



SABER School Feeding Policy Goals—Current Status

Policy Goals

Status

1. Policy Frameworks

School feeding is mentioned under the Multisector Action Plan for Nutrition as one of the main interventions to address nutrition issues. A National School Feeding Policy in Sri Lanka currently does not exist; guidelines and directives are in place to regulate the school feeding program. However, a SABER-SF exercise stimulated the discussions to develop a technical policy for school feeding in Sri Lanka by the government in the near future.

Emerging



2. Financial Capacity

A national budget for the school feeding program is part of the national planning process and is revised annually. The budget line for school feeding is at the national level only. The budget allocated for the national school feeding program is not enough to cover the identified needs, and funds are disbursed to the implementation level intermittently.

Emerging



3. Institutional Capacity and Coordination

The School Health Promotion Steering committee has representatives from more than three ministries; a management unit for school feeding programs is in place in Sri Lanka, but they are understaffed and need additional resources. However, coordination mechanisms with the school level are in place and functioning, and national guidance occurs for the school feeding program. This guidance is made available in the form of directives and guidelines but is not yet fully functional across all schools.

Emerging



4. Design and Implementation

A monitoring and evaluation system for school feeding is defined and functional. Targeting criteria and methodology exist as well as national guidelines on food modalities and food baskets, but specific procurement guidelines for the school feeding program are not in place. Nevertheless, national procurement guidelines by the government of Sri Lanka are applied to the national school feeding program.

Established



5. Community Roles—Reaching Beyond Schools

In Sri Lanka, School Feeding Management committees, subcommittees of the School Development committees, are currently in place and are active in the implementation of the school feeding program; they comprise parents, teachers, and community representatives. A need is seen to develop mechanisms through which committees can hold the school feeding program accountable at the regional and national levels.

Emerging



Introduction

This report presents an assessment of school feeding policies and institutions that affect young children in Sri Lanka. 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 help 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 amount of resources is 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 will integrate this tool into their project preparation from 2015 onwards.

Sri Lanka in Brief

Sri Lanka achieved its independence in 1948 and became the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972. The nation is divided into nine provinces, 25 districts, 97

education zones, and 305 divisions that oversee 10,119 schools (MoE 2014).

Sri Lanka is an island country, located in South Asia, with a population of more than 20 million people. The population growth rate was reported at 1 percent in 2012 (World Bank, 2012a), and infant mortality is 9 per 1,000 live births (World Bank 2012b). The human development index in 2013 was 0.75, with an overall rank of 74 in the world (in 2013) (UNDP 2014).

Sri Lanka has experienced 26 years of conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which officially ended in May 2009. This conflict claimed more than 60,000 lives, devastated physical infrastructure in Northern and Eastern provinces, left landmines contaminating arable land, and disrupted traditional livelihoods.

Per capita gross national income in 2011 stood at \$2,580, meaning that the country has been elevated to lower middle-income status. However, regional disparities are pronounced with respect to poverty levels, incomes, infrastructure development, and institutional capacity.

The poverty gap at national poverty line was 1.7 percent in 2010, with an overall rank of 74 (World Bank 2015).

Education and Health in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka ensures free education from primary to higher education as per the policy endorsed by the State Council between 1931 and 1947. This policy contributed to expanding the general education system and to ensuring an increase in access and participation in primary and secondary education. The government provides all students at the primary and secondary stages with free textbooks, uniform fabrics, medical services, subsidized transport facilities, scholarships for high-performing students from low-income families, and school meals for selected schools.

The school system has a span of 13 years (from grade 1 to 13) and admission is at age five. Primary education spans grades 1–5, lower secondary grades 6–11, and senior secondary grades 12–13.

Compulsory education regulations were implemented for ages five to 14 (covering grades 1 to 9), but recently a Cabinet decision was made to extend the regulations up to age 16 (grade 11).

The school system comprises 10,119 schools, 4,078,037 students, and 232,908 teachers (government schools). The education system functions as a decentralized system. The central level comprises the line Ministry of Education (MoE), National Institute of Education, Department of Examinations, and Department of Education Publications. There are nine provincial councils, and hence, the provincial education setup comprises nine provincial Ministries of Education, nine Provincial Departments of Education, 98 Zonal Education Offices, and 305 Education Divisions.

