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Frank Bliss

School feeding as a core contribution to social security

Analyses and recommendations

AVE-Study 37b/2024

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Analyses and recommendations

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Ways out of poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity

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List of abbreviations

BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
GNI	Gross national income
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCFA	Franc de la Communauté Financière d'Afrique
hh	Household/s
HDI	Human Development Index
ILO	International Labour Organization
l	Litre
NGO	Non-governmental organisation/s
p.c.	per capita
p.d.	per day
SMC	School Meals Coalition
SF	School feeding
TA	Technical Assistance
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
US$	In this paper not exactly convertible to Euro; fluctuation roughly between 1 US$ = 0.9 and 1.0 Euro
WASH	Water, Sanitation, Health
WHO	World Health Organisation
WFP	World Food Programme

Project background

In view of the fact that the number of extremely poor people in many developing countries is not declining despite many efforts, the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) at the University of Duisburg-Essen carried out a research project entitled "Ways out of poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity" (AVE) from 2015.

The aim of the project was to develop recommendations for German official development cooperation with regard to improving the accessibility of poor, vulnerable and food-insecure population groups and the sustainable improvement of their living conditions.

The focus of the second phase of our research (2020 to 2023) was on investigating projects that work primarily within the following thematic areas: (i) agricultural financing, (ii) social enterprises and (iii) school feeding as a social security measure. Socio-cultural aspects of development, participation and gender were always taken into account as overarching cross-cutting issues. So-called *good practice projects* were identified for the aforementioned priority topics in the focus countries of Ethiopia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Kenya, Mali, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Zambia, and analysed on-site for their effectiveness in a second step.

Based on our field research and investigations in recent years, this article looks at the implementation of contributions to school meals. It deals with not only the effects of providing one meal a day on the pupils involved, but also with the broader effects of local, or, at least, hybrid, food procurement on agriculture and trade in the school environment as well as social effects on the school community and all stakeholder groups involved.

Summary

In international discourse, school feeding is seen as an increasingly important contribution to social security. Particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, school meals proved to be perhaps the most important means of getting many millions of children from poor and very poor households back into school. The founding of the School Meals Coalition in 2021, which currently has almost 100 member states, meant that school meals are now also on the agenda of most low- and middle-income countries.

In practice, however, it is clear that political declarations must be followed by practical steps to introduce nationwide implementation. This includes emphasising the governments' voluntary commitment through binding legal requirements and, above all, a secure, continuously increasing budget. Very poor countries that cannot immediately afford the transition from isolated school feeding projects to a nationwide programme require (temporary) donor support.

However, this presupposes that there is a medium-term takeover strategy for school meals by the government and state structures are established or existing ones strengthened from the outset, especially at a local level, with the aim of, at least, being able to sustainably secure the procurement of the necessary basic foodstuffs for all schools in their area of responsibility in a few years' time.

Local procurement (*home-grown school feeding*) has proven to be particularly effective when comparing the different procurement approaches for the food required compared to centralised purchasing. Local farmers and retailers are the main beneficiaries since, for cost reasons, the aim in poorer countries is to supplement the basic foodstuffs purchased by the state from local farmers with voluntary contributions (e.g. spices, other sauce ingredients, fruit) from the respective community. Local procurement also promotes community involvement and ownership, which also benefits the upkeep of the schools themselves.

As part of empirical studies by the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) at the University of Duisburg-Essen on school meals in the primary and preschool sector in Ethiopia, Benin and Cambodia, the concrete implementation of school meals, which are currently being established throughout the countries, was examined between April and September 2023 using a sample of 56 schools. Particularly concentrating on sustainability, it was determined that the commissioning of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to facilitate the establishment of school canteens should only take place for a limited period of time. In order to guarantee the continuation of the programmes after the donors (and the NGOs) have left, the existing state institutions would have to be prepared very early on to take on the final responsibility for the supply of food.

When setting up a school canteen, it is essential to plan for an adequate water supply for the school and ensure that the kitchen has an environmentally friendly energy supply. Functional kitchens, dining facilities, hand-washing facilities and other sanitary facilities should be planned with the involvement of school management, cooks, parents and any support committees. Similar to fair pay for kitchen staff, these are essential elements of providing pupils with a sustainable supply of hot meals each day.

1. Introduction

School feeding, in which children, at least, in primary school classes should receive a hot meal daily before or during school lessons, has been regarded worldwide as a core contribution to *social security*, at least, since the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this, it is part of *social assistance* in poorer countries, where it is primarily designed as a contribution to poverty reduction and food security.

The fact that school meals are made available to all pupils (including children from wealthy families) free of charge or, at a minimum, for a small (often voluntary) contribution does not change their primary objective of reducing poverty. The indiscriminate inclusion of all schoolchildren is intended to prevent discrimination against children from poorer families.

The policy of the School Meals Coalition (SMC), which was founded in 2021, and its member countries aims to help establish school feeding (SF), which was previously only provided as part of (often temporary) projects in many countries, on a permanent basis and as comprehensively as possible, and not just to help repair the damage that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused to the world's education systems, particularly in poorer countries. The SMC is, therefore, prioritising contributions to their sustainability in all countries, regardless of their socio-economic situation.

Box 1: Corona and the School Meals Coalition

Hundreds of millions of children and young people had to stay away from school for many months during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is why numerous governments began to look for solutions for the education sector in order to prevent a general dropout, especially of pupils from poorer households. After all, there was a risk in low-income countries, where school attendance rates were already unsatisfactory, that many pupils would not return to school after the interruptions. The introduction or significant expansion of school meals proved to be an effective and inexpensive system in view of the problem situation in order to support children from vulnerable households in particular in continuing their school attendance by providing a nutritious meal daily.

Recognising the importance of school meals, a group of countries founded the School Meals Coalition (SMC) in the context of the 2021 World Food Summit. There are now 95 countries and 115 partners from civil society and governmental and semi-governmental institutions that want to support governments in their endeavours to promote school meals. In addition to the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, these include organisations such as the WWF and the administration of the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. The SMC is co-ordinated by a secretariat within the structure of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

The countries involved in the SMC include some of the richest countries in the world, numerous emerging economies and extremely poor countries, such as Niger and the Republic of South Sudan. One focus is on Africa, where an "African School Feeding Day" has already been proclaimed and where, alongside the African Union, the West African Economic Community ECOWAS is particularly involved.

In the context of school meals, the SMC also wants to support local agriculture and agricultural markets and, at the same time, help to make the health situation, nutritional conditions, education systems and local communities generally more resilient to the consequences of climate change. School meals should especially rely on family farms and

local food suppliers for local procurement, which can lead to a more sustainable provision of food and boost the economy generally through additional employment.

Source: https://schoolmealscoalition.org [1/2024]

Fig. 1: Meeting of the SMC Executive Group in Rome on 30 November 2023.

This analysis and strategy paper is intended to provide governmental and non-governmental development organisations with suggestions for cooperation with partner countries in the development of sustainable school feeding systems that are adapted to the respective country context. The focus is on school feeding in low- and (lower) middle-income countries.

The basis for the elaboration is the multi-year work of a research team on SF, among other things, in the context of the research project "Ways out of (extreme) poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity", which began in 2015. The project is being carried out by the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) in close cooperation with and with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). School feeding was an explicit focus of the research in 2022 and 2023.

In addition to a general secondary analysis of the practice of SF, the study focuses on three case studies in the two African countries of Ethiopia and Benin as well as Cambodia in South-East Asia.

The three on-site surveys conducted in 2023 covered 28 schools in Cambodia, including schools in five provinces with different approaches to procurement; 16 schools in a total of seven departments in different ecological zones of Benin were considered; and ten schools in Ethiopia, including one in the Addis Ababa region, four in the important state of Oromia and five in the smaller Sidama. All studies involved discussions with representatives of the lead ministries at state and, where applicable, regional level as well as their departments in the provinces and districts. The WFP was always involved in the study; in Ethiopia, only on the basis of a general exchange, while in Benin, there was close cooperation in the selection of the locations of the schools visited and in Cambodia, similar to Benin, the surveys were sometimes also conducted with the direct participation of WFP representatives on-site.

The schools for the study in all countries should be able to provide positive examples and highlight problems. Some schools should be located close to city centres, others explicitly in areas that are difficult to reach by public transport.

Discussions at the school locations were always held with the local authorities and, where applicable, village chiefs, as well as with the school administrators and representatives of the various stakeholders involved in school life: first and foremost, the schoolchildren, their parents and teachers, as well as the warehouse managers responsible for storing the food, the school support associations and, last but not least, the cooks.

2. Brief Outline of the History and Aims of School Feeding

Apart from a few historical examples, the beginnings of systematic SF in public schools date back to the late 19th century. Even then, the aim in the USA and the United Kingdom, for example, was to make it easier for children from poorer households (hhs) to attend school. At that time, "facilitating" primarily meant reducing the widespread malnutrition of many children, which threatened to jeopardise their learning success at school. Although mass programmes were also set up in both countries between 1941 and 1943, particularly as a result of the Second World War, many measures were mostly based on voluntary action by the local authorities involved until the post-war period. [1]

Regarding the so-called developing countries, the history of SF began as early as 1955 in Brazil. The programme was initially aimed at the children of the poorest hhs. Over time, the programmes were increasingly expanded until the 2009 law on SF (Law No. 11,947) finally covered all pupils in public schools. Around 44 million children and young people were to receive at least part of their daily food requirements free of charge in this way. The law also stipulated that at least 30 % of the financial resources available should be used to purchase food from *family farms* (see Da Selva et al. 2022).

The history of SF also began in independent India as early as 1955 (after food had already been provided in some schools during the British colonial period from 1925). In 1958/1959, School meals were massively expanded with the "Expanded Nutrition Programme" with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), as well as with substantial Indian funds, and, finally, led to the nationwide "Applied Nutrition Programme" in 1995 (see WFP 2007). Since then, despite considerable difficulties and setbacks due to interventions by the High Court, school meals have been implemented more or less nationwide.

Similarly, in the 1970s, at the latest, SF was also introduced in numerous other countries as a contribution to school enrolment, particularly for children from poor regions of the countries or poor families. In the decades that followed, however, SF often remained project-based and, consequently, an isolated solution that was financed less by the states themselves than by the international donor community, and was sometimes implemented independently of state structures. A discussion about national or even local procurement only played a role in some contexts. This involved, for example, the issue of supplying basic foodstuffs from US or European surplus production, which neither took into account the country-specific food customs nor the fact that the national markets were disrupted and even destroyed by the large quantities of food donated.

In addition, it would take until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 for most poorer countries to declaratively commit to the introduction of universal SF, at least, in public primary schools. On the African continent alone, around 50 million pupils had to interrupt their school

[1] For the beginnings of SF, see Ariès 1975 and Bryant 1912; for the USA, see Avey (2015) and The Food Historian (2022); for the United Kingdom, see Finch (2019). It should be noted at this point that this synthesis and recommendation paper largely dispenses with references. However, the attached bibliography lists a number of mostly up-to-date sources to facilitate access to the topic.

attendance for varying lengths of time during and because of the pandemic, with many of these children not being allowed to return to school due to pressure from their families.

School meals for extremely poor families also proved to be an important argument for parents to send their children back to school. The extent to which school attendance among the poorest actually depends on SF was observed in Sidama (Ethiopia), where up to 25 % of pupils were absent from school again during an interruption in SF of just over three weeks in spring 2023 (only to be able to return once SF resumed).

Many donors, as well as a considerable number of the supported countries themselves, are convinced that school feeding must increasingly become the responsibility of the individual countries in order to be sustainable and not dependent on external funding. In this context, the WFP, among others, points out the contradiction between the considerable expenditure on education, even in poorer countries, on the one hand, and the low expenditure on health support for children, which enables them to attend school, on the other. While US$ 210 billion was invested in basic education worldwide in 2020, only between US$ 1.4 and 5.5 billion was invested in ensuring that children were healthy enough to attend school. This was an investment in the learning process, but not in the learners themselves: "Very simply: sick children cannot attend school and hungry children cannot learn" (WFP 2020: 4).

A realistic assessment, which is shared by the WFP, assumes that a number of countries will have to continue to be supported in the organisation and financing of SF for some time. A total of 40 million children alone in around 30 countries under crisis conditions would be dependent on SF. A further 20 million children would be in need of SF in 20 particularly poor countries, where the financial resources would not be sufficient. However, the WFP also sees a need for support for several million children in middle-income countries.

The WFP's target perspective goes beyond the well-being of children and their families. If, for example, the 25 poorer countries in Africa with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) values did not invest in healthy nutrition for their children, i.e. if they did not have a well-nourished, healthy and well-educated population, they would lose 50 to 70 % of their economic potential in the long term. If, on the other hand, the *benchmarks* for health and education were achieved, the gross national income (GNI) could be two and a half times higher.[2]

[2] The economic viability of school feeding was also addressed several times at a BMZ and WFP conference in Rome in November 2023. It was said, for example, to be seven or nine times higher than investments. A more recent study by Verguet et al. cites even more positive absolute figures: "Across the 14 countries, we estimate that 190 million schoolchildren benefit from school feeding programmes, with total program budgets reaching USD11 billion per year. Estimated annual human capital returns are USD180 billion: USD24 billion from health and nutrition gains, and USD156 billion from education. In addition, school feeding programmes offer annual social protection benefits of USD7 billion and gains to local agricultural economies worth USD23 billion" (2020: 1). In the context of our research, however, we are hesitant to derive economic profitability calculations from the human right to healthy food and food security in general. However, we were told very clearly by the government in Cambodia that an efficiency calculation is of considerable relevance in the struggle for the budget for SF.

3. Results of Three Case Studies: Ethiopia, Benin and Cambodia

Based on the case studies from Ethiopia, Benin and Cambodia, the policy of school feeding, and, above all, its practical implementation, was analysed taking into account all local stakeholders. To this end, ten schools in Ethiopia, 16 in Benin and 28 in Cambodia were visited in different regions of the respective country and interviews were conducted. Those responsible for the national programmes were also interviewed in the capital cities and at a provincial or district administration level. Some of the results were presented during the missions in the countries, and later comments from the partners (the WFP in Benin and Cambodia, the central government and the provincial governments of Oromia and Sidama in Ethiopia) were incorporated into the final reports.

Of the three countries, ***Cambodia*** – also due to its position as a lower middle-income country – is the most advanced in the organisation of SF, which already relied heavily on local procurement in 2015 and has since been enshrined in law. However, there is a very strong political commitment in both Ethiopia and Benin. In ***Benin,*** this is reflected in the fact that there is a commissioner for SF with the rank of head of department in the apparatus of the president himself (the *présidence*). In ***Ethiopia,*** a separate directorate for SF has been created in the Ministry of Education, and separate departments for SF have been created in the administration of the capital Addis Ababa and in the government apparatus of the important federal state of Oromia.

The introduction of school feeding has roughly the same history in all three countries, i.e. it was implemented – initially largely under the direction of NGOs – in particularly poor areas affected by drought or other disasters as a supplement or continuation of emergency aid, primarily at district level. While work on the conceptual introduction of a national SF programme was already underway in ***Cambodia*** in 2018, the step from SF as a collection of projects to a nationwide approach, at least in the primary and preschool sector in ***Ethiopia***, with the exception of the capital Addis Ababa, only took place in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the 2020/2021 school year, the national government and the governments of the federal states have declared SF to be a general state task and introduced them for all publicly owned primary schools. In Addis Ababa, for example, there is very generous funding from the capital city budget by national standards. Here alone, 700,000 schoolchildren are currently given a hot meal daily.

In ***Benin,*** SF has only been given greater priority by the government under President Patrice Talon since 2017. The provision of all primary school children in state schools became a declared government goal on 20 July 2017, under the name "Programme National d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégré" (PNASI). In the meantime, "*cantines scolaires*" have been established in around 75 % of all primary schools (5,356 schools by the end of 2022) as part of the PNASI. Since then, around 1.165 million children in grades 1 to 6 have received a school meal daily.

Locally sourced SF began as part of the WFP's support for ***Cambodia*** in the 2016/2017 school year, and even earlier in some cases. At that time, over 1,220 schools with a roughly estimated total of 300,000 preschool and primary school pupils received a free hot meal daily

Fig. 2: Children in a school in Benin receive their food in containers they have brought themselves.

at the start of the school day. For the 2022-2023 school year, the WFP lists 1,114 schools in Cambodia that procure food locally as part of government SF programmes. At the time of the INEF study (August 2023), 534 schools in ten provinces of Cambodia were fully included in the exclusively local procurement approach. With the exception of just under 100 donor-funded SF schools, this exclusively local procurement has so far only taken place in the SF schools funded by the government and implemented by the state structures. A so-called "hybrid" approach is currently still being implemented for the other about 580 schools, in which national (also based, in part, on donated food imports) and local procurement are combined. Here too, however, the aim is to gradually switch to local food procurement.

What Ethiopia, Benin and Cambodia have in common is that the infrastructure for SF is still very limited. In the first two countries, even the ***water supply***, an elementary basic requirement for SF, is by no means guaranteed, least of all in Ethiopia, where many schools have to buy water in jerry cans at great expense. But where water is hardly available, the entire ***WASH sector*** is jeopardised. Here, the condition of the ***latrines*** is also particularly poor and every litre (l) of water for ***washing hands*** has to be rationed, especially in Sidama.

A general problem in all three countries is also the ***energy supply*** for the kitchen. Apart from two cookers fuelled with palm kernel shells (Benin) and other exceptions that we did not see, only firewood is used for cooking, which is predominantly used for ***energy-saving stoves*** in Cambodia. ***Traditional three-stone stoves*** are still often used in the other countries alongside such improved stoves (*Fig. 3*). The former are also used because the "improved" cookers are completely dysfunctional or may not fit the standard cooking vessels. There is also insufficient dialogue with the cooks about energy use.

There is greater potential for producing firewood only in Ethiopia, as most schools have their own land. Almost everywhere in rural schools, however, peripheral areas of the schools could be planted with ***trees*** that grow quickly, such as acacias, and are suitable as firewood.

The ***utilisation of biogas*** in a school context has proven to be less than successful in Benin. On the one hand, there is a lack of sufficient biomass to operate the fermentation chambers, and, on the other hand, trained personnel would have to be available who would also have to take responsibility for feeding the fermenters on an ongoing basis. In Cambodia, where the potential is greater and biogas is already used occasionally in hhs, the idea of biogas plants has not yet been pursued more intensively.

