



Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Assessing systemic capacities for integrating effective food and nutrition education into school systems: an opportunity for school health and nutrition

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Ecuador

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

FAO

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

food education
nutrition education
skills-based education
systemic capacity
capacity development

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The exchange of perspectives and issues between decision makers, implementers and first-hand participants, which resulted in new and innovative ways of proposing solutions for main capacity gaps at policy, organizational and individual levels

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

School-based food and nutrition education (SFNE) is a key strategy to foster healthier and more sustainable diets, given its role in impacting the school community's food outlooks, practices and behaviours, particularly when part of broader school health and nutrition programmes. In today's world, SFNE is an ideal platform for young generations to learn about food systems and act upon the effects that these have on the health of people and the planet and on the sociocultural structure of communities.

However, even though nutrition education is reportedly widespread globally, the main learning objectives are those on the scope of enhanced knowledge and better understanding, mainly on aspects of basic nutrition, as the approach is largely theoretical and classroom-bound. Less common, are objectives related to enhanced life skills and to improved practices, behaviours and children's agency. Further, SFNE is seldom explicitly linked to the school food environment and to other real life settings where children eat and interact. This together with limited time in the curriculum and time demands of front line educators greatly inhibit the results of the SFNE on children's nutrition and health status and on their food literacy.

Systemic capacity development for developing, implementing and evaluating effective SFNE interventions and programmes, that in turn support the general strengthening of the school systems towards promoting life skills and citizenship is thus greatly needed.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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Between 2020 and 2021, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Ecuador embarked in a national process to assess the status of school-based food and nutrition education (SFNE) in their countries through a capacity lens. This in order to identify priority gaps and build a national roadmap for addressing these gaps, which various sectors, partners and stakeholders can jointly own and implement in order to foster healthier and more sustainable practices in schoolchildren and adolescents.

The exercise, supported by FAO, consisted of a mapping of all national actors/organizations relevant to SFNE; background research to review national secondary data, policies, reports, and materials relevant to SFNE; interviews with key actors; a series of online multistakeholder workshops to validate the background findings and to prioritize gaps and propose concrete and time-bound solutions; and finally report preparation, dissemination, and follow-up.

Broadly this process, allowed for a comparison of existing capacities with desired levels of capacities and hence, were guided by three main questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to go? What is the best way to get there?

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

The multilevel capacity needs assessment resulted in a nationally-owned roadmap with set priorities and multilevel solutions that can be used by any institution or agency that have the mandate or wish to support food education in the country. This will avoid duplication of efforts, dilution of resources and investments in ineffective or unsustainable interventions and trainings.

The results for each country can be found in the following reports

Dominican Republic: <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB7086ES>

El Salvador: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CB8672ES/>

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

This exercise provided stakeholders from across the school system, from ministry technical staff to teachers and parents, the opportunity to interact in a safe and open way. This format allowed the exchange of perspectives and issues between decision makers, implementers and first-hand participants, which resulted in new and innovative ways of proposing solutions for main capacity gaps at policy, organizational and individual levels. While focused on food education, it expanded to various aspects of the school system, as it can't be disjointed, and thus provided a platform for proposing solutions to improve broader systemic issues, such as pedagogical methodologies and the need for comprehensive food and nutrition information systems for schoolchildren and adolescents.

The nature of such exercises can be cost-effective in prioritizing issues and proposing solutions to complex and broad multisector priorities, such as school health and nutrition. It brings together various partners, vertically and horizontally, to work on a joint roadmap that all can own and promote, and ensure that future partners can contribute to, avoiding in many instances duplication of efforts and incoherent efforts.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

The tool is readily available for any country to use. Lessons learned are currently being collected to benefit future users, and the results of the exercise go beyond food education, into what is needed and how to go about it for school system transformation towards development of life skills and citizenship.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

<https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb7584en>