Teachers are prepared for the teaching profession through universities, National Colleges of Teacher Education, Teacher Training Colleges, and Zone Level Teacher Centres (MoE 2012; 2014).

Recent data on enrollment, completion levels, and access to education indicate that current enrollment in primary education is 1,713,298 and secondary education is 2,364,739. The completion rate in primary education is 98.4 percent. The survival rate at grade 9 is 92.87 percent and at grade 11 is 84.30 percent (MoE 2014).

Gender disparities in education: Sri Lanka enjoys a high level of gender parity in the education sector. The provision of educational facilities for women without discrimination has established gender equity in Sri Lanka. Also the life expectancy of females is higher than that of males in Sri Lanka. Student enrollment at all stages of the education system shows gender parity, and at the secondary level there are more female students than male students. The number of females completing different stages of education and passing examinations is higher than those of their male counterparts. However, the average literacy rate for females (91.4 percent) is less than the literacy rate of males (94.1 percent). This difference is mainly because of the lower literacy levels of the older female population, and the rates show no disparity in the younger age groups. This indicates that Sri Lanka will have a highly educated female population, and that could change the literacy profile of the future generation (Department of Census and Statistics 2012).

The government's education strategic plan, the Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP), was introduced in 2006. Within the ESDFP, a five-year, medium-term, rolling strategic plan is prepared by the MoE in collaboration with the other national education agencies and the provincial education authorities. ESDFP is guided by four main policy themes and a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. The policy themes are the following: increasing equitable access to and participation in primary and secondary education, improving the quality of education, strengthening governance and service delivery of education, and the foundation theme on overarching education sector planning.

Government spending on education: Currently, 1.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) is allocated for education. In this case, education sector comprises general education (school education), higher education (university education), and tertiary and vocational education. The new government has proposed to increase this percentage to 6 percent of (GDP).

The ratio of female to male primary enrollment is 100 percent (2010), and the official net enrollment rate for primary education is 94 percent (2012) (World Bank 2015).

Health

Malnutrition prevalence, height for age (percentage of children under age five) is 19.2, while the malnutrition prevalence, weight for age (percentage of children under age five) is 21.6 (World Bank 2015). On the other hand, it seems that obesity and diabetes are an increasing problem among schoolchildren in Sri Lanka (World Bank 2015). Mental health is also a pressing issue concerning schoolchildren and their well-being.

Noncommunicable diseases account for about 65 percent of total deaths but only 9 percent from communicable, maternal perinatal, and nutritional conditions.

Prevalence of low birth weight according to the Family Health Bureau was 13.3 percent in 2013, and the prevalence of preschoolers being moderately underweight and severely underweight (age three to five) was 19.5 and 3.8 percent, respectively.

About 80 percent of households have access to safe drinking water, and about 46 percent drink water from protected wells (Ministry of Health Care and Nutrition, 2012. Annual Health Bulletin, 2012).

Prevalence of anemia among the adolescents is 22 percent (UNICEF, Micronutrient Survey 2012- MRI).

The Case for School Feeding

School feeding programs, defined here as the provision of food to schoolchildren, can increase school enrollment¹ and attendance, especially for girls.² When combined with quality education, school feeding programs can increase cognition³ and educational success.⁴ 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 (WFP 2013). 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 the fact that they offer the greatest benefit to the poorest children. Several studies⁵ have indicated that missing breakfast impairs educational performance.

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

Social shocks of 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, WFP and the World

Bank jointly undertook an analysis titled *Rethinking School Feeding* (Bundy et al 2009). This initiative sought to better understand how to develop and implement effective school feeding programs as a productive 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 provide social protection to the poor.

School Feeding Program in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka launched its School Feeding Programme in 1931 while under foreign rule. The modality of the feeding program has been changed several times based on the situation on the ground and, especially, on the government's focus on addressing social and nutritional issues. Challenges faced the sustainability of the school feeding program because of a scarcity of resources and lack of an evidence-based approach on the impact of the school feeding program on schoolchildren. Sri Lanka experienced a civil war beginning in 1983 that lasted for about three decades, which caused serious hardships for Sri Lanka and the younger generation. The current school meal program was commenced by the then government in 2002 and expanded gradually considering nutritional needs and promotion of local food production and healthy food habits. WFP assisted the provision of school meals for schoolchildren in 2003 in the conflict-affected areas in active partnership with the MoE in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, the School Nutrition and Health Services Branch under the MoE currently manage the school feeding program. Three program modalities are utilized: (1) a cash-based *school meals program* wherein meal providers are contracted to deliver prepared meals to schools, (2) a *milk program* wherein children receive a glass of milk or yogurt, and (3) an in-kind *school meals program* wherein food commodities are brought to the schools and prepared at the school level for distribution to the students as hot meals. The first two programs are fully funded by the government of Sri Lanka, and the third program (in-kind school meals) is supported by WFP in addition to some government funds for procurement of condimental items and vegetables. All school feeding

