



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.) *

Decentralized school feeding model

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

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) *

The practice was implemented in conjunction with the local governments of Imbabura, Montufar, Carchi, Sucumbios, and in coordination with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

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

Boys and girls from 3 to 14 years old

Rural schools

Healthy and inclusive schools

Linking smallholder local producers as suppliers of fresh and nutritious foods.

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The decentralized school feeding model makes it possible to deliver fresh and nutritious food to children in rural schools, giving them the opportunity to have at least one healthy meal a day. This improves their nutritional intake and overall health and, in turn, increases school retention. In addition, WFP's decentralized school feeding model facilitates linkages between schools and smallholder producers as food suppliers, boosting the local economy. WFP implemented a pilot school feeding project from 2016 to 2019 in conjunction with the local Imbabura, Montufar, Carchi, Sucumbios governments. At the conclusion of this project, WFP handed the project over to the local governments, which each allocated a fixed budget for the programme and continue to implement it. Moreover, following the success of and lessons learned from this project, WFP led an advocacy process that resulted in the inclusion in the Law on Organic School Feeding other innovative, inclusive, and decentralized modalities, further stipulating that 30 percent of school meals must come from smallholder producers.

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? *

In Ecuador, the double burden of malnutrition (chronic malnutrition and obesity) costs the country nearly four percent of total GDP (WFP, 2017) in missed growth. According to the National Health and Nutrition Survey (ENSANUT 2018), child chronic malnutrition (CCM) affects 23 percent of children under five years of age, with the highest prevalence in the rural Indigenous populations, in which it reaches 40.71 percent (INEC, 2018). Statistics from 2018 also show that 35.4 percent of children from five to 11 years old have problems related to being overweight and/or obese, a growing trend that affects and will continue to affect their learning, productivity, and health in the future. Similarly, the prevalence of anemia, according to the CVD 2014, stands at 39.9 percent in the child population.

Figures like these are the result of eating habits with a higher intake of carbohydrates and foods with low nutrition. The Fill the Nutrient Gap study (FNG, 2018) identified that barely 48 percent of the Ecuadorian population has access to a healthy and nutritionally balanced diet.

Malnutrition makes boys and girls more susceptible to disease, limits learning capacity, and lowers cognitive development, negatively affecting children's performance in school. This translates into a higher probability that children will enter school late, repeat grades, drop out of school, and have overall reduced educational capacity. The double burden of malnutrition is most severe in rural areas and among Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations.

The Ministry of Education, as part of the School Feeding Program, currently delivers one solid food serving and one liquid serving per day to each child. However, this food does not always meet nutritional requirements. To improve this and health and food security outcomes among children, WFP implemented a pilot project in the northern border, which aims to deliver at least one healthy meal a day to children in rural schools. Through this innovative model, children in rural schools have improved their diet. At the same time, the local economy has been invigorated through a comprehensive assistance model, increasing the income of the households of smallholder producers, as well as improving the diet of the households of the entire educational community and of the smallholder producers.

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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The decentralized school feeding model seeks to strengthen the capacities of local governments to lead the delivery of fresh and nutritious food in schools in rural areas that exhibit high levels of malnutrition and vulnerability. WFP supports schools with various activities, including training local authorities and school staff on food and nutrition security issues and best practices in handling and preparation; empowerment of local governments in food purchase of fresh and nutritious food; facilitating the involvement and strengthening the capacities of smallholder producers in the delivery of fresh and nutritious foods; and developing and delivering gender-sensitive activities that seek to improve nutrition and health.

The school feeding project began in 2014 and will gradually incorporate the provinces of Carchi, Imbabura, Sucumbíos and Esmeraldas. The project's objective was to incorporate smallholder producers in the supply of foods for school meals, specifically in the provision of school lunches. This model was implemented in conjunction with the local governments, and in coordination with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

The cost of each school meal was USD 0.40, which was provided for five days each week. The total average cost per year was US\$ 1.770.000. In addition, the project required students' parents to be engaged in the project: some were part of the School Feeding Committee, which helped develop the menus and programming, and others receive products from farmers, who were engaged in the preparation of food for students. In some cases, depending on the poverty levels of the engaged territory, parents contributed with an economic contribution between USD 1.50 to USD 3 per month. The project used this contribution to acquire gas for cooking, condiments for food preparations, oil, and, in some cases, payment to mothers or staff that help prepare food.

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 project had an important impact on the public policy of school feeding, since it allowed to generate advocacy processes to incorporate within the new Organic Law of School Feeding, the decentralized modality and the delivery of fresh and nutritious products.

Between 150 and 180 schools participate in this process in the school feeding supplement model, with a progressive increase over time. This implies between 10,000 and 17,000 students served in the four provinces annually.

Carchi and Imbabura are the provinces with the highest number of children to whom the daily ration of refreshments or lunches is delivered. In addition, it is important to consider that some local governments assumed the model and continue to implement it to this day, and despite the COVID 19 pandemic, an attempt was made to deliver fresh food to children in rural areas.

In 2018, a case study of the model was carried out, related to the linking of smallholder producers to alternative markets, identifying that there is an increase in the income of smallholder producers. The increase in agricultural activities and the decrease in work activities dedicated to non-agricultural businesses are highlighted, fixed incomes recover the spaces of family farming.

The research reflects a direct relationship between income and family well-being, health, eating well, having a job, having money, good seeds, markets with good prices and own land.

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? *

In the implemented model, good practices were generated such as the strengthening of technical capacities of the local government to assume the delivery of fresh and nutritious products in coordination with other institutions at the local level and schools. The model was assumed by the local governments of Imbabura, Carchi and Montufar from 2019, and they continue to implement it to date, despite the limitations arising as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.

In this process, the co-responsibility and commitment of parents for the preparation and meal delivery to children was also fundamental.

As one of the challenges encountered today, to continue with the model, it is related to the purchase of smallholder producers, through the public procurement system that the country has, since compliance with several aspects is requested by the organizations, which has limited their registration and participation in the processes. World Food Programme (WFP) are supporting the strengthening of smallholder producers for their registration in the public procurement portal, so they can continue selling their products to the local governments.

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)? *

At the final stage of this project, WFP handed to the local governments, which each allocated a fixed budget for the project to continue the implementation. Moreover, following the success of and lessons learned from this project, WFP led an advocacy process that resulted in the inclusion of this innovative and inclusive modalities at the School Feeding Law, giving the opportunity of delivery fresh food to the country's schools and improve health and nutrition to scholars. as well as the participation of local governments.

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://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LqKqM4eRDzMq_QC5nxhgXphbUzHg_nZA?usp=sharing
<https://youtu.be/kPDhMAQU9Fs>