Fig. 3: The traditional three-stone stove is still used in this school in Benin, in this case, because the cooks cannot handle different types of improved cookers (*foyers améliorés*).

In third place on the list of concerns for many schools in all three countries (least of all in Cambodia) is the ***lack of canteen facilities***. The children are, therefore, forced to eat in the classrooms or find a place to eat themselves, for example, on mats on the floor outside the classrooms for the youngest children. The ***kitchens*** have not been designed appropriately everywhere either. In Benin, for example, kitchens that are too open, i.e. exposed to driving rain, are contrasted with buildings that have hardly any extractors when the stove is open and where the cooks almost suffocate while working.

The ***school headteachers*** bear the main responsibility for the implementation of SF in all countries. They are supported by more or less well-functioning committees, such as the *School Support Committee* in Cambodia or the *Association Parents d'Elèves* in *Benin or the Comité Cantine* for practical work. The ***local administration*** has been intensively involved in SF to date only in Cambodia.

The ***operation of school gardens***, the regular ***procurement of firewood***, all kinds of relief work and, above all, the ***acquisition of financial and material donations*** are primarily the responsibility of the support committees, most of which are committed to their work but have few wealthy supporters in the mostly very poor communities – until now an important criterion for the selection of schools for the SF. Teachers, headteachers and even the village chief often put in extra money when there would otherwise be no money to buy firewood or ingredients for the meals. Many school kitchens, particularly in Benin, literally live from hand to mouth when it comes to anything that goes beyond the well-organised delivery of basic foodstuffs by the WFP.

The schools in Ethiopia ultimately have to see how they can manage organisationally with very good funding from the state in Addis Ababa, continued external funding from NGOs in Sidama and a solidarity organisation in Oromia, which collects national donations. In all cases, however, the schools have to see how they can provide an acceptable, nutritious school meal from basic foodstuffs. This is achieved through small ***financial contributions from parents***, which are not compulsory. They usually amount to 25 to 50 FCFA per meal (3.75 – 7.5 cents) in Benin or just over 80 riel (about 2 cents) in Cambodia. In Ethiopia, 100 – 200 Birr are usually collected per school year, which roughly equates to 0.75 - 1.5 cents per school day.

The schools in Benin and Ethiopia as well as the schools in Cambodia that continue to be supported by the WFP use the income to pay for not only the ***ingredients for the meals*** (i.e. the ingredients for the sauce) but also the ***"recognition fee" for the cooks***, which, in the schools

we visited, is a maximum of US$ 20 per month, for work in six-day weeks, and working hours of mostly 4.00 am to 7.00 am or 8.00 am in Cambodia. The cooks currently receive US$ 25 a month, or more often US$ 50, only in the schools that are completely taken over by the state with full local procurement. Here, the money also comes from the state via the coffers of the rural communities (*communes*).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations for German Development Cooperation

This chapter summarises important findings from the three comprehensive field studies conducted in 2023 against the background of our secondary analysis of important international contributions to school feeding and provides recommendations (→) for German governmental and non-governmental development cooperation. Our in-depth discussions on fundamental issues with representatives of the national authorities responsible for school feeding, the WFP and other institutions involved form an important basis for this.

4.1 Prerequisites for Sustainable School Meal Models

While many countries have recognised SF as an important contribution to *social security*, the actual commitment to their implementation varies greatly. Countries such as Benin and Cambodia, on the one hand, and Malawi, which is particularly strongly supported by development cooperation, are worlds apart. While the former, such as Ethiopia and even the extremely poor Sierra Leone, have begun to make a nationwide commitment and, from small, isolated projects over the last three to five years, have now set up more or less nationwide programmes that are financed to a significant extent from the state coffers, the corresponding (low!) figures for the 2020/2021 school year still read like a mockery, at least for some other countries.

The adoption of legal foundations and their concretisation through decrees are particularly important for the establishment and implementation of school feeding programmes. Although there is no guarantee that political declarations will result in concrete implementation, they are an indispensable central prerequisite for the sustainability of school feeding programmes.

This also includes law-based, fixed budget items in state budgets at all administrative levels that are responsible for SF. Cambodia, for example, is making good progress in this respect, while in Ethiopia, the capital Addis Ababa and the federal state of Oromia offer promising approaches, although the latter are still lacking in other federal states. There is still a lack of both binding laws and budgets in many countries.

Voluntary work has had a significant influence on the start of SF especially in Africa, and has made them possible in the first place. However, a national system cannot survive in the long term on the unpaid labour of women, particularly as cooks. At the very least, the core staff should be employed by the state and cooks should be paid on the basis of the national minimum wage for low-skilled labour (as a lower limit).

A lack of financial resources, even in low-income countries, is not a convincing argument for states to refrain from providing their own funds. There is considerable fiscal room for manoeuvre in most countries, even the poorer ones; it only needs to be used on the revenue and expenditure side, possibly with pressure from donors.[3] However, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) conclusions, a number of extremely poor countries with limited resources need co-financing for a while and, above all, technical assistance in setting up social security systems adapted to the respective country context.

[3] The suggestion that poorer countries cannot afford to make substantial contributions to financing social programmes through tax collection (see Evans et al. 2023) has also been empirically refuted since the important ILO studies on social security from 2014 at the latest (ILO 2014a; see also ILO 2014b).

The taboo of ignoring the revenue side in dialogue with governments should also be dropped. Countries that really take SF seriously must also ensure that income, business and/or corporate taxes, for example, are provided for by law and actually paid. School meals as a reason for fair taxation is even a particularly suitable entry point for a corresponding political dialogue with the national finance ministries.

→ *Support for SF in partner countries should always be made dependent on the provision of substantial counterpart contributions – over and above the political commitment of governments. The willingness to continuously increase their own contributions should be supported by additional financial contributions – possibly also for other important areas of social security.*

→ *An important supporting factor for the establishment of SF and its funding is to convince relevant members of government of the broad benefits attached. This can also demonstrate the economic benefits of good social security systems for the country and the accountability of the government itself.*

→ *Ethically rather questionable, but possibly necessary, would be to mention the nine-fold "payback" that some actors want to calculate as a profit from the investment in SF (quoted from Gordon Brown, ex-Prime Minister, UK).*[4] *In addition, there is the opportunity to create SF with functioning local procurement as a model for the demand for local agricultural products from "regenerative, resilient and food sovereign" production (such as "organic" and "local" as an example of "good food" in Cambodia).*

4.2 Local Versus Hybrid and Centralised Procurement

School meals in South and South-East Asia, the MENA region and especially in sub-Saharan Africa initially began to spread in the form of small-scale projects, often with a charitable background and for a limited period of time. It was not uncommon for SF to be integrated or incorporated into emergency aid or food security projects. Schools in areas particularly affected by poverty or special crises were also supplied with food in addition to the distribution of food to affected sections of the population.

To a large extent, these were food gifts in the form, for example, of tinned sardines, tinned cheese, butterfat, soya oil and wheat flour, with little consideration given to regional and local eating habits. In the meantime, the selection of donated staple foods has been adapted more closely to local needs; Cambodia, for example, now receives mainly rice, the national staple food, and cooking oil from the USA (see Fig. 4). However, this approach is also being increasingly scrutinised, as imported (donated) food does not have any local economic impact. On the contrary, imported food usually damages local markets.

Alternatives to imported and centrally distributed food for school feeding programmes include national procurement (i.e. in the country of school feeding) with continued central distribution and primarily local procurement, whereby there are fluid transitions between local and national procurement. The international trend – including within the SMC – is currently moving in the direction of (primarily) local procurement.

[4] Or significantly higher values, see footnote 2.

Fig. 4: A shed at a school in Cambodia where rice contributed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is stored for the national school feeding programme.

Primary ***local procurement*** includes multiple options for purchasing food: Firstly, all components – usually staple foods such as rice, maize, wheat and beans, fresh produce, such as meat, vegetables, fish and eggs, as well as salt and cooking oil – can be purchased from local producers and traders in the vicinity of the schools in the respective school district or the community that hosts the schools (see Cambodia as an example). Oil and salt, in particular, do not necessarily come from the immediate vicinity, as they are not produced there, but should be of local origin.

"Local procurement" in countries such as Benin and Ethiopia also includes nationwide or at least regional tendering or negotiation with local traders. This also applies to cooking oil for the national market and even for imports, as, according to the WFP, the quality of nationally produced oils is not (yet) sufficiently good.

We are also dealing with ***hybrid systems*** in Cambodia and, to a lesser extent in Benin, that are exemplary of many other countries. In Cambodia, the transition to schools with 100 % local procurement is already well advanced, while in Benin, it is in its infancy, with the WFP endeavouring to purchase more and more centrally procured maize from local and regional cooperatives. However, complete local procurement is not (yet) being pursued. Hybrid in Cambodia means that most of the donor-funded schools whose supplies are managed by the WFP continue to receive rice donated from the USA and cooking oil of the same origin. However, fresh food, such as meat, fish and vegetables, are procured exclusively locally.

In Benin, basic supplies include maize or rice as well as small quantities of legumes (lentils, beans, soya). Because sauce ingredients are only purchased locally to a very small extent from the meagre income the schools receive from parents' donations, the actual value of the food has so far been ***centralised procurement***. This even has a high proportion of imports (e.g. all cooking oil and, especially for price reasons, rice), but is linked to the endeavour to rely more heavily on local producers.

A structural problem of international support for SF is that some donors (the USA, for example, regarding cooking oil and basic food, and Japan concerning tinned fish) continue to insist on ***deliveries of natural products*** that are only partially suited to the respective nutritional tradition (sardines in oil instead of the sea, river or farmed fish offered everywhere in Cambodia). This reduces the value of the local share of the procurement substantially and, thus, the broad impact of SF beyond the pure food security effect.

→ *Accordingly, it is recommended that the problem of culturally appropriate food donations should be emphasised more strongly within the framework of donor co-ordination and, among other things, within the framework of the School Meals Coalition. Additionally, as local or regional sources of supply are available to a sufficient extent in the countries, funds should be made available instead of natural resources.*

→ *Food for school meals should generally be sourced locally, as far as this is justifiable in terms of effort and cost. Local procurement does not necessarily mean "locally produced". There is some scope for supplementation in the medium term, however, particularly in the case of vegetables, by encouraging and supporting local businesses to expand their existing production and/or include previously uncommon varieties in their product range. Local conditions must be considered as not everything grows everywhere and/or production should be limited for ecological and economic reasons, for example, due to excessive water requirements.*

4.3 Responsibilities, Obligations and Support Mechanisms

The structure of school meal programmes depends heavily on the decision regarding local or central procurement. With a focus on primarily local procurement as a clear model for the future, much depends on whether it is possible to centrally involve school management in addition to the municipal structures and the representatives of the ministry in charge and to give them not only responsibility but also decision-making authority.

Up to now, ***headteachers*** have borne a great deal of responsibility and invested a lot of time, even outside of their previous duties, in order to be able to serve the children a (hot) meal daily despite very limited resources and, at times, extremely difficult conditions (e.g. water supply, energy problems). Therefore, in the decentralised system – in close cooperation and under the control of the responsible authorities or committees – they should always have responsibility for the overall co-ordination of SF and, thus, the budget available in the respective school.

→ *Together with the parents' representatives, the organisations that support the schools and the municipal administrations, they should also have extensive decision-making powers on detailed issues.*

In many countries, SF is also supported by ***traditional authorities***, which is especially important in places where particularly conservative families (especially fathers) are reluctant to send their children, especially girls, to school. A "*chef de village*" or clan elder in West Africa or a "*shekh al-qabila*" in Yemen may be the only person who can persuade a reluctant parent to send their daughter to school or even let her go to secondary school.

→ *Wherever possible and sensible, traditional authorities should, therefore, be considered as central stakeholders to an even greater extent than before and involved in providing information and decision-making processes as well as training measures at an early stage.*

Our three field studies have shown that the responsible ***employees of the school administrations*** in the provinces and school districts are informed and trained to very different extents about the details of SF, although they are primarily supposed to answer questions from the schools, receive complaints and help solve any problems that arise.

There is a need for action here, especially in countries with weak or previously uninvolved municipal structures. Either much more intensive training and further education is provided here, including on detailed issues, or good communication channels are established between the schools, as the main players in SF and the experts in the provincial and central

administrations, who can be available at short notice for questions, complaints and problem-solving.

The ***involvement of the school environment*** – the village population, local authorities, "modern" elected representatives, business people, self-help groups, women's associations and others – can be very beneficial for the introduction and, above all, the operation of SF. Examples show that financial resources, labour and political support (e.g. for the financing of school kitchens and canteens) can be mobilised.

The comparable inclusion of the less homogeneous "community" in an urban context is much more difficult than in villages. However, existing neighbourhood structures can also be used and residents be motivated to take advantage of the attractive opportunity to contribute to their own children's food security.

> "I started up my *kuyun* [note: two-axle tractor with trailer] and drove around the village until I got three loads of firewood for the school" (a village chief in northern Cambodia in September 2023).
>
> "Some people from our village are abroad, even in Canada. They collected money there and sent us 10,000 dollars for the school. We use the money for the water supply and school meals" (headteacher from the area around Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in April 2023).

4.4 The Organisation of School Feeding

4.4.1 The Food at School and its Sources

Fig. 5: The concentration of three shops selling junk food and many "junk toys" in this school is not a good example.

The ***composition of dishes*** in SF varies greatly. It is often, but not always, orientated towards regional food preferences and offerings in systems with national procurement. Even where local procurement is favoured, there are sometimes standardised specifications from the capital, for example, regarding staple foods. Certain combinations – rice with certain beans or maize porridge with other pulses – may go down well in one region, but the combination does not taste good to the children elsewhere or is at least very unfamiliar. Maximum flexibility

would be helpful here in order to combine standards for healthy school meals with local eating habits.

However, even common staple foods are not necessarily ecologically appropriate, for example, in East Africa, where many hhs cannot imagine eating without maize porridge. At the same time, maize cultivation places a heavy burden on the soil. Where alternatives are available – such as ***tubers*** – they should, therefore, be promoted more strongly in menus.

Where tuber crops, such as cassava and yams, are an important staple food in West and Central Africa, they offer a good, ecologically sound and widely accepted alternative to wheat or maize. However, they are not yet very popular with those responsible for SF due to their more complex procurement. Trials, such as those currently being carried out with sweet potatoes in Sierra Leone, should, therefore, be particularly encouraged.

Fig. 6: Here, on the other hand, snacks are offered exclusively from local production and tradition.

The ***consumption of meat*** is justifiable almost everywhere in the quantities that are currently affordable. There is currently no reason to look for and promote dishes with less meat and possibly more fish from sustainable farming. Even Cambodia is not a country where school meals with 20 g of meat a week cause significant CO2 emissions or will do so in the near future.

The minor impact on nature is more than compensated for by the local increase in vegetable production, which is also very often "organic". This is not only because smallholder farms are generally unable to afford chemical fertilisers and pesticides, but also because of the increasing demand from the population for "healthy food".

However, school meals – especially for children from better-off hhs – are in competition with ***junk food***, i.e. unhealthy snacks (Fig. 5). This is offered almost everywhere in front of and in schools in our three reference countries. Only in Cambodia is this explicitly prohibited by decree on school grounds, but this is often not adhered to. Here, the headteachers argue that the stall fees generate income, which, in turn, is invested in SF.

Good practices for school sales also come from the same countries. Cooks, for example, who are poorly paid or not paid at all are often allowed to sell snacks before or at school to compensate. However, these must be healthy, i.e. made only from local foodstuffs without colourings and with little sugar. Some schools also stipulate that food must be packaged in the traditional way (e.g. in banana leaves) (Fig. 6).

4.4.2 Families' own Financial Contribution

The ***financial scope*** for SF has a considerable influence on the composition of the menus. The school administration of a country (with or without donor participation) very often only provides the basic foodstuffs for the meal and expects other ingredients (e.g. sauce, vegetables, fruit) to be financed through local contributions. This results in considerable differences in quality. While children in the area around Addis Ababa in Ethiopia are served the relatively expensive national dish *teff pancakes* (dwarf millet) - supplemented with bean sauce and vegetables – pupils in poor Sidama receive, at most, a few grams of pulses and cooking oil to go with their cooked maize or wheat semolina porridge. The situation is similar in other countries: the more affluent the school environment, the richer the composition of the food.

This sometimes very large difference in the quality of the food against the background of the parents' ability to pay should, therefore, be compensated for by mechanisms that make it possible to provide food that is both tasty and of an acceptable quality, even in very poor regions. One ***good practice*** that requires stable basic funding, however, is the Ethiopian self-help organisation "Busa Gunafaa" in Oromia,[5] which collects donations for SF on a large scale and distributes them to schools in poor areas.

→ *In any case, in poorer areas (which can also be poorer neighbourhoods in otherwise economically flourishing urban centres), the parents' own contribution should be carefully considered. It must be weighed up against the goal of explicitly providing "free" food to persuade poor parents to enrol their children, and especially all girls, in school and keep them there at least until they have completed their first degree or, better still, even after that.*

Conversely, in the practice we observed everywhere, the mobilisation of their own funds for the ***ownership*** of SF in a village or *commune* is important. On the other hand, without the additional funds, the children in many schools would not get a very tasty meal.

Voluntary (labour) contributions from the village community also serve the ownership and ***sustainability of the operation of the school kitchens.*** However, these contributions, in the form of money, goods and/or labour, must be adapted to the respective needs of a school. In regions where families increasingly use gas for cooking at home, for example, it makes no sense to have the children bring a bundle of wood for the kitchen every week. Instead, money would have to be mobilised for the purchase (in addition to the use of improved cookers, which can save up to 70 % energy).

It is important for ***parents to have a say in*** determining the amount and payment conditions for their own contributions. According to the results of our research in three countries, only between 40 and over 90 % of parents actually pay the contributions set by the schools, usually by the school management. This does not always have to reflect a fundamental unavailability of the money. It is often the result of parents not being involved in decisions about contributions. If it is clear exactly what the money will be used for, the willingness to contribute increases demonstrably. As the income is often only generated seasonally, the payment method can also be aligned with local socio-economic conditions, for example, instead of permanent small contributions, a one-off payment after the harvest would be better, even in times of scarcity. Alternatively, parents are free to pay months later if significantly higher revenues can be achieved by saving the harvest and selling it after a price increase.

[5] For more information, see Bliss / Gutema (2023).

→ *Our recommendation regarding parental involvement (participation) is that this should play a much greater role in the concepts surrounding the implementation of SF. Parents and grandparents should be better informed about the aims and purpose of the scheme and allowed to have a say in questions relating to the mobilisation of resources.*

4.4.3 Supporting the Implementation

Many countries currently want to expand SF very quickly and have been doing so in practice since 2021, therefore, the question of monitoring implementation arises. Neither the national governments nor the WFP generally have sufficient capacity of their own to do this. This is why many countries, including Ethiopia, Benin and Cambodia, make use of national and international NGOs to train the various actors and support the establishment of kitchens and, if necessary, canteens. In the cases on which we have worked, even two or three years after the start in many schools, nothing works without the involvement of such NGOs. This leads to three fundamental questions and corresponding attempts to answer them:

I. Can this approach create sustainability for school feeding?

The answer to this is clearly NO. If local structures, especially local administrations and traditional authorities, are not involved in the responsibility from day one, the system is likely to collapse after the inevitable end of funding for NGO activities at some point. The NGOs should, therefore, only be commissioned for a short period of time and with tasks that are continuously declining from the outset.

II. Which supporting organisations should be involved in school meals?

In our experience, state administrations and development organisations, very often commission international NGOs or their national offshoots, which have more experience in school feeding than national NGOs (even if only in technical implementation), as they have generally been in business longer. Many national NGOs are also nothing more than tax-saving models, i.e. they have neither their own funding nor legitimacy of any kind and do not always have technical and/or local expertise. However, alternative service providers (professional companies) are not available for the most part. As long as there are no professional consulting firms, especially in poorer countries, it will not be possible to do without the involvement of NGOs or international NGOs when setting up school feeding programmes. However, this can only be an initial solution (see I).

III. Are the qualifications of the commissioned NGOs sufficient?

Even after training, the employees of the NGOs we found in the two African countries did not always demonstrate sufficient expertise. Above all, there were weaknesses in independent reactions to problems that arose in everyday school life. In Benin, for example, there was no response to the poor condition of some kitchens. In Ethiopia, there were problems with the procurement and, thus, uninterrupted supply of basic foodstuffs to the schools. There were also weaknesses in the WASH sector everywhere. Frequent staff turnover also appears to undermine the impact of training measures.

→ *We strongly recommend that NGOs should only be commissioned to implement SF after good preparation and only initially, and, simultaneously, prepare existing state structures for their responsibility to take over at least the co-ordination responsibility for the food supply at schools in the medium term.*

4.5 Problems and Solutions for Local Procurement

Fig. 7: A school garden like this is certainly not suitable for supplying vegetables to a school and should only be used for teaching purposes.

The main problems with completely local procurement are (i) the unavailability of the products required from local production and (ii) the (so far) insufficient quality of individual foodstuffs.

The ***unavailability of certain foods in a community*** is an indisputable fact. All three countries analysed in detail have different climate zones with correspondingly different agricultural production and/or animal husbandry. In many cases, however, the cultivation of vegetables, for example, can be newly introduced, expanded or modified. In Cambodia, for example, SF is often combined with the promotion of vegetable cultivation, including new varieties. However, national production from other provinces can always generally be used for local procurement.

A solution to obtain missing fresh produce from ***production in school gardens*** is absolutely unrealistic, as the quantities produced to date, as well as foreseeable expansions, are merely symbolic. An exception may be the case of Ethiopia, where many schools have their own large areas of land, which can amount to several hectares. However, these are never cultivated by the school stakeholders themselves, but are leased to third parties for the purpose of raising funds to finance additional purchases for the SF.

→ *Where school gardens exist, they should primarily familiarise children with nature and food production in general. However, establishing their own production would, in most cases, tie up too much of the commitment required elsewhere from teachers and parents.*

The problem of food quality, which is not always guaranteed, should not be overemphasised in the context of SF. This only accounts for a small fraction of the total local consumption. The widespread aflatoxin problem (highly toxic mould infestation of the grain), especially with softer maize varieties, could best be solved structurally by returning to the cultivation of tried and tested "hard" maize varieties, at least for local consumption. Possible controls using modern technology (LC/MS methods) are only possible in most poorer countries on a random basis, at best, even with the centralised purchase of maize, and are hardly conceivable in the future with local procurement. In practice, wheat, teff and rice are contaminated with aflatoxins to a much lesser extent. As far as rice in Cambodia is concerned, for example, all interviewees confirmed that an infestation with aflatoxins would be recognised immediately by the trade and, therefore, be virtually unthinkable in the practice of procurement for schools.

Fig. 8: At least three actors independently monitor the quality of the food parcels in Cambodia.

In the case of cooking oil, salt, dried pulses and similar basic products, local procurement will always have to rely on regional and national production. However, local trade can benefit from this to a considerable extent.

→ *The quality problem, particularly in the case of staple foods, should be dealt with flexibly depending on the product and its explicit risks in the respective country or regional context. Only if food intended for school use poses greater risks than the same generally traded products should procurement be centralised as an exception (i.e. at a level that enables more precise controls).*

4.6 Gender Equality and School Meals

Almost all school feeding models known to us suffer from the fact that gender equality is hardly substantially promoted in practice, despite multiple demands at the target level. On the contrary, some practices contribute to further disadvantage girls and women during implementation.

The greatest contribution that SF makes to ***gender equality*** is that more girls go to school and, above all, are not subject to the widespread dropout during the course of their schooling, but are, at least, (allowed to) complete their primary school qualifications. Teachers and headteachers in our case studies repeatedly point to a particularly positive effect on the academic performance of girls compared to boys, but this is difficult to prove empirically. Above all, it would be necessary to examine more closely what role SF on the one hand, and the support policies of the federal states in favour of girls' school attendance, on the other hand, play in the significant increase in girls' school success.

By contrast, the traditionally anchored ***gender roles*** in the hh and at school were hardly actively challenged, at least in the two case studies in Ethiopia and Benin. In Cambodia, on the other hand, we were already able to recognise changes. In most African countries in particular, girls, for example, have to do the main work of fetching water, they carry the food (together with the cooks) to the classes, distribute the food to the younger children, do the washing-up and tidy up. The Cambodian example shows that things can be done differently, where boys and girls are usually assigned the same tasks.

Women cooks are particularly burdened and disadvantaged. The untenable ideology that cooking in the context of SF should be a social and, above all, voluntary service means that women are particularly exploited. It is by no means only in exceptional cases that this leads to them no longer being able to fully fulfil their actual employment duties due to the heavy

workload as cooks, and even having to suffer a loss of income. In addition, the working conditions of female chefs (and certainly chefs where they are active) are very often poor to downright dangerous. Moreover, cooks are rarely actively involved in the design of kitchens and improved stoves, with sometimes disastrous results (e.g. smoke inhalation in thoughtlessly constructed, closed kitchen buildings without windows or chimneys).

Furthermore, it can be stated for not only the countries studied, but also other countries, that women (as mothers or grandmothers) are represented very little in ***school decision-making bodies*** and, thus, in working groups and committees related to the organisation of SF.

Finally, the INEF-BMZ research emphasised the importance of ***personal contributions*** in cash and in kind, which can be extremely burdensome for poor hhs even in view of the small and minimal share of the actual costs. In practice, firewood is provided exclusively by women, just as, in the end, the money is very often paid de facto by the mothers from their usually meagre resources – even where, according to gender roles, this is the responsibility of the father.

→ *In order to clarify the effect of SF on greater gender equality among girls, detailed analyses would also have to be carried out on the basis of statistical material.*

→ *Redefining the roles of girls and boys in the context of auxiliary work is particularly important – and can be implemented quickly – when implementing SF. A separation of tasks according to gender must be discontinued. However, the new role models must be clearly communicated (i.e. explained to all those involved).*

→ *Cooks should be paid fairly, at least for the core tasks of SF, with national minimum wages for low-skilled workers being the absolute minimum. The frequent reference to the poverty of previously employed cooks cannot invalidate this demand, as it would mean additional discrimination.*

→ *Cooks should be involved in the planning of kitchens, kitchen equipment and, above all, energy-saving stoves. In addition, all national programmes should also include kitchen staff and their working conditions as part of the monitoring and evaluation process.*

→ *At the very least, the parents' financial contributions for school meals should be explicitly demanded from the heads of hh, so that the burden of providing firewood and additional cash is not predominantly placed on the mothers.*

4.7 Energy for School Kitchens and Availability of Drinking Water

4.7.1 Tackling the Energy Problem Sustainably

Up to now, too little attention has been paid to the issue of energy in the preparation of school meals. Firewood is used as the main source of energy almost everywhere in African countries as well as in South, Southeast and South Central Asia. Open fires have a negative impact on the health of cooks. The need for wood may lead directly to deforestation and has particularly negative consequences in places where the destruction of tree populations is already well-advanced.

In addition to the search for alternative, renewable energies, attention is currently being focused on the introduction of improved, i.e. energy-saving, stoves that can save up to 70 % of the firewood previously required. However, cooks are often unable to cope with the stoves

as they are poorly designed, not adapted to the cooking appliances or the staff have not been sufficiently familiarised with their use.

All too often, kitchens have also been designed by planners with little expertise, so that they are not shielded from the rain or, as closed rooms, do not provide for smoke extraction and pose a considerable risk to the health of the cooks.

The problem of procuring wood itself is also often underestimated. In most cases, this should be supplied free of charge by the local communities, which often overburdens them in regions with shortages. This means that the schools have to bear considerable costs, which, in turn, affects the already low maintenance budgets. However, where the supply of wood is less of a problem, the question arises as to who processes whole or partially supplied trees into usable logs (usually very small for the improved stoves). So far, this has been left to parents or the cooks themselves.

→ *Much more attention should be paid to the energy issue when providing advice and material support for national school feeding programmes. Tests with renewable energies should be supported. However, the sustainability of the operation must always be taken into account. Schools must not be overburdened by innovations.*

→ *The involvement of cooks in the design and practical development of improved cookers and kitchen buildings is urgently recommended. The changeover from traditional (three-stone) to energy-saving stoves should be carried out more closely in consultation with the cooks.*

→ *The financing of fuel for school kitchens (mostly firewood) should be given much greater consideration in the design of national school meal programmes (also see 4.7.2 on drinking water).*

4.7.2 Solving the (Extended) Water Issue

The fact that the secure provision of drinking water and, ultimately, the availability of the entire WASH offer is an essential prerequisite for the establishment and commencement of school canteen operations is emphasised by stakeholders worldwide. A school with 500 children requires at least 2,500 l of water per day, even if only 5 l are counted per child p.c. / p.d. (for the portion in food, for drinking, for washing hands (Fig. 10), for washing cooking and eating utensils and proportionally also for daily latrine cleaning). In Ethiopia, not even half of this amount of water is available in many schools and this has to be bought individually in the form of 20 l canisters (Fig. 9).

The Ethiopian example also represents the reality of school feeding in all other Sahel countries as well as in most countries in West and East Africa and some countries in Asia. Although this situation is well-known, a school feeding programme often starts where the conditions for a reasonable water supply are not in place and the local actors are, therefore, clearly overwhelmed by the situation. In such cases, contributions from parents and donations from the community are also and primarily used to procure water. The children then only have access to basic foodstuffs, for example, boiled, pure maize meal with a little oil and three grams of salt as standard.

Fig. 8 (*left*): In Ethiopia, safe water sources are not even available everywhere outside the school. Here, water for entire villages is drawn from a river valley.

Fig. 9 (*right*): Also because of the desired effects on hygiene behaviour at home, children should have sufficient water available for washing their hands before eating. Here in Ethiopia, where water is often difficult to access, the simplest conceivable solution is to provide water for washing hands.

→ *Accordingly, it is strongly recommended that when a school is included in the feeding programme, the water supply should first be ensured on a sustainable basis. Only in exceptional cases and for a limited period of time in emergency situations (e.g. after disasters) should a missing water point at a school be compensated for by a financial subsidy for the purchase of water*.

Even in Cambodia, where a basic water supply is provided in all 28 schools visited, hygienically safe drinking water is not available everywhere. According to the school administrators, water filters from previous projects are not permanently replaced. Water filters should generally only ever be installed if their safe operation is guaranteed.

Beyond the narrower solution to the problem of water supply, school feeding should always be linked to a WASH approach. In Ethiopia and Benin, on the other hand, in some cases, even where the water issue could be resolved, no thought was given to ensuring the proper operation of latrines. This can have a particularly negative impact on girls' school attendance.

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