could be strengthened, based on the conclusions of this report.

Policy Options

- Develop a funding strategy and seek additional funding from fiscal and cost containment initiatives and the private sector, and other donors to ensure the budget corresponds to the need of the program expansion
 - Set up national and provincial coordination units
 - Set up thematic technical working groups to address each SABER policy recommendation
 - Review school menus to develop local agriculture using international guidelines on food safety and nutrition; strengthen local and community-focused school feeding, including establishment of local committees and implementing homegrown school feeding model where appropriate
 - Review school management committees to include school feeding
- Ensure school feeding is included in national and all relevant sector policies
 - Improve interministerial coordination and develop terms of reference for the involvement of the following ministries in the Interministerial Working Group: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Emergency Situations
 - Create a school feeding unit with qualified personnel

Appendix 1

Table 1. Levels of Development of SABER–School Feeding Indicators and Policy Goals in Armenia

Systems Approach for Better Education Results: School Feeding Policy Framework						
Policy Lever	Indicator	Stages				Overall Score Per Domain
		Latent	Emerging	Established	Advanced	
Policy Goal 1: Policy Frameworks						
Overarching policies for school feeding—sound alignment with the national policy	National-level poverty reduction strategy or equivalent national strategy as well as sectoral policies and strategies (education sector plan, nutrition policy, social protection policy) identify school feeding as an education and/or social protection intervention, clearly defining objectives and sectoral responsibilities	There is recognition of school feeding as an education and/or social protection intervention, but school feeding is not yet included in the published national-level poverty reduction strategy, equivalent national policy, or sectoral policies and strategies.	School feeding discussed by members and partners during preparation of national-level poverty reduction strategy, equivalent national policy, or sectoral policies and strategies but not yet published.	School feeding included in published national-level poverty reduction strategy or equivalent national policy (including specifications as to where school feeding will be anchored and who will implement); published sectoral policies or strategies have clearly defined objectives and sectoral responsibilities.	School feeding included in published national-level poverty reduction strategy or equivalent national policy (including specifications as to where school feeding will be anchored and who will implement and accompanied by targets and/or milestones set by the government); published sectoral policies or strategies have clearly defined objectives and sectoral responsibilities, including what school feeding can and cannot achieve, and aligned with the national-level poverty reduction strategy or equivalent national strategy.	Established
	An evidence-based technical policy related to school feeding outlines the objectives, rationale, scope, design, and funding and sustainability of the program and comprehensively addresses all four other policy goals (financial capacity, institutional capacity and coordination, design and implementation, and community participation).	There is recognition of the need for a technical policy related to school feeding, but one has not yet been developed or published.	A technical policy and situation analysis under development by the relevant sectors that address school feeding.	A technical policy related to school feeding is published, outlining the objectives, rationale, scope, design, funding, and sustainability of the program and covering some aspects of all four other policy goals, including links with agriculture development.	A technical policy related to school feeding is published, outlining the objectives, rationale, scope, design, funding, and sustainability of the program and comprehensively covering all four other policy goals with a strategy for local production and sourcing, including links with agriculture development and smallholder farmers; policy is informed by a situation analysis of needs and aligned with national poverty reduction strategies and relevant sectoral policies and strategies.	
Policy Lever	Indicator	Latent	Emerging	Established	Advanced	Overall Score Per Domain
Policy Goal 2: Financial Capacity						

