



Sustainable Financing Initiative
for School Health and Nutrition (SFI)

School Meals Financing Rapid Assessment

Benin

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
FCFA	Franc CFA
GHI	Global Hunger Index
GPE/PME	Global Partnership for Education/ Partenariat Mondial pour l'Éducation
MEMP	Ministère des Enseignements Paternel et Primaire (Ministry of Nursery and Primary education)
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
PAG	Plan d'Action Gouvernementale (Government Action Programme)
PNAS	Politique Nationale d'Alimentation Scolaire (National School Feeding Policy)
PNASI	Politique Nationale d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégrée (Integrated National School Feeding Policy)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SY	School Year
WAEMU (UEMOA)	West African Economic and Monetary Union (Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine)
WFP	World Food Programme

1. National context

1.1. Levels of reported malnutrition among school age children

The prevalence of stunting, underweight, and wasting in children under five years of age reached 32%, 17% and 5%, respectively, in 2018¹. Children living in rural areas of Benin are more at risk of malnutrition. A 2015 study on schoolchildren aged 5-10 years in rural communities in northern Benin reported a prevalence of underweight, wasting, and stunting as 40%, 31% and 22%, respectively².

According to the Global Analysis of Vulnerability and Food Security (GAVFS)³ conducted in 2017, more than one million people in Benin are food insecure, or 9.6%. According to the same survey report, food insecurity is more pronounced in rural areas (15.0%) than in urban areas (8.0%). The department of Atacora (North-Western Benin) is the most affected by food insecurity. Inadequate food consumption is more pronounced in rural areas (18.5%) than in urban areas (9.2%).

The Cadre Harmonisé (CH) food and nutrition security analysis⁴ conducted in October 2020 in Benin estimated 384,655 people to be food insecure between October-December 2020, which was 15 times more than in 2019 (October-December). This deterioration of the food and nutrition situation was due to the COVID-19 related movement restrictions and border closures, which impacted the availability and price of staple food in local markets⁵. The situation stabilised since.

In the 2021 Global Hunger Index (GHI)⁶, Benin ranks 82nd out of the 116 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2021 GHI scores. With a score of 22.2, Benin has a level of hunger that is serious.

1.2. National school feeding policy – aims and objectives

1.2.1 Brief history of school feeding policy in Benin

In 2000, the government initiated a national canteen programme, implemented by the Technical Services (ST) of the Ministry of Nursery and Primary education (Ministère des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire, MEMP). The results of this programme were not satisfactory and multiple challenges were highlighted:

- insufficient coordination of interventions
- lack of concrete measure to make activities and results durable
- inadequate funding
- weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- lack of synergy of actions between all sectors involved in education, food and nutrition, hygiene, and health in schools
- dysfunctions in the management of canteens.

¹ Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique (INSAE), *Enquete Demographique et de Sante au Benin, 2017-2018*, Cotonou, 2019 :

https://www.insae-bj.org/images/docs/insae-statistiques/enquetes-recensements/EDS/2017-2018/1.Benin_EDSBV_Rapport_final.pdf

² Galetti V, Mitchikpe CES, Kujinga P, Tossou F, Hounhouigan DJ, Zimmermann MB, et al. Rural Beninese children are at risk of zinc deficiency according to stunting prevalence and plasma zinc concentration but not dietary zinc intakes. *J Nutr*. 2016: <https://doi.org/10.3945/jn.115.216606>

³ https://instad.bj/images/docs/insae-statistiques/enquetes-recensements/Autres-Enquetes/AGVSA/Rapport_AGVSA_VF_2017.pdf

⁴ <https://www.food-security.net/en/datas/benin/>

⁵ WFP Benin Annual Country Report 2020, Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000125378/download/>

⁶ <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/benin.html>

In response to these challenges, and to improve school feeding, the government drafted a National School Feeding Policy document (**Politique Nationale d’Alimentation Scolaire, PNAS**), adopted in **2014**. The PNAS aims to i) encourage the enrolment and attendance of pupils, ii) ensure the feeding of all children in schools, iii) improve learning capacities and school results, with the vision that "By 2025, all school children in Benin have access to a balanced, healthy and varied diet that reduces their vulnerability to hunger and improves their access, retention and performance in school".

In 2016, the newly elected Government developed its action programme (PAG 2016-2021⁷) which reaffirmed its will to develop the education system by devoting a significant part of its resources in general and its Public Investment Programme in particular.

The PAG is structured around sectoral priority projects and the Government included the project to extend school canteens to all schools in rural areas of the country in the PAG 2016-2021 among the priority projects of the Ministry of Maternal and Primary Education.

1.2.2 Current school feeding policy: the National Integrated School Feeding Program (Programme National d’Alimentation Scolaire Intégré/PNASI)

The **National Integrated School Feeding Program (Programme National d’Alimentation Scolaire Intégré, PNASI)** started in 2017 with the signature of an agreement between the government of Benin and the WFP for the WFP to ensure the implementation of this project while ensuring that the steering and management capacities of the national part are strengthened in the short and medium term, with a transfer of the implementation to national institutions in the longer term.

The overall objective of the PNASI is to strengthen school feeding in Benin by developing a multisectoral approach and by favouring local purchases to improve school performance, food diversity and the nutrition of pupils in schools with canteens. The specific objectives of the programme are:

- i. to ensure the regular provision of school meals to pupils in public primary schools in order to improve their academic performance
- ii. to use the school as an entry point for converging support to education, agriculture, and health
- iii. to invest in the development of the institutional framework and improve the steering, coordination and monitoring of the school feeding programme in Benin.

Its expected results are that Pupils in the targeted schools receive at least one meal a day during the school year; the proportion of food purchased on the local market for school canteens increases by 10% each year; and sustainable coordination and monitoring bodies are set up and operational⁸.

In **July 2018**, a **Roundtable** was organised with the objective to mobilize resources from partners to complement the government investment in the PNASI and to extend its coverage from the outset of the 2018-19 school year (SY).

In the new Government Action Programme (PAG 2, 2021-2026), Benin has set itself the objective of **enacting a law on the financing of school canteens** in order to secure the necessary budget for the extension and maintenance of the PNASI. This reaffirms the Government’s commitment and highlights the fact President Talon’s considers the PNASI is a strong symbol of his social policy.

⁷ <https://revealingbenin.com/>

⁸ PNASI Project Document, provided by the WFP

2. Current programme

2.1. Number of children targeted/reached

There are currently only two important implementers of school canteens in Benin: the WFP, implementing the PNASI and extra schools as part of its Country Strategic Plan and CRS implementing McGovern-Dole projects.

For the 2019-2020 school year, the number of schools and children targeted and reached were as follow.

Actor	Number of communes	Number of schools	Number of children targeted	Number of children reached
WFP (PNASI+ extra schools) ⁹	77 (out of 77)	3849	760 358	660 654 (87%)
CRS ¹⁰	4	144	44 629	44 629 (100%)
Total	77	3,993	537 300	

2.2. Brief summary of relevant evaluation evidence

A final evaluation of the PNASI's first phase (2017-2021) is currently being undertaken. Its results will be available later this year (2022).

A mid-term evaluation of the PNASI's first phase¹¹ was carried out in 2019. Its main conclusions were:

- Institutional constraints have penalised the implementation of certain components of the PNASI – and the programme has suffered from weak steering, management and monitoring frameworks and an overly ambitious timetable. The government's desire to roll out a large-scale canteen service in record time has prevailed, which resulted in a wider coverage than initially planned but also an imbalance in the implementation of the different components. Component 2 aiming at setting up multi-sectoral activities at school level (health, hygiene, agriculture) and support for producer groups for local canteen supplies was neglected. The institutional sustainability dimension of Component 3 could not be implemented in the absence of visibility on the institutional organisation envisaged by the government). Moreover, the rush to start up did not give WFP and MEMP time to define the steering and implementation mechanisms, nor to build a results and monitoring framework that takes into account WFP standards (in particular with regard to gender) and that is a real tool for implementing and monitoring the activities.
- The PNASI has a high profile but has not yet been included in local and national consultation frameworks.
- The objective of 165 days of canteens - zero stock at the end of the year is a difficult equation to achieve.
- The effects are reported by the actors, but the M&E does not fully reflect the potential effects of the PNASI.
- The field system is relevant, and significant coordination and monitoring efforts have been made, but the potential remains under-exploited.
- Purchases from small-scale producers have not been initiated, although they are of interest to financial partners.

⁹ Source: WFP Benin Annual Country Report 2020, Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023
<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000125378/download/>

¹⁰ M&E information provided by CRS

¹¹ Gouvernement du Benin et Bureau Pays du PAMau Bénin, Evaluation conjointe à mi-parcours du Programme National d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégré (PNASI) Aout 2017 – Mai 2019 Rapport d'évaluation, Décembre 2019
<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000112478/download/>

- Although the objective of inclusion is stated, the attention paid to pupils most at risk of exclusion and to gender issues remains weak. The geographical targeting analysed at departmental level is assessed as globally coherent, however, the government's intention to achieve universal coverage ('one school, one canteen') by 2021 does not address issues of vulnerability, and the relevance of this orientation remains to be demonstrated. The issues of 1) inclusion of the most vulnerable pupils in school and 2) gender are insufficiently taken into account in the design of the PNASI: the indicators are not systematically disaggregated by gender; and there is an absence of i) specific studies on gender, ii) activities specifically targeting girls/women and the most vulnerable pupils, and iii) a parity objective.

As of 2022, it appears that the universal coverage objective is still guiding the PNASI, but that the time horizon to achieve it has been prolonged.

Six main recommendations emerge from the findings of the evaluation:

R1: Build an institutional framework favourable to school feeding in Benin.

R2: Provide the PNASI with a formalised management and monitoring framework.

R3: Operation of the canteens: guaranteeing the quality of implementation and monitoring.

R4: Mobilise NGOs to consolidate the commitment of local authorities and communities to the school and canteen.

R5: Support the development of local procurement.

R6: Analyse, document and promote the inclusive potential of the school canteen.

2.3. Line ministry responsible for delivery

The **Ministry of Maternal and Primary Education** (Ministère des Enseignement Maternel et Primaire, MEMP) is in charge of school feeding, with the **Ministry of Planning and Development** (MPD) playing a coordinating role and the **Presidential Unit for Monitoring the Functioning of School and University Establishments**, which is responsible for monitoring the education projects of the Government Action Programme (Programme d'Actions du Gouvernement, PAG), ensuring the control of the implementation of the PNASI. In the agreement signed between the WFP and the Government in 2017, the Ministry of Education was indicated as representing the Government in the framework of the PNASI. In the steering, other sectors are involved and the Ministry of Planning and Coordination of Government Action plays the coordination role.

Currently, the **WFP** is implementing the programme on behalf of the government, with a competency transfer planned during the second implementation phase that began this school year. To operationalize the PNASI, WFP contracts with operational partners, notably some fifteen NGOs that deploy teams entirely dedicated to the PNASI, consisting of mediators (1 mediator for 10 schools), a supervisor (1 supervisor for 5 mediators) and a supervisor (1 supervisor for 5 mediators) and a project manager; and private service providers (private transporters; food wholesalers).

As the PNASI is based on a multisectoral and integrated approach, the **Ministry of Health** is involved in the medical check-up of pupils, deworming campaigns and the control of the health and hygiene of cooks. It also participates in awareness campaigns on nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation. The **Ministry of Agriculture** is involved in the organisation, training, and support of local producers. It also strives to ensure, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Trade**, that food is available in adequate quantity and quality on the local market. According to WFP, the current steering allows all the sectors concerned to be involved, but it is necessary to continue to advocate at all levels for better cross-ministry involvement.

3. Public financing

3.1. Level of financing from national and local government

3.1.1 National Government

The PNASI is implemented by the WFP. As a result, the government allocates financing to the MEMP, which transfers it on to a WFP trust fund dedicated to the PNASI. It is a dedicated activity in the MEMP's budget

When the PNASI first started in 2017, the total contribution of the government was foreseen to be 27.2 billion FCFA (\$47mio) for a period of 53 months from 2017 to 2021, divided in eight equal payments (one for 2017, two for 2018, 2019 and 2020 and one for 2021), with the objective to cover 31% of the country's school¹².

PNASI phase 1: 2017-2021 forecast					
Number of schools covered	Number of children covered	Coverage rate	Duration	Total budget	Cost per year
1 574	351 109	31%/ schools	53 months	27.2 billion FCFA (\$47mio)	6 billion FCFA(\$10mio)

In 2018, the government organised a Roundtable with partners to gather additional financing from donors to expand the PNASI from the 2018-2019 school year. Following this Roundtable, the government signed an addendum to its partnership agreement with the WFP to expend its contribution by 21,563,601,105 FCFA (\$36mio) for the remaining period and its coverage objectives from 31% to 51%.

A previous addendum has been signed in February 2018 to include the possibility for the government to make its contribution partly in-kind in order to pass on in-kind commitments from partners (in-kind contribution foreseen of 3.4 billion FCFA/\$5.7mio).

PNASI phase 1 after the 2018 Roundtable			
Number of schools covered	Number of children covered	Coverage rate	Total budget
3179 (1 579 initially planned + 1600 added)	649 509 (351 109 initially planned + 298 400 added)	51%/ schools	48 763 601 105 FCFA (\$83mio) (27.2 billion FCFA (\$47mio) initially planned + 21 563 601 105FCFA added (\$36mio)

The new WFP-Government agreement is yet to be signed so budgetary implication for Benin are not yet available. However, preliminary projections (confidential at this stage) show that a total of 134bn FCFA (\$227mio) would be necessary to deploy the programme over the period 2021-2026, with an annual cost stabilizing around 29bnFCFA (\$49mio) from 2023. For 2022, >15 billion FCFA (\$25mio) have been budgeted for school canteen¹³which shows an increase from phase 1, in line with the intended increase in coverage.

¹² Accord entre le Gouvernement du Bénin et le Programme Alimentaire Mondial relatif à la mise en œuvre du programme national d'alimentation scolaire intégrée dans les zones en insécurité alimentaires et en sous-scolarisation, July 2017.

¹³ Ministère de l'Economie et des Finance du Benin, Actions phares du secteur de l'éducation, Loi de Finances gestion 2022, 2022

3.1.2 Local governments

At this stage, the PNASI does not require contribution from departments or municipalities. There are contributions, for example hiring cooks or contributing to the necessary infrastructure building and/or maintenance, but this is not standardised, nor is it systematic or monitored.

