

**WFP – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
Country Strategic Plan (2021-2024)
Proposal to the Government of Belgium**

Country:	The Democratic Republic of the Congo
Project Title:	Country Strategic Plan (2021-2024)
Funding Requirement:	EUR 1,000,000
Project sites	Nationwide DR Congo
Project Duration:	October 2023 to December 2024 (14 months)
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1. Description of the general context

For more than two decades, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been facing one of the most complex and severe humanitarian crises in the world. Protracted crises aggravated by increased conflict have caused a deterioration of the situation in recent months, particularly in the east of the country. Approximately 6.3 million people are internally displaced adding to more than 529,000 refugees living in DRC. The impact of climate change, notably the increasing variation of temperature and rainfall across agricultural seasons, and the heavy rains causing flooding in several provinces affecting thousands of people are exacerbating an already critical situation. In areas affected by armed conflict and natural disasters, basic social infrastructure (health, education, water distribution and sanitation, civil registry services, and technical services) is regularly looted, damaged or destroyed.

According to the most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report (May 2023), 25.8 million people in DRC are in food insecurity phases 3 and 4, the highest number of food-insecure people in the world. Of the total 25.8 million people, approximately 3.4 million people are estimated to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) – a significant increase from 2.8 million in the July 2022 analysis. The number of people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) has increased from 21.7 million to 22.4 million in the recent analysis. Conflict continues to be the primary driver of food insecurity, leading to massive displacement and poverty of affected populations.

Food insecurity and lack of access to food impact children's attendance in school, which has a larger impact on children's education and the country's human capital. With such a high rate of food insecurity, it is not surprising that the DRC is the country where students report having the most hunger in school, which has the potential to negatively impact their attendance and knowledge acquisition. A regional evaluation in Sub-Saharan Africa done by the "Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs de la CONFEMEN" in 2019,¹ showed that 27,9% of school children have never experienced hunger at school, while 32.4% reported experiencing hunger sometimes (1 or 2 times/week), and 39.7% said they always feel hungry at school. The report also found that 55% of the group always experiencing hunger at school lives in DRC. The average differences in reading proficiency between students who have always eaten at school and those who have never eaten are significant, including in DRC. These results reinforce the importance of school meals in enabling a successful school performance.

2. Project justification

¹ *Qualité des systèmes éducatifs en Afrique subsaharienne. PASEC 2019* : [RapportPasec2019_Rev2022_WebOK.pdf \(lmc-dev.fