Challenge

Every day, countless children across the globe turn up for school on an empty stomach, which makes it hard to focus on lessons. For all of them, a daily school meal can mean not only better nutrition and health, but also increased access to and achievement in education. It is also a strong incentive to consistently send children to school.

Governments increasingly invest in home-grown school meals programmes because they are an effective safety net for children, farmers and communities, with the potential to foster development and well-being in the long term. Home-grown school meals programmes contribute to achieving various sustainable development goals: they facilitate access to education (SDG4), help improve nutrition (SDG2), and address the structural poverty of smallholder farmers (SDG1) (WFP, 2016).

Solution

The success of the Brazilian experience in poverty reduction and food security promotion over the last years has caught global attention, especially Brazil’s comprehensive approach to school meals. Developing countries are interested in exchanging information on how Brazil established policies for tackling hunger with sustainable legal, institutional and financial mechanisms.

The national school meals programme is integrated in other Brazilian initiatives to curb hunger and malnutrition through a multi-sectoral approach. Besides serving nutritious meals to 43 million students, the
programme boosts local agriculture, by dedicating at least 30 percent of its budget to purchasing food produced by smallholder farmers. The programme generates multiple benefits in education, nutrition, and local economies.

Since 2011, the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil enables other developing countries to tap into successful Zero Hunger experiences through South-South Cooperation. The Centre is the result of a partnership between the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Government of Brazil, with the support of other partners, such as the UK Department for International Development and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Stakeholders and Partners

Building innovative partnerships between governments, companies and organizations is at the core of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil’s strategy to support other countries in their fight against hunger and malnutrition and to help them reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

Methodology

The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil provides technical assistance to governments in the following areas:

School meals: School meals programmes constitute a central element of the Centre’s methodology. School meals contribute to improved child nutrition, to an increase in school enrollment and attendance rates, and to improve students’ performance. They also create opportunities for local farmers and communities.

Nutrition: Ending different forms of malnutrition is a crucial element of the Sustainable Development Goals. The demand of countries for information, knowledge, and capacity strengthening in this area has grown. The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil offers technical assistance and opportunities for dialogue for countries to find innovative and sustainable solutions to overcome malnutrition.

Social development: Integrated and multi-sectoral social development initiatives are essential to overcome hunger and poverty, to ensure food and nutritional security, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Partner countries frequently reach out to the Centre to share knowledge, increase their technical capacity and receive technical assistance to implement or strengthen their national social protection systems with a focus on food security and nutrition.

Capacity strengthening: The Sustainable Development Goal 17 advocates for strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnerships for sustainable development, including through South-South Cooperation. Support to public policies, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing activities offer countries the means to advance in their fight against hunger. The WFP Centre of Excellence against
Hunger in Brazil offers public policy dialogue opportunities for both government staff and decision makers, always ensuring a multi-sectoral approach to addressing hunger and malnutrition.

Effectiveness/ Validation

In the last five years, forty countries have benefitted directly from the activities of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil.

The Centre provides continuous support and technical assistance to 28 national governments. The year 2015 marked a major breakthrough in the work of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil: 25 countries approved the terms for the creation of an African School Feeding Network. The network will contribute to the design and improvement of school meals policies, including the increase of national budgets dedicated to school meals programmes.

The Centre has also worked in partnership with the African Union to expand investments by African countries in school meals programmes.

The Centre’s monitoring and evaluation approach is guided by an evaluation matrix that encompasses the full range of the Centre’s strategies and methodologies. It aims at gathering evidence on the contribution of South-South and triangular Cooperation to the SDGs.

Innovation

An external evaluation of the Centre’s first five years of work found that the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil endorses innovation in the following areas:

- It tailors its actions to the demands of the partner countries and adapts to changes;
- It promotes the involvement of high-level government actors, which increases countries' commitment to school meals programs;
- It contributes to innovative school meals solutions and to increase the impact of existing national and international experiences. It emphasizes the multi-sectoral approach to school meals programs;
- It contributes significantly to the global recognition of school meals as a strategy to promote sustainable development;
- It is recognized for its ability to build strategic partnerships that contribute to the emergence of an enabling environment for the creation of national solutions to fight hunger and poverty.

South-South Cooperation

All technical assistance activities of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil start upon request for support of a partner government. The multidimensional approach of the Centre can benefit any country, not only developing countries, who are facing challenges in designing and implementing sustainable school meals or social protection programmes.

The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil is supported by a vast network of partners. New partnerships (in Asia for example) are crucial to maintain, increase, and improve the activities of the Centre to support developing countries in tackling hunger and malnutrition.

In addition, the Centre also conduces many joint initiatives such as research projects and dialogue forums in specific countries. These help to foster the development of innovative solutions to overcome hunger and poverty.
Sustainability

The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil has been operating consistently since 2011.

The sustainability of its work is promoted by its demand-driven approach, which ensures that the Centre’s technical assistance activities start upon governments’ requests. Therefore, they imply commitment from the partner government.

It embraces new partnerships, which allow the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil to maintain, increase, and improve its activities to support developing countries in tackling hunger and malnutrition. However, guaranteeing continuous funding to partner countries, for the implementation of the strategies designed with the technical support from the Centre, remains a key challenge as highlighted by the external evaluation.

Replicability

Core principles of South-South Cooperation include respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence; equality and non-conditionality. Based on these principles, the Centre’s activities start systematically upon governments’ request for support.

To collaborate with the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil, countries need to:

- Be committed to pursuing sustainable solutions to fight hunger and poverty;
- Send an official request for support;
- Involve high-level government officials;
- Liaise with the respective WFP Country Office or Regional Bureau, depending on the country they engage with;
- Provide an overview of the country’s situation, detailing strengths and challenges.

Resources

To learn more about the work of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil, please refer to the following resources:

- The website of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil;
- The Centre’s Facebook page;
- The WFP webpage on the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil.

Contact Person

For further information, please contact Mariana Rocha, Assistant to the Director of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil.

References

1 WFP, 2016. Home Grown School Meals Benefit Children, Farmers and Communities