¹ Ahmed (2004); Gelli, Meir, and Espejo (2007).

² Jacoby, Cueto, and Pollitt (1996); Kristjansson et al. (2007); Powell et al. (1998).

³ Jukes, Drake, and Bundy (2008); Kristjansson et al. (2007); Whaley et al. (2003).

⁴ Adelman et al. (2008); Ahmed (2004); Tan, Lane, and Lassibille (1999).

⁵ Pollitt, Cueto, and Jacoby (1998); Simeon (1998); Simeon and Grantham-McGregor (1989).

programs are under the overall management of the School Nutrition and Health Services Branch. In addition, canteens are found in many schools run on a commercial basis; these are not considered part of the school feeding program.

The Ministry of Health provides iron tablets, folic acid, and vitamins in addition to the deworming medicine, which are considered complementary activities to the school feeding program.

Table 1: Coverage of the school meals program in Sri Lanka (2015)

Program	Students covered	Schools
School Meal Program for primary children	884,620	6,839
School Milk Program	84,843	352
WFP-supported School Meal Program	156,427	958
Total	1,125,890	8,149

Source: MoE (March 2015).

Program	No. of schools	Allocation (SL Re million)	Number of students		
			Grades 1–5	Grades 6–13	Grand total
School Meal Program for Children	6,839	3,156	769,886	114,734	884,620
Food for Education Program	958	83	96,950	59,477	156,427
School Milk Program	352	400	84,843		84,843
Total	8,149	3,639	951,679	174,211	1,125,890
% of coverage from the total	81.39%		55.55%	7.51%	27.89%

- 81.39% School coverage
- 27.89% Total student population
- 55.55% Total students at primary level

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 that are implementing their own national programs, school feeding is included in national policy frameworks.⁶

The second policy goal for school feeding is 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 (e.g., WFP), 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.

The third policy goal is institutional capacity and coordination. School feeding programs are better executed when an institution is mandated with and accountable for the implementation of such a program. Effective programs also include multisectoral involvement from sectors such as 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.

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

⁶Bundy (2009); WFP (2012).

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 gathering 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 practice 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

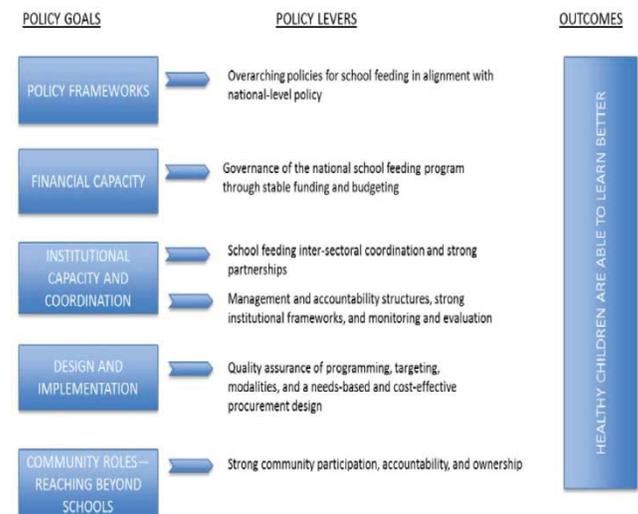
Emerging: Initial/some initiatives toward policy development

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 Sri Lanka



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 (WFP 2012).