<p>Governance of the national school feeding program—stable funding and budgeting</p>	<p>National budget line(s) and funding are allocated to school feeding; funds are disbursed to the implementation levels (national, district and/or school) in a timely and effective manner.</p>	<p>There is recognition of the need to include school feeding in the national planning process, but this has not yet happened; the government is fully reliant on external funds and does not have provision in the national budget to allocate resources to school feeding; there is recognition of the need for mechanisms for disbursing funds to implementation levels, but these are not yet in place.</p>	<p>School feeding is included in the national planning process, and national funding is stable through a budget line but unable to cover all needs; there is no budget line at regional and school levels; existing school feeding funds are disbursed to implementation levels intermittently.</p>	<p>School feeding is included in the national planning process and is fully funded through a national budget line; all ministries involved in program implementation have a budget line or funds allocated; budget lines also exist at regional and school levels; school feeding funds are disbursed to implementation levels in a timely and effective manner.</p>	<p>School feeding is included in the national planning process and is fully funded through a national budget line consistent with the school feeding policy and situation analysis including options for engaging with the private sector; budget lines and plans also exist at regional and school levels, sufficient to cover all the expenses of running the program; school feeding funds are disbursed to implementation levels in a timely and effective manner and implementers have the capacity to plan and budget as well as request resources from central level.</p>	<p>Emerging</p>
<p>Policy Lever</p>	<p>Indicator</p>	<p>Latent</p>	<p>Emerging</p>	<p>Established</p>	<p>Advanced</p>	<p>Overall Score Per Domain</p>
<p>Policy Goal 3: Institutional Capacity and Coordination</p>						
<p>School feeding coordination—strong partnerships and intersector coordination</p>	<p>Multisectoral steering committee coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy.</p>	<p>Any multisectoral steering committee coordination efforts are currently nonsystematic.</p>	<p>Sectoral steering committee coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy.</p>	<p>Multisectoral steering committee from at least two sectors (e.g., education, social protection, agriculture, health, local government, and water) coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy.</p>	<p>Multisectoral steering committee from at least three sectors (e.g., education, social protection, agriculture, health, local government, and water) coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy; this government led committee provides comprehensive coordination (across international agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and local business representatives as well) and is part of a wider committee on school health and nutrition.</p>	<p>Emerging</p>
<p>Management and accountability structures, including staffing—strong institutional frameworks for implementation</p>	<p>National school feeding management unit and accountability structures are in place, coordinating with school-level structures.</p>	<p>A specific school feeding unit does not yet exist at national level; coordination between the national, regional, local (if applicable), and school levels is lacking.</p>	<p>A school feeding unit exists at national level, but it has limited resources and limited staff numbers and lacks a clear mandate, while coordination mechanisms between national, regional, local (if applicable), and school</p>	<p>A fully staffed school feeding unit with a clear mandate exists at national level, based on an assessment of staffing and resource needs; coordination mechanisms between national, regional, local (if applicable), and school levels are in place and functioning in most instances.</p>	<p>A fully staffed school feeding unit exists at national level, based on an assessment of staffing and resources needs, with a clear mandate, and pre and in-service training; coordination mechanisms between national, regional, local (if applicable), and school levels are in place and fully functioning.</p>	<p>Emerging</p>

			levels are in place, they are not fully functioning.			
	School-level management and accountability structures are in place.	Mechanisms for managing school feeding at school level are nonuniform, and national guidance on this is lacking.	National guidance on required mechanisms for managing school feeding are available at school level, but these are not yet implemented fully.	Most schools have a mechanism to manage school feeding, based on national guidance.	All schools have a mechanism to manage school feeding, based on national guidance, with pre- and in-service training for relevant staff.	
Policy Lever	Indicator	Latent	Emerging	Established	Advanced	Overall Score Per Domain
Policy Goal 4: Design and Implementation						
Quality assurance of programming and targeting, modalities, and procurement design, ensuring design that is both needs-based and cost-effective	A functional monitoring and evaluation system is in place as part of the structure of the lead institution and used for implementation and feedback.	The importance of monitoring and evaluation is recognized, but government systems are not yet in place for monitoring and evaluation of school feeding implementation.	A government monitoring and evaluation plan exists for school feeding with intermittent data collection and reporting occurring especially at national level.	The monitoring and evaluation plan for school feeding is integrated into national monitoring or information management systems and data collection and reporting occurs recurrently at national and regional levels.	The monitoring and evaluation plan for school feeding is integrated into national monitoring or information management systems and data collection and reporting occurs recurrently at national, regional, and school levels; analyzed information is shared and used to refine and update programs; baseline is carried out and program evaluations occur periodically.	Emerging
	Program design identifies appropriate target groups and targeting criteria corresponding to the national school feeding policy and the situation analysis.	The need for targeting is recognized, but a situation analysis has not yet been undertaken that assesses school feeding needs and neither targeting criteria nor a targeting methodology has been established as yet.	Targeting criteria and a targeting methodology is being developed corresponding to the national school feeding policy; a situation analysis assessing needs is incomplete as yet.	Targeting criteria and a targeting methodology exists and is implemented corresponding to the national school feeding policy and a situation analysis assessing needs.	Targeting criteria and a targeting methodology exist and are implemented corresponding to the national school feeding policy and situation analysis (including costing for various targeting and designs); monitoring and evaluation information is used to refine and update targeting and coverage on a periodic basis.	
Food modalities and the food basket correspond to the objectives, local habits and tastes, availability of local food, food safety (according to WHO guidelines), and nutrition content requirements.	There is recognition of the need for national standards for food modalities and the food basket, but these do not exist yet.	National standards on food modalities and the food basket have been developed and correspond to two or more of the following: objectives, local habits and tastes, availability of local food, food safety (according to WHO guidelines),	National standards on food modalities and the food basket have been developed and correspond to objectives, local habits and tastes, availability of local food, food safety (according to WHO guidelines), and nutrition content requirements.	National standards on food modalities and the food basket have been developed and correspond to objectives, local habits and tastes, availability of local food, food safety (according to WHO guidelines), and nutrition content requirements; monitoring and evaluation information is used to refine and update food modalities and food basket on a periodic basis.		

