

**SABER**

School Health and School Feeding

2016

Even when quality schools, textbooks, and teachers are all provided, children can only receive effective education if they are in school and prepared to learn. Poor health and hunger both reduce attendance and hamper learning in school. School health and school feeding (SHSF) programs can help overcome these barriers to learning for all—especially among children and youth from poor households, who are most likely to suffer from health and nutrition problems. SABER-School Health and School Feeding documents and analyzes school health programs for children of school age and helps governments strengthen these programs.

Why do countries invest in school health and school feeding?

Children are at the center of efforts to achieve learning for all. To achieve this goal, it is essential that the poorest children, who suffer most from ill health, poor nutrition, and hunger, receive additional support in school that helps them to overcome these disadvantages. School health and nutrition programs can contribute to improved learning and have become a part of national development policy worldwide. A pervasive school system provides a platform for delivering simple health interventions to schoolchildren, and schools are among the best institutions to reach most adolescents almost on a daily basis. SHSF programs are therefore well placed

to contribute to adolescent health and development. In cost-benefit analyses, school health programs often compare with many other education interventions. These programs have the additional advantage of optimizing the benefits of education already being offered to poor children and are often remarkably low in cost.

What challenges exist?

Common health conditions affecting school-age children also affect their education. Malaria and worm infections can reduce enrolment and increase absenteeism, while hunger and anemia can affect cognition and learning, thus exacerbating the problems of even those children who do go to school. The pain associated with tooth decay and the diarrhea and respiratory diseases

associated with poor hygiene may also frequently affect both attendance and learning. Major health conditions that affect education are highly prevalent among poor schoolchildren. Hunger also affects learning and attention.

What is SABER-School Health and School Feeding?

Using new diagnostic tools and detailed policy information, the World Bank Group's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) platform collects and analyzes comparative data and knowledge on education systems around the world and highlights the policies and institutions that matter most to promote learning for all children and youth. SABER's detailed data-gathering and analysis are

organized by “domains,” or areas of education policymaking within an education system. These currently include levels of education (early childhood development, primary and secondary, workforce development, and tertiary), types of quality resources and supports (school finance, school health and school feeding, and teachers), areas of governance (engaging the private sector and school autonomy and accountability), information sources (education management information systems and student assessment), and complementary inputs and cross-cutting themes (equity and inclusion, information and communication technologies, and resilience). SABER aims to give all parties with a stake in educational results—from students, administrators, teachers, and parents to policymakers and business people—an accessible, detailed, objective snapshot of how well the policies of their country’s education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

The SABER-SHSF tools collect, analyze, and disseminate comprehensive information on SHSF policies around the world. The overall objective 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. SABER-SHSF diagnostic tools

can be used to determine a country’s progress in implementing each indicator and provide a snapshot of the developmental status of school health policy in the country.

Although school feeding is one component of a broader school health program, the costs and scale of school feeding are much greater than other school health program components. For this reason, a separate rubric-framework has been developed for assessing school feeding policies.

What drives effective school health and school feeding?

Based on extensive research and global evidence, there are four core policy goals that form the basis of an effective **school health** program:

Establishing health-related school policies. This is an integral part of developing an effective school health program because it provides an opportunity for national leadership to demonstrate a commitment to school health programming and ensures accountability for the quality of programs. An effective national school health policy can help a government develop its strategic vision for school health and encourage program ownership. The policy should also have a multi-sectoral approach to encourage cooperation because school health is relevant to many sectors, including education and health.

Ensuring safe, supportive school environments. This includes access to adequate water and sanitation facilities, as well as a healthy psychosocial environment. Safe water and sanitation practices contribute not only to obvious health benefits but have also helped girls’ attendance rates. A school administration that strives for a positive psychosocial environment by addressing issues such as bullying, violence, and other stigmas has also shown to be consistently related to student progress.

Delivering school-based health and nutrition services.

Diseases that negatively affect schoolchildren’s ability to learn, such as those caused by worm infections, are highly prevalent worldwide, especially among the poor. These diseases, many of which are preventable and treatable, impact children’s attendance rates, cognitive abilities, and physical development. This makes screening for health problems imperative, along with the treatment of parasitic infections, weekly iron supplementation to control iron deficiency anemia, and other simple but effective treatments. Interventions can also include psychosocial counseling and school feeding. Health and nutrition interventions delivered through school systems can be highly cost-effective because schools have the infrastructure to serve as a platform to deliver simple health treatments and provide screening and referral services.

Skills-based health education.

This skills-based approach focuses on the development of knowledge, attitudes, and values that impact the long-term behavior and choices of schoolchildren. A skills-based health education is essential to mitigating social and peer pressures, addressing cultural norms, and discouraging abusive relationships. Psychosocial, interpersonal, and life skills can strengthen students' abilities to protect themselves from health threats and adopt positive health behaviors. A skills-based health education program can include curriculum development, life skills training, and learning materials on subjects such as HIV.

Based on extensive research and global evidence, there are five core policy goals that form the basis of an effective **school feeding** program:

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 that are implementing their own national programs, school feeding is included in national policy frameworks.

Financial capacity. Stable funding is a prerequisite for sustainability. However, where

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 nongovernmental organizations and the government. 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.

Institutional capacity and coordination. School feeding programs are better executed when an institution is mandated and accountable for the implementation of such a program. Effective programs also include multi-sectoral involvement across education, health, agriculture, and local government, as well as a comprehensive link between school feeding and other school health or social protection programs and established coordination mechanisms.

Sound design and implementation. In order 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 towards 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.

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.

How is SABER-School Health and School Feeding helping to improve education systems?

SABER-SHSF is supporting governments in their efforts to improve education results by:

- Providing a comprehensive framework based on a thorough review of global evidence and related diagnostic tools.
- Assisting countries to better understand where their policies and programs stand in comparison with good practice, as well as to diagnose where the strategic focus for improvement should lie.
- Aiding countries to respond to the diagnosis of the problem and develop a strategy for improvement of their school health programs.

How are countries and partner organizations using SABER-School Health and School Feeding to improve system effectiveness?

- SABER has been used as a platform for the involvement of other key donors, key international and national NGOs. In this context, it helps countries identify strengths and gaps in the school feeding related policies and system in a country, and areas where each player can contribute, without duplicating assessment or capacity-building efforts.
- Many of the countries that have implemented SABER usually require assistance in drafting a school feeding policy, revising existing

manuals and systems or undertaking cost assessment exercise.

- Some countries have visited the World Food Programme (WFP) Center of Excellence in school feeding to further develop a comprehensive action plan for the National School Feeding Programs.

World Food Programme (WFP). The WFP, which is the largest humanitarian provider of school meals worldwide, is implementing SABER for school feeding interventions. Its current strategy states that as of 2015, all countries that intend to implement school feeding programs with WFP support must undertake a SABER analysis of school feeding. In 2015, WFP and the World Bank Group piloted the use of SABER tools in seven countries around

the world and the WFP has subsequently used these tools in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

SABER-School Health and School Feeding Partners

This initiative is a collaboration between the World Bank Group, the World Food Programme, and the Partnership for Child Development, which reflects the high-level of commitment of these institutions/organizations to support and promote school feeding and school health policies and institutions around the world. The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is also a strong supporter of SABER and education systems research and has done much work to support the application of SABER globally.