School feeding is mentioned in the Sri Lankan national development strategy (“Mahinda Chinthana”; Government of Sri Lanka 2010) under future programs for creating opportunities for children; one of the actions is to provide a Glass of Milk and Mid-Day Meal Programme. In the National Nutrition Policy (Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition 2010), school feeding is not mentioned per se, but it is included under Policy Objective 1, “Ensuring Optimal Nutrition throughout the Lifecycle,” under key action area 1.4.1, “Create a Good Nutrition Enabling Environment in Schools,” and the related activities under this key action. A school feeding policy strengthens the government’s free education policies. Accordingly, the feeding policy is included in the ESDFP, under its policy theme “Increasing Equitable Access to Primary and Secondary Education” (MoE 2012: 48–49). Unfortunately, none of the documents clearly specifies where school feeding will be anchored and who will implement it.

On the other hand, the midday meals program is further mentioned in the Multi-sector Action Plan for Nutrition (Government of Sri Lanka 2013) as one of the main interventions of a direct nutrition-specific program to address micronutrient deficiencies and other health concerns. The sectoral responsibility for school feeding lies with both the MoE and the Ministry of Health.

School feeding is perceived as a program with several activities that aims at (1) cultivating better nutrition habits and (2) identifying nutrition issues and creating awareness to minimize them. The main objectives of

school feeding are therefore related to improving the nutritional status of schoolchildren.

The school feeding program is currently being implemented in Sri Lanka on the basis of guidelines and directives through an annual circular, which need to be combined into a comprehensive technical policy. Based on the SABER–School Feeding exercise, it was recognized that a school feeding policy is needed and should be developed. Discussions about this are ongoing, but there are no plans yet to develop such a policy. The implementation guidelines used are only partially based on evidence and do not yet systematically cover all of the other four policy goals that are mentioned under SABER–School Feed. The selection of districts and schools where school feeding is implemented is based on a combination of malnutrition, poverty, and some education data.

1. Policy Framework Is Emerging		
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 	School feeding is covered in part under the Sri Lankan national development strategy “Mahinda Chinthana” and the National Nutrition Policy. However, it is mentioned under the Multi-sector Action Plan for Nutrition as one of the main interventions to address nutrition issues within schoolchildren.
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.	Emerging 	No specific national policy on school feeding currently exists; however, guidelines and directives through an annual circular regulate the school feeding

		<p>program. As a result of the SABER–School Feeding exercise, currently discussions are ongoing to develop a national school feeding policy in Sri Lanka.</p>
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Policy Goal 2:
Financial Capacity in Sri Lanka



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.

Funds for all national school feeding programs are allocated from the central level through national budget. The budget is included in the national planning process as part of the annual education sector budgeting exercise. The amount allocated is negotiated on an annual basis with the Ministry of Finance. The budget is disbursed through a national-level budget line, but no budget lines are in place at the lower (regional or district) level. The in-kind school meals program receives assistance from WFP in selected areas.

Not all needs of the national school feeding program are met; for example, while for 2015 the estimated needs for the school meals program are estimated at SL Re 4,423 million, only SL Re 3,500 million was allocated to the program in 2015.

The budget allocated is unable to cover all needs as identified and agreed to under the Multi-Sector Action Plan for Nutrition (Government of Sri Lanka 2013). Fund disbursement to the implementation level is monthly. The government treasury releases funding for this program on a priority basis.

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 ●●○○	A national budget for the school feeding program is part of the national planning process and is revised annually; a budget line for school feeding is in place at the national level only; WFP covers the cost of the in-kind school meals in selected areas. The budget allocated is not enough to cover the needs for the national school feeding program for the meals or for the other needs that are identified under the Multi-Sector Action Plan for Nutrition. Funds are disbursed to the implementation level in an intermittent manner.

Policy Goal 3: Institutional Capacity and Coordination in Sri Lanka



Policy Levers

- School feeding intersectoral 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 with 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 school feeding program in Sri Lanka is coordinated by a multisectoral steering committee and the School Health Promotion Steering Committee. The latter is chaired by the Secretary of State of the MoE and has representatives of the MoE, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Child Development, Ministry of Social Services and Livestock Development, and Ministry of Urban Development, Water Supply and Drainage. The committee tends to meet on a quarterly basis to identify any policy issues, review status of implementation, and recommend measures for strengthening school health promotion programs including school feeding

The School Nutrition and Health Services Branch under the MoE manages the various school feeding programs in Sri Lanka. In terms of staffing levels and allocated resources, the school feeding management unit is

considered understaffed and does not have all the necessary resources at its disposal to fulfill the required activities. A need exists for a comprehensive assessment of the staffing and resources requirements of the unit. However, coordination with the school-level structures are in place and considered to be functional. For example, the school health promotion committee reports progress to the zonal health promotion committee, and it reports to the provincial health promotion committee. These provincial committees directly coordinate with the national committee chaired by the Secretary to the MoE.