			and nutrition content requirements.			
	Procurement and logistics arrangements are based on procuring as locally as possible, taking into account the costs, the capacities of implementing parties, the production capacity in the country, the quality of the food, and the stability of the pipeline.	There is recognition of the need for national standards for procurement and logistics arrangements, but these do not exist yet.	National standards on procurement and logistics arrangements have been developed and are based on three or more of the following: procuring as locally as possible, taking into account the costs, the capacities of implementing parties, the production capacity in the country, the quality of the food, and the stability of the pipeline.	National standards on procurement and logistics arrangements have been developed and are based on procuring as locally as possible, taking into account the costs, the capacities of implementing parties, the production capacity in the country, the quality of the food, and the stability of the pipeline.	National standards on procurement and logistics arrangements have been developed and are based on procuring as locally as possible, taking into account the costs, the capacities of implementing parties, the production capacity in the country, the quality of the food, and the stability of the pipeline; monitoring and evaluation information is used to refine and update procurement and logistics arrangements.	
Policy Lever	Indicator	Latent	Emerging	Established	Advanced	Overall Score Per Domain
Policy Goal 5: Community Participation						
Community participation and accountability —strong community participation and ownership (teachers, parents, children)	Community participates in school feeding program design, implementation, management and evaluation and contributes resources (in-kind, cash or as labor).	Systems and accountability mechanisms are not yet in place for consultation with parents and community members on the design, monitoring and feedback of the school feeding program.	A school feeding management committee exists, but parent and community member participation could be strengthened and awareness on the opportunity to monitor and feedback on the school feeding program is lacking.	The school feeding management committee comprises representatives of teachers, parents, and community members, and communities have accountability mechanisms to hold school feeding programs accountable at school level.	The school feeding management committee comprises representatives of teachers, parents, and community members and has clearly defined responsibilities and periodic training. Accountability mechanisms are in place by which communities can hold school feeding programs accountable at school, regional, and national levels.	Emerging

Acknowledgments

This report is part of a joint World Bank Group, Partnership for Child Development, and World Food Programme effort to help countries strengthen their education system policies and institutions specifically in relation to school health and school feeding. The SABER–School Feeding tools were applied by the World Food Programme, and this report was prepared from the SABER–School Feeding questionnaire completed during the national workshop held on April 8–9, 2016, in Tsaghkadzor, Armenia. This report was jointly written by Bachir Sarr from PCD and Vanja Karanovic from WFP.

The organization of the SABER workshop demonstrates the strong commitment of the government of Armenia and its strategic partners, such as WFP and the World Bank, to implement sound school feeding policies and strategies.

The results of this workshop, presented in this report, are due to the contribution of all actors and partners involved in the implementation of the school feeding program in Armenia and particularly WFP and its partner organizations.

Our sincere appreciation goes to His Excellency Mr. Levon Mkrtchyan, Minister of Education and Science, who supported the successful roll-out of the workshop.

Particular gratitude goes to Mr. Robert Stepanyan, Head of the Monitoring and Development Programme in the Ministry of Education and Science; Ms. Lilit Hlghatyan, Senior Expert in the Finance Department of Ministry of Education and Science; Mr. Artak Harutyunyan, the Senior Expert in the Department of Social Assistance of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; Ms. Susanna Makeyan, Senior Expert in the Department of General Education in the Ministry of Education and Science; and Ms. Parandzem Darbinyan, Senior Expert in the Department of Planning of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development.

We thank PCD and WFP teams involved in planning and organizing the workshop, specifically: Mr. Bachir Sarr, PCD Senior Policy Adviser; Ms. Pascale Micheau, WFP Country Director and Representative; Mr. Luca Molinas, WFP Head of Programme; Ms. Vanja Karanovic, WFP Programme Policy Officer; Ms. Liana Kharatyan former WFP Programme and Policy Officer; Mr. Grigori Grigoryants, WFP Programme Policy Officer; Ms. Elmira Bakhshinyan, WFP Programme Policy Officer; Mr. Yessai Nikoyan, WFP Logistics Officer; Mr. Vladimir Malkhasyan, WFP Field Monitor; Mr. Vahan Arakelyan, WFP Field Monitor; Mr. Karen Hakobyan, WFP field monitor; and the rest of the WFP team in Armenia.

The SABER workshop would not have happened without the support from WFP country office technical teams, specifically Laura Avagyan, Anna Avetisyan, and Alexander Mnatsakanyan.

Our thanks also go to all workshop participants for their attendance and enthusiasm and finally to all those who directly or indirectly facilitated this workshop.

Acronyms

HGSF	Home Grown School Feeding
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PCD	Partnership for Child Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan
SHN	School Health and Nutrition
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SF	School Feeding
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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The **Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)** initiative produces comparative data and knowledge on education policies and institutions, with the aim of helping countries systematically strengthen their education systems. SABER evaluates the quality of education policies against evidence-based global standards, using new diagnostic tools and detailed policy data. The SABER country reports give all parties with a stake in educational results—from administrators, teachers, and parents to policy makers and business people—an accessible, objective snapshot showing how well the policies of their country's education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

This report focuses specifically on policies in the area of **School Feeding**.

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