The mid-term evaluation of the PNASI noted that the involvement of municipalities in the PNASI was relatively marginal as they were not formally involved in the setting up of the PNASI even though they have been key partners in other previous canteen programmes (GPE model or the CRS pilot project with local purchases).

This is identified as a potential problem for the programme's sustainability and the WFP is advocating in favour of school meals towards local officials and is currently working on a partnership agreement with the representatives of the association of communes in Benin. Moreover, the "local purchase" component from small producers close to the schools, which is currently being deployed, offers the opportunity to increase the involvement of local authorities, and to ensure a stronger anchoring and ownership of local elected officials.

3.2. Revenue source (i.e., general taxation, earmarked taxation)

At this stage, the government's resource attributed to the PNASI come from the general budget. There is no earmarked taxation. As part of its current Action Programme (PAG 2, 2021-2026), Benin has set itself the objective of enacting a law on the financing of school canteens, and it is in this context considering all financing instruments (see section 7 below).

It is interesting to note that Benin issued a EUR500 million SDG focused Eurobond in July 2021, making it the first African country to issue an SDG Bond and that the PNASI is listed among the policies that can benefit from the money raised as it contributes to several SDGs.

3.3. National vs Local government mobilisation & expenditure

The financial commitments made by the Government of Benin towards the WFP in the framework of their agreement on the PNASI implementation and described in section 3.1.1 above was fully paid out according to the calendar, despite some commitments made during the Roundtable failing to materialise (see under section 4.1).

Regarding local governments, as mentioned above, no level of contribution is required at this stage, there is therefore no information on a potential difference between mobilisation & expenditure.

3.4. Financing by level of school system

The PNASI only targets primary schools.

3.5. Is funding adequate and consistent with programme delivery goals

For its first phase (2017-2021), the PNASI has delivered on its coverage target, and the government has maintained the level of financing necessary despite donor financing being lower than expected due to the Covid-19 crisis (see under section 4.1). The civil society has highlighted the budgetary effort to achieve the 51% coverage objective with a doubling of the budget for canteens between 2018 and 2019, representing about 22% of the MEMP's budget excluding salaries¹⁴.

The second phase, which started at the beginning of the 2021 school year, is currently being designed by the WFP and the government. No official document is available yet, and thereby no

<https://budgetbenin.bj/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/actions-phares-du-secteur-de-leducation.pdf>

¹⁴Social Watch Benin, Note Budgétaire sur l'éducation 2019, 2020,

<https://socialwatch.bj/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Note-budg%C3%A9taire-Education2019.pdf>

budget, beyond the fact that in 2022, >15 billion FCFA have been budgeted for school canteen¹⁵, which corresponds to the full cost for that year. A 100% coverage objective has been announced by the government but without a precise deadline. At this stage it is therefore not possible to assess adequacy.

A potential indirect perverse effect of the better coverage of the national school meals programme was mentioned by a respondent and linked to funding adequacy was that the increased school uptake resulting from a successful school feeding programme could result in a decrease in education quality if adequate budget was not available to accommodate the extra pupils (hire and pay more teachers, build schools...).

¹⁵ Ministère de l'Economie et des Finance du Benin, Actions phares du secteur de l'éducation, Loi de Finances gestion 2022, 2022

<https://budgetbenin.bj/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/actions-phares-du-secteur-de-leducation.pdf>

4. Donor financing

4.1. Level of donor financing

As a result of the Round Table organised by the Benin Government in 2018 to gather additional financing from donors in order to expand the PNASI from the 2018-2019 school year, bilateral and multilateral donors (e.g., China, Japan, USA, Islamic Development Bank, African Development Bank and the World Bank) had announced a total contribution of 28 billion FCFA or \$50 million¹⁶. On this basis, the government increased the PNASI's coverage target to 51% in 2021 (against 31% for SY 2017-2018).

The definitive commitments (Switzerland had not committed during the roundtable but contributed, USA contributed through USDA FFE projects, so not directly to the PNASI, Germany contributed through a grant the WFP HQ, so not accounted for here) were distributed as follow:

Partner	Amount FCFA	Instrument
China	3 232 070 800 ¹⁷	In-kind (rice)
Japan		
Switzerland	1 092 000 000	Grant
AfDB	7 680 685 305	N/A
IsDB	5 622 850 000	N/A
WB	3 935 995 000	N/A
Total	21 563 601 105	

Source: Ministry of development, follow up of the Round Table (confidential)

However, the follow up done by the Ministry of Development and the Ministry of Finance shows that only 20% of these commitments were fulfilled in time due to the Covid-19 crisis:

Status	Partners	Amount	Percentage
Fulfilled commitments	China, Japan, Switzerland	4 324 070 800	20%
Cancelled	AfDB	7 680 685 305	36%
Delayed commitments	IsDB, WB	9 558 845 000	44%
Total commitments		21 563 601 105	100%

Source: Ministry of development, follow up of the Round Table (confidential)

Switzerland, Japan, and China contributed directly to the PNASI over the period, but projects from the IFIs were cancelled (AfDB) or delayed and not yet reprogrammed but still under discussion (IsDB, WB).

A less direct and trackable way donors might contribute to the PNASI is through budget support that is not earmarked for the PNASI or education specifically. As these resources are fungible and important (according to the 2022 budget law, budgetary grants represent 15.650 billion FCFA for that year¹⁸), one cannot exclude that some is used to finance the PNASI.

Beyond these contributions to the national budget, some contributions are made to the WFP for implementing school feeding programmes (PNASI schools and "extra" schools that will be progressively transferred to the PNASI). These contributions are difficult to aggregate as they cover

¹⁶ Round Table press release, <https://leconomistebenin.com/2018/07/06/table-ronde-pour-le-financement-de-leducation-au-benin-28-milliards-fcfa-pour-les-cantines-scolaires/>

¹⁷ Detail of each contribution not specified in documentation

¹⁸ <https://budgetbenin.bj/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Version-citoyenne-de-la-Loi-de-Finances-2022.pdf>, p.14

different time periods, can be in-kind or financial, and target more-or-less specific objectives (e.g., infrastructures, school gardens, capacity building...).

The main financial contribution for the PNASI's first phase were made by the Netherlands (10mio € for 2019-2023, covering 400 schools), Germany (5mio € for 2019-2023, covering 200 schools) and the Choithrams Foundation¹⁹ (USD 750,000 for 2015-2021).

Finally, beyond the PNASI, McGovern-Dole financing implemented by CRS represented the following amounts (partly in-kind):

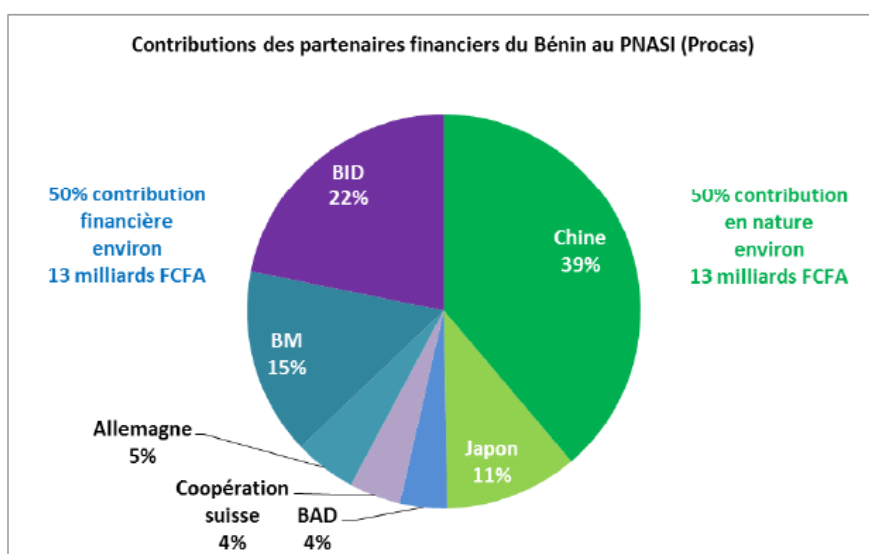
Year	Award Value
2021	\$25,000,000
2017	\$21,350,000
2014	\$19,080,649

4.2. Type of donor financing (grant vs concessional etc)

Financial contributions from donors so far have been exclusively grants (Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands).

It is however worth noting that an important share of donor contributions is made in kind (China and Japan in rice, USA through McGovern Dole programme mostly in-kind).

The mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the PNASI's first phase²⁰ analysed that in value, half the commitments made by donors for the extension of the PNASI were in-kind, as shown in the graph below:



Source : Gouvernement du Benin et PAM au Bénin, *Evaluation conjointe à mi-parcours du Programme National d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégré (PNASI) Aout 2017 – Mai 2019 Rapport d'évaluation*, Décembre 2019, annexe 33

The final numbers reported above show that out of the 4 324mio FCFA contributed by partners, 3 232mio FCFA were in-kind rice donations, representing nearly 75% of fulfilled commitments.

¹⁹ <https://www.choithrams.com/en/zerohunger/>

²⁰ Gouvernement du Benin et Bureau Pays du PAM au Bénin, *Evaluation conjointe à mi-parcours du Programme National d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégré (PNASI) Aout 2017 – Mai 2019 Rapport d'évaluation*, Décembre 2019

<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000112478/download/>

4.3. Major actors

Since the beginning of the PNASI, the number of actors has been reduced as all programmes are being transferred under the umbrella of the PNASI.

As mentioned above, there today is only one programme of important scale beyond the ones implemented by the WFP (PNASI and extra schools): the Food for Education Programme financed by McGovern Dole and implemented by CRS.