National guidance is available regarding the management mechanisms of the available resources for the three modalities that make up the school feeding program. This guidance is made available in the form of directives and guidelines issued by the School Nutrition and Health Services branch of the MoE. The guidance includes the need to establish a School Feeding Management Committee at school level, which is a subcommittee of the School Development Committee. The School Development Committee includes representatives of parents, teachers, and the community. The “emerging” rather than “established” level was given based on the fact that this structure is not yet fully functional across all schools covered by the school feeding program.

3. Institutional Capacity and Coordination Is Emerging		
Indicators	Score	Justification
3A. Multisectoral steering committee coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy.	Established 	Several multisectoral committees exist in Sri Lanka where school feeding and nutrition are discussed and regulated. The School Health and Promotion Steering Committee is chaired by the Secretary of the MoE and has representatives of the following ministries: Education, Health, Agriculture, Child

		Development, Social Services and Livestock Development, and Urban Development, Water Supply and Drainage. This committee meets on a quarterly basis.
3B. National school feeding management unit and accountability structures are in place, coordinating with school-level structures.	Emerging 	The School Nutrition and Health Services Branch under the MoE manages the various school feeding programs in Sri Lanka, but is understaffed and lacks the resources to accomplish all required activities; a need exists to conduct a staffing and resources requirement assessment; however, coordination mechanisms with the school level are in place and functional.
3C. School-level management and accountability structures are in place.	Emerging 	National guidance is available for the three modalities of the school feeding program. This guidance is made available in the form of directives and guidelines issued by the School Nutrition and Health Services branch of the MoE. However, they are not yet fully functional across all schools.

Policy Goal 4: Design and Implementation in Sri Lanka

Established



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.

In Sri Lanka, the M&E system for school feeding is defined in a circular of the MoE. Given the anchoring of school feeding in the National Nutrition Policy, some of the nutrition-specific indicators are monitored by the Ministry of Health.⁷ The frequency of the monitoring is given in the guidance, and an M&E plan is carried out on an annual basis for the different levels (national, provincial, zonal). Data collection and reporting are regular on all levels in spite of limited staff on the national and provincial levels.

Monitoring data are integrated in a management information system (MIS), which at present is not automated or web-based. The computer-based school-census database includes the basic and critical data relating to the school feeding program, such as numbers of schools and students benefited, information on wash facilities, and sources of funding. Action has been taken to pilot a web-based MIS on school feeding, and necessary steps will be taken to strengthen the MIS in due course. Currently the M&E system is not yet used to refine and update program design; some limited flow of monitoring feedback takes place from higher to lower levels.

⁷ The MoE monitors program-related indicators such as fund disbursement and utilization, number of children fed, etc. It also monitors some nutrition-related indicators such as weight and height of the children. The Ministry of

Targeting criteria and methodology are available and clarified in the school feeding guidelines and used at the implementation level. They are not based on a comprehensive school feeding-specific situation analysis; however, data are available on the district level that identify the districts with the highest levels of malnutrition and those with the highest levels of poverty. This classification is done on the district level and not at the school level. The targeting criteria and methodology are based on a combination of the levels of malnutrition, poverty, and some education indicators.

National guidelines on food modalities and food basket are developed by the School Nutrition and Health Services Branch of the MoE. The guidelines include details on the food basket of each modality of the school feeding program. These guidelines are built on the objectives of the program, local habits and tastes, as well as the availability of local food. (It is worth noting that some of the commodities for the in-kind modality supported by WFP are imported.)

Although the national nutritional requirements are almost met by the two larger subprograms, with 500 kilocalories (Kcal)/child/day, they are actually slightly below the international accepted standard of at least 555 Kcal/child/day (up to 830 Kcal) for half-day school programs. For the third modality—the milk program—the nutritional value provided is much lower, 100 Kcal/child/day. Food safety is considered in the guidelines in deciding the food basket, using the local food safety norms, not World Health Organization guidelines.

