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# Catalysing Community Driven Food Systems Transformation

## Pathways through school feeding in Nigeria

### Project Brief 3 of 3

#### Context

The Nigerian Home-Grown School Feeding Program (NHGSFP) is a food-based safety net programme focusing on providing food to children and improving food security of beneficiary households. It was launched with the intention of implementing a sustainable school meals programme (SMP) that would establish a social safety net for the poor and eradicate malnutrition in school-age children while stimulating the national agricultural economy— acting as a catalyst to drive agriculture-nutrition policies and strengthen food systems in the country.

However, the country's agricultural sector faces significant operational challenges as smallholder farmers struggle with productivity due to resource constraints, limited skills, market inconsistencies, security issues, and climate change. The SMP, being a major platform embedded in government policy and social protection systems, can serve as a catalyst to promote equitable and sustainable food systems transformation in the country.

The Food Systems Transformation Through School Feeding project under the CHeFS initiative addresses this challenge by promoting interventions that integrate nutrient-rich, locally grown crops into SMPs. This project spotlight details the status of a new intervention in Nigeria.



## Intervention and Impact

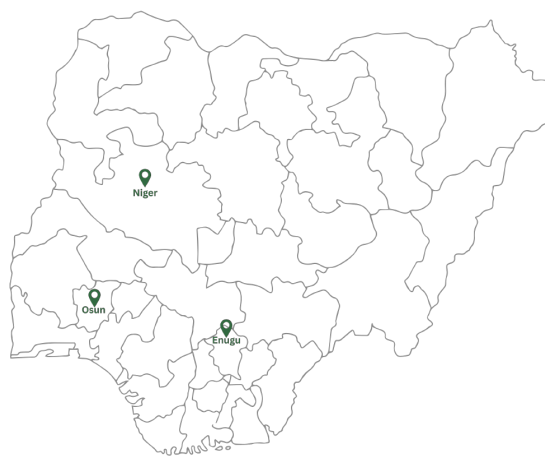
This project builds on the initiatives of the Government of Nigeria in transforming food systems through community-driven interventions that leverage the NHGSFP. As women play a central role in food systems—contributing to agricultural labor, production, household nutrition, and the economy—achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in food systems can result in greater food security and better nutrition as well as sustainable food systems for all.

Therefore, this project aims to provide technical support to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture’s Food Security and Nutrition Strategy on the following objectives:

- To strengthen the knowledge and skills of women across the food supply chain (production, processing) and food environment (consumption) using bio-fortified and neglected under-utilised species (NUS) in school meals programmes (SMPs);
- To Integrate and mainstream gender into decisions about SMPs by policymakers in the federal, state and local governments.

To develop a project implementation plan that addresses these objectives, stakeholders from federal ministries and agencies (e.g. health, agriculture, education, humanitarian, budget and economic planning), the government’s Home Grown School Feeding and Food systems Transformation team, subnational policymakers, academia, and NGOs convened at a workshop in Abuja, Nigeria. They discussed opportunities for school feeding interventions across the country and identified three states to participate in the intervention. The states include: Enugu, Niger and Osun. This represents one state from 3 geo political zones in the country.

The project will include three progressive phases: stakeholder mapping, school farm establishment and training, menu modifications.



Map of project States in Nigeria. Credit: Sourced from Canva, edited by Savannah Dysard

First, stakeholder mapping will be carried out in the intervention states to identify both direct (women farmers, cooks, students) and indirect (Government officials, NGOs, community heads) stakeholders. A workshop will then be conducted to spread project awareness and understand the influence and interest of all identified stakeholders. An advocacy visit will also be paid to key stakeholders (local government chairmen, community heads, cooks cooperative heads).

Next, baseline data collection will be conducted at the state and community levels. At the state level, surveys and interviews will be conducted with key decision makers to understand specific knowledge gaps that exist within the food value chain among the target groups and to understand the extent to which current decision-making processes are gender inclusive. At the community level, data collection will focus on understanding the roles and responsibilities of school cooks and women farmer cooperatives. The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (Pro-WEAI) and Gennovate ladder of power and freedom tool will enable data collection specific to women farmers/cooks.

The subsequent project interventions will include the establishment of community gardens and school farms, peer-to-peer learning, and nutrition education. Capacity building sessions for school cooks, farmer cooperatives, and students will focus on: establishing and maintaining community gardens and school farms, disseminating nutrition education, and understanding how to carry out small-scale food processing. Hands-on demonstrations at the school farms will offer practical learning experiences that can be highly effective.

Additional knowledge and skills trainings will be tailored to women groups/cooks across the food value chain to increase production, processing, and consumption of bio-fortified and neglected and underutilised species (NUS) in SMPs. Policymakers will also be engaged to provide mentorship to women to ensure the integration and mainstreaming of gender into decision-making processes that affect food system governance.

Finally, stakeholders in each states will convene to modify SMP menus by integrating the crop varieties produced in community gardens and school farms. Menus will prioritise the local, diverse food sources that are rich in both macro and micronutrients.

## Next Steps

Over the next six months, the project team plans to:

- Leverage peer-to-peer learning workshops for women groups focused on the production and processing of bio-fortified crops to strengthen the SMP supply chain at the community level;
- Scale up school farm hubs;
- Continue nutrition education and awareness on healthy diets in the SMP and households; and
- Advocate to policymakers at the national and subnational levels to influence positive decisions on the NHGSFP.

## About this project brief

This project brief is part of a series aiming to convey the results and progress of the Food Systems Transformation Through School Feeding Project, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Rockefeller Foundation under the Catalyzing Change for Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems (CCHeFS) initiative. The full series can be found at [www.regenerativefoodsystemsalliance.org](http://www.regenerativefoodsystemsalliance.org).

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