Historically, CRS have been bigger actors, as well as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which implemented canteens in Benin until 2018. The GPE is still financing Education in Benin but does not have a canteen component beyond a small activity under its Covid-19 recovery project, that subsidises 15FCFA out of the 25 demanded in WFP canteens in 20 communes during school years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

The Cost-Benefit analysis carried out by the Government of Benin and the WFP in 2019²¹ shows that in 2018, the coverage of the different actors was as follow:

Actor	Number of communes	Number of schools	Number of children
PNASI	67	1579	320 000
WFP	19	620	114 000
GPE	10	297	59 100
CRS	4	144	44 200
Total	77	2640	537 300

For the 2019-2020 school year, the PNASI covered 3234 schools with school canteens, the WFP 618 schools, and the CRS 144 schools.

The 144 schools covered by CRs were part of two phases of a Mc Govern-Dole project. These schools are now being transferred to the PNASI while 175 new school, selected because they lacked the infrastructure necessary to implement a canteen (such as water access point, toilets, kitchen, as well as setting up management committees and building capacities of their participants) are covered by a third project that launched in 2021. These 175 new schools will subsequently be transferred to the PNASI, contributing to the long-term objective of 100% coverage.

4.4. Observations on coordination

Given the small numbers of actors operating in the canteen area and the strong hand of the government through the PNASI, coordination has not been mentioned as a subject of concern by respondents.

They have mostly mentioned coordination between sectors and ministries in order to implement the integrated character of the PNASI. The government is currently reflecting on the relevant steering framework to best implement the integrated approach. In the meantime, a quadripartite committee composed of the WFP, the MEMP, the implementing local NGOs and the presidential unit serves as a coordination mechanism for the PNASI.

Informal coordination is also taking place between the main actors such as the WFP and CRS as they have worked side by side for years and the channels of communication are well established. As mentioned above, the CRS programmes are fully aligned with the PNASI with the former 144 schools from the two first projects being transferred to the PNASI and 175 new schools being “prepared” to be transferred at the end of the third project. Generally, a geographic distribution between the different actors is observed, reducing the risks of duplicates and uncoordinated actions.

²¹ Programme d'alimentation scolaire du Bénin, Analyse Coût-Bénéfice, May 2019, <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114270/download/>

5. Role of private sector and households

5.1. Are private sector actors engaged (specify actors and levels of financing)

The private sector does not contribute in a systematic way to supporting the PNASI, but there are examples of public-private partnerships between the WFP and private foundations at the local level.

In 2021, two foundations, the Moov Africa Foundation²² and the MTN Foundation²³, contributed to the PNASI by delivering canteen related infrastructure (e.g., refectory, kitchen) in one school each. While no financial estimate has been given for the first one, the second one has been promoted as being worth 38 millions FCFA (\$65,000).

Moreover, as mentioned above, the Choithrams Foundation has granted the WFP \$750,000 for 2015-2021 (20 schools) and \$750,000 for 2022-2025 (40 schools) to support the construction of infrastructure, installation of school gardens and capacity building of women's processing groups.

5.2. Do households contribute

WFP has explained that contributions were expected from benefiting households, but that they could be financial (25FCFA/ meal, 200-300CFA/month, depending on the school) or in-kind (fresh supplies to complement the dry rations they provide, serve as cooks, contribute to managing the canteen...).

CRS has mentioned requiring a financial contribution of 50FCFA/ month (<0.1\$) in its canteens to pay for condiments and fresh supplies.

On the other hand, canteens managed under GPE funding (until 2018) were free. Under its Covid-19 recovery project in Benin, the GPE pays 15FCFA out of the 25 demanded in WFP canteens in 20 communes during school years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Both WFP and CRS have highlighted that household contributions varied a lot depending on the region and were generally irregular. Factors other than poverty were identified as contributing to this problem, mainly the level of trust between parents and schools. Differences between models implemented by different partners can also be confusing for families and the PNASI MTE mentions that "parental contribution seems to be particularly problematic in the former GPE schools where parents have been used to a completely free canteen".

The PNASI MTE states that the canteen can become a source of tension between parents because of the monetary contribution that some parents pay while others do not. It reports that in several sites, community representatives appear to be in favour of excluding pupils who do not contribute, but interviews showed that this was not the case most of the time. Teachers often oppose excluding children who cannot pay, which can create tensions between the school and the community. It also mentions that the daily contribution can be a source of tension within households with disagreement on whether the contribution is the man of the woman's responsibility.

²² <https://beninwebtv.com/benin-moov-africa-inaugure-un-bloc-de-cantine-aux-ecoliers-de-lepp-goulo-sodji/>

²³ <https://www.gouv.bj/actualite/1501/don-bloc-cantine-moderne-lago-memp-recoit-appui-fondation-benin/>

6. Efficiency and equity reflection

6.1. Administrative costs of programme delivery

The Cost-Benefit analysis carried out by the Government of Benin and the WFP in 2019²⁴ outlined the following cost distribution:

Type of expenditure	Total cost (US\$) (435 216 children)	Cost per child (US\$)	Percentage
Commodities	5 250 648	12.06	55%
Logistics and warehousing	732 286	1.68	8%
Management and administration	409 211	0.94	4%
Human resources	1 206 428	2.77	13%
Community costs	1 885 405	4.33	20%
Total	9 483 977	21.78	100%

The Agreement signed in 2017 by the Government of Benin and the WFP for implementation of the National Integrated School Feeding Program outlines the following cost distribution:

Type of expenditure	Total cost (FCFA) 2017-2021	Percentage
Commodities	20 977 360 358	74%
Other direct support costs (implementing national NGOs)	6 164 388 282	22%
Administrative costs (HQ) 4%	1 085 669 946	4%
Total	28 227 418 586	100%

6.2. Allocation against deprivation and targeting indicators

The project document for the PNASI's first phase outlines the targeting indicators.

The project covers all rural areas of the country, especially food insecure areas.

The first year of the project will take into account the 1574 government school canteens in 68 communes. In addition, the following criteria will be used to select the communes to be impacted according to the resources available:

- (i) the food insecurity rate;
- (ii) the poverty rate;
- (iii) the malnutrition rate;
- (iv) the school enrolment rate;
- (v) the primary school dropout rate;
- (vi) the favourable school environment (hygiene, physical infrastructure for food preservation and preparation, possibility of community participation);
- (vii) the distance between the school and the pupil's home.

²⁴ Programme d'alimentation scolaire du Bénin, Analyse Coût-Bénéfice, May 2019, <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114270/download/>

The following table from the MTE shows how the coverage matched targeting indicators in 2018:

	Department	Coverage PNASI schools/ total public primary schools (sources : WFP list and 2018 MEMP statistics)	Coverage PNASI pupils/ Total pupils in public primary schools (sources : WFP list and 2018 MEMP statistics)	Access rate (GPE category)	Performance rate (GPE category)	Moderate food insecurity rate (% severe food insecurity) (Source: 2017 Global Analysis of Vulnerability and Food Security)
Departments with low PNASI coverage	LITTORAL	6,50%	6,70%	97%	73%	1,5% (0)
	MONO	24,60%	18,30%	97%	73%	6,2% (0,4%)
Departments with intermediary PNASI coverage	ATLANTIQUE	32,60%	21,50%	de 80 à 90%	de 56 à 65%	7,2% (0,2%)
	BORGOU	34,10%	24,70%	68%	56%	7,7% (0,2%)
	OUEME	34,20%	28,10%	97%	73%	7,4% (0,7%)
	COUFFO	35,60%	28,30%	80- 90%	56 - 65%	14,9% (1,3%)
	ZOU	38,00%	30,20%	80- 90%	56 - 65%	,11,1% (6%)
	COLLINES	44,30%	31,60%	80- 90%	56 - 65%	12,9% (2,4%)
Departments with high PNASI coverage	ALIBORI	48,90%	35,50%	35%	24%	7,6% (0,4%)
	DONGA	50,70%	43,30%	80- 90%	56 - 65%	4,9% (0,4%)
	PLATEAU	60,20%	46,30%	80- 90%	56 - 65%	8,5% (0,6%)
	ATACORA	66,40%	54,10%	68%	47%	20,9% (2,7%)
Total Benin		41.3%	31%			

Source: translated and adapted from Annex 14 of the PNASI Mid-Term Evaluation (2019)

The mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the PNASI's first phase²⁵ carried out in 2019 concluded that "although the objective of inclusion is stated, the attention paid to pupils most at risk of exclusion and to gender issues remains weak". The geographical targeting analysed at departmental level is assessed as globally coherent, however, the government's intention to achieve universal coverage ('one school, one canteen') by 2021 does not address issues of vulnerability, and the relevance of this orientation remains to be demonstrated. The issues of 1) inclusion of the most vulnerable pupils in school and 2) gender are insufficiently taken into account in the design of the PNASI: the indicators are not systematically disaggregated by gender; and there is an absence of i) specific studies on gender, ii) activities specifically targeting girls/women and the most vulnerable pupils, and iii) a parity objective.

As of 2022, it appears that the universal coverage objective is still guiding the PNASI, but that the time horizon to achieve it has been prolonged.

²⁵ Gouvernement du Benin et Bureau Pays du PAM au Bénin, Evaluation conjointe à mi-parcours du Programme National d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégré (PNASI) Aout 2017 – Mai 2019 Rapport d'évaluation, Décembre 2019

<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000112478/download/>

7. Observations on scope for financing scale-up of programmes

The government of Benin has set itself the objective of enacting a law on the financing of school canteens as part of its Action Programme for 2021-26²⁶. As this law is not yet drafted and the project document of the PNASI's second phase is still under development by the WFP and the government, information is scarce on the target budget and financing options. However, preliminary projections (confidential at this stage) show that a total of 134bn FCFA (\$227mio) would be necessary to deploy the programme over the period 2021-2026, with an annual cost stabilizing around 29bnFCFA (\$49mio) from 2023.

During the first phase of the PNASI, the government demonstrated its commitment by making budgetary trade-offs to be able to replace delayed or cancelled multilateral donor commitments in order to honour its contract with WFP. The 2022 budget demonstrates continued government commitment, with a budget of >15billion FCFA (\$25mio) for canteens attributed to the MEMP in line with the objective of raising the school feeding's programme's coverage to 75% in the short term.

The 2022-24 provisional budget²⁷ builds on Benin's economy's resilience to the Covid-19 crisis and counts on a strong and quick recovery in the years to come.

In 2020, economic growth was 3.8%. While below the 7% anticipated before the crisis, this represents the third best performance in Sub-Saharan Africa. The budgetary impact due to the crisis has led to a budget deficit of 4.7% of GDP in 2020, compared to 0.5% of GDP in 2019, but this level is better than expected (5.1% of GDP forecast) and the best in the West African Economic and Monetary Union's (WAEMU). This is presented by the government as the result of improved revenue mobilisation, despite the crisis, and prudent expenditure management. Benin expects a GDP growth rate of 6% in 2021 and 7% in 2022 and a reduced deficit, which would give it fiscal space to finance at least partly the PNASI's scaling-up.

Despite these strong fundamentals, it is expected that Benin will need further financing, including from its international partners. Government officials interviewed estimate that the second phase will be mainly financed by the government and certainly complemented by the mobilisation of partners and innovative financing. A new roundtable is not envisaged at this stage, but bilateral discussions with interested bilateral and multilateral partners will certainly be carried out. It appears that following a visit of WFP's executive director in Benin, discussions are ongoing to make President Talon a "champion" of school canteens, giving visibility to his commitment and trust to potential donors.

In this context, and in the broader context of the current elaboration of the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), on which a team of consultants is currently working, the government of Benin is looking at all potential sources to finance the scaling up its national school feeding programme as part of its development:

- The private sector is identified as an under exploited source. Voluntary contributions such as the ones received by the WFP from Foundations could be pursued further, with a higher involvement of the local level. It was mentioned by respondents that Benin has foundations engaged in social actions which can be solicited. Discussions with WFP to benefit from support from the Global Child Nutrition Foundation are also ongoing.
- Local governments: a budget line be included in town council budgets to support

²⁶ <https://www.gouv.bj/actualite/1628/presentation-2021-2026-cadres-structures-gouvernement-benin/>

²⁷ <https://budgetbenin.bi/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/actions-phares-du-secteur-de-leducation.pdf>

school canteens. However, at this stage, the tendency is for the central state to increase its transfer to sub-national levels. Not matter what, the involvement of local governments will be necessary to enhance the ownership and sustainability of the PNASI.

- Innovative financing mechanisms, which government officials interviewed mentioned could for example be proceeds from school gardens, mobilization of donors at the local level, fiscal support for the private sector to contribute. The idea of allocating proceeds from the national lottery to school canteens was also mentioned.
- Earmarked sources have been mentioned by government respondents without further detail. Given Benin’s successful record in bond issuance, including the first African SDG bond in 2021, and sustainable GDP to debt ratio (49.2% in 2021, well below the WAEMU ceiling of 70%²⁸), thematic and/or impact-based bond could be envisaged.

It was highlighted by government respondents that although the first challenge is financing, capacity building was crucial in the perspective of a transfer of the implementation from the WFP to the government, and of a model foreseen as decentralized but harmonized.

The mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the PNASI’s first phase²⁹ carried out in 2019 highlighted challenges related to capacity. To the question “Do the institutional sustainability mechanisms implemented allow for the appropriation of the approach by national institutions?”, the MTE answered that despite substantial national funding, the sustainability of the achievements of the PNASI at the institutional level has not been achieved. No institution has been designated to assume the role that the WFP plays today, which hindered the planned capacity building and transfer activities to be carried out. The PNASI did not have a management framework with a procedures manual that could eventually be used by the national institution in charge of school feeding, there was no multisectoral framework for school feeding, and the PNASI was not represented in local or national consultation frameworks. It is expected that both the PNASI’s second phase and the planned law on the financing of school canteens will tackle these challenges.

Finally, it has been mentioned that the operation of the PNASI will require further infrastructure investment (e.g.: water access point, toilets, kitchen, storage room, access roads...) which go beyond the dedicated budget, and that international partners’ contribution will most probably be sought to contribute to these investments.

²⁸ <https://revealingbenin.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/4-ETAT-DE-MISE-EN-%C5%92UVRE- Education-Sant%C3%A9-Protection-sociale-Sport.pdf>

²⁹ Gouvernement du Bénin et Bureau Pays du PAM au Bénin, Evaluation conjointe à mi-parcours du Programme National d’Alimentation Scolaire Intégré (PNASI) Aout 2017 – Mai 2019 Rapport d’évaluation, Décembre 2019

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