No specific procurement guidelines are in place for the school feeding program. Nevertheless, national procurement guidelines by the government of Sri Lanka are applied to the national school feeding program with no difficulties. For example, in the Mid-Day Meal Programme, the schools procure a service (i.e., not food) where they identify meal suppliers who will then procure the ingredients and provide cooked meals to the schools. Thus, the procurement process takes into account the cost (of the total service and thus only indirectly of the food) and considers the capacities of the meal providers (i.e., the service). Food quality (using the national

Health monitors specific nutrition indicators such as hemoglobin level (to check prevalence of anemia).

guidelines) and the stability of the food pipeline are looked at directly through the school principals, School Development Committees, and School Health Promotion Committees. Food quality is checked by the public health inspectors of respective divisions, who are also members of the School Health Promotion Committee.

4. Design and Implementation Is Established		
Indicators	Score	Justification
4A. A functional monitoring and evaluation system is in place as part of the structure of the lead institution and used for implementation and feedback.	Established 	An M&E system for school feeding is defined and functional at all levels; it is integrated into MIS; data collection and reporting are regular; however, the M&E system is not utilized yet to provide necessarily feedback to update and refine program design.
4B. Program design identifies appropriate target groups and targeting criteria corresponding to the national school feeding policy and the situation analysis.	Emerging 	Targeting criteria and methodology are available, clarified in the school feeding guidelines, and used at the implementation level. They are not based on a comprehensive school feeding situation analysis. However, they are based on data classifying districts according to malnutrition and poverty levels; targeting criteria are based on a combination of the levels of malnutrition, poverty, and some education indicators.
4C. Food modalities and the food basket correspond to the	Emerging 	National guidelines on food modalities and food basket

objectives, local habits and tastes, availability of local food, food safety, and nutrition content requirements.		exist. The guidelines include details on the food basket of each modality of the school feeding programs. These guidelines are built on the objectives of the program, local habits and tastes, as well as the availability of local food and local food safety norms.
4D. Procurement and logistics arrangements are based on procuring as locally as possible, taking into account the costs, capacities of implementing parties, production capacity in the country, quality of the food, and stability of the pipeline.	Established 	No specific procurement guidelines are in place for the school feeding program. Nevertheless, national procurement guidelines by the government of Sri Lanka are applied to the national school feeding program with no difficulties. These general guidelines take into account the cost and the capacity of the implementing partners.

**Policy Goal 5:
Community Roles—
Reaching Beyond
Schools in Sri Lanka**



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 improve 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, a school management committee may be set up comprising 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.

In Sri Lanka, School Feeding Management Committees—a subcommittee of the School Development Committee—are currently in place and are active in the implementation of the school feeding program. The establishment and functioning of School Health Promotion Committees are regularized through MoE Circular No. 2007/21 on the School Health Promotion Programme.⁸ Moreover, MoE Circular No. 2015/01 clarifies the responsibilities related to school feeding. The responsibilities include checking the quality and quantity of the food, regular and timely implementation of the program, and the impact of school feeding through indicators such as school attendance rates and nutrition status of students.

⁸http://www.moe.gov.lk/english/index.php?option=com_circular&view=circular&id=50.

These committees comprise parents, teachers, and community representatives. The School Feeding Management Committee is able to hold the meal providers accountable in the case of unsatisfactory performance. However, no mechanisms are yet in place for them to hold higher levels accountable.

5. Community Roles—Reaching Beyond Schools Is Emerging		
Indicators	Score	Justification
5A. Community participates in school feeding program design, implementation, management, and evaluation and contributes resources.	Emerging 	School Feeding Management Committees—a subcommittee of the School Development Committee—are currently in place and are active in the implementation of the school feeding program. They comprise parents, teachers, and community representatives. The School Feeding Management Committee is able to hold meal providers accountable in the case of unsatisfactory performance. However, no mechanisms are yet in place for them to hold higher levels accountable.

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

Conclusion

Based on the above findings and results of discussions with stakeholders, the majority of the policy goals in Sri Lanka are at the “Emerging” stage. It is noteworthy that in many indicators, Sri Lanka is very close to being at “Established” stage. The Design and Implementation policy goal, however, is already at the “Established” level. It is important here to stress that the SABER framework focuses on policy and the systems level and is not an assessment of the implementation side of the school feeding program.

The following policy options represent possible areas in which school feeding could be strengthened in Sri Lanka, based on the conclusions of this report.

Policy Options

There is recognition of the need for developing a technical policy for the national school feeding program; in addition to policy, technical and financial support will be needed from donors and stakeholders to ensure implementation.

Additionally, there is a need to further look into and develop the alternative implementation modalities currently used in the school feeding program in order to identify the most effective and feasible modality in line with the specific contexts and situations in different schools and the distinct characteristics of various parts of the country .

Where feasible, Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) needs to be further strengthened and integrated into the school program. Linkages should be made between small holder farmers and schools, especially in rural areas, but also within the urban context.

Additional linkages between the school feeding program and other social safety nets in the country are necessary to ensure that, when needed, beneficiaries can smoothly transition into another safety net upon graduating from school.

Appendix 1

Table 1. Levels of Development of SABER School Feeding Indicators and Policy Goals in Sri Lanka

Systems Approach for Better Education Results: School Feeding Policy Framework						
POLICY LEVER	INDICATOR	STAGE				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	EMERGING
	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 (institutional capacity and coordination, financial capacity, 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 small holder farmers; policy is informed by a situation analysis of needs and aligned with national poverty reduction strategies and relevant sectoral policies and strategies	
Policy Goal 2: Financial Capacity						
Governance of the national school feeding program - stable funding and budgeting	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	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 the implementation levels, but these are not yet in place	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 the implementation levels intermittently	School feeding is included in the national planning process and is fully funded through a national budget line; all ministries involved in the program implementation have a budget line or funds allocated; budget lines also exist at regional and school levels; school feeding funds are disbursed to the implementation levels in a timely and effective manner	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 the implementation levels in a timely and effective manner and implementers have the capacity to plan and budget as well as request resources from the central level	EMERGING
Policy Goal 3: Institutional Capacity and Coordination						
School feeding coordination - strong partnerships and inter-sector coordination	Multisectoral steering committee coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy	Any multisectoral steering committee coordination efforts are currently nonsystematic	Sectoral steering committee coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy	Multisectoral steering committee from at least two sectors (e.g. education, social protection, agriculture, health, local government, water) coordinates implementation of a national school feeding policy	Multisectoral steering committee from at least three sectors (e.g. education, social protection, agriculture, health, local government, 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	EMERGING
Management and accountability structures, including staffing - strong institutional frameworks for implementation	National school feeding management unit and accountability structures are in place, coordinating with school level structures	A specific school feeding unit does not yet exist at the national level; coordination between the national, regional/local (if applicable), and schools is lacking	A school feeding unit exists at the national level, but it has limited resources and limited staff numbers and lacks a clear mandate; while coordination mechanisms between the national, regional/local (if applicable), and school level are in place, they are not fully functioning	A fully staffed school feeding unit with a clear mandate exists at the national level, based on an assessment of staffing and resources needs; coordination mechanisms between the national, regional/local (if applicable), and school level are in place and functioning in most instances	A fully staffed school feeding unit exists at the national level, based on an assessment of staffing and resources needs, with a clear mandate, and pre- and in-service training; coordination mechanisms between the national, regional/local (if applicable), and school level are in place and fully functioning	
	School level management and accountability structures are in place	Mechanisms for managing school feeding at the school level are non-uniform and national guidance on this is lacking	National guidance on required mechanisms for managing school feeding are available at the 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 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 (M&E) system is in place as part of the structure of the lead institution and used for implementation and feedback	The importance of M&E is recognised, but government systems are not yet in place for M&E of school feeding implementation	A government M&E plan exists for school feeding with intermittent data collection and reporting occurring especially at the national level	The M&E 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 M&E 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; analysed information is shared and used to refine and update programs; baseline is carried out and program evaluations occur periodically	ESTABLISHED
	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 recognised, 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 exists and is implemented corresponding to the national school feeding policy and situation analysis (including costings for various targeting and designs); M&E 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), 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	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; M&E information is used to refine and update food modalities and food basket on a periodic basis	
	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; M&E information is used to refine and update procurement and logistics arrangements	
Policy Goal 5: Community roles—reaching beyond schools						
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 the 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 the school, regional, and national levels	EMERGING

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Acronyms

ESDFP	Education Sector Development Framework and Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
MoE	Ministry of Education
WFP	World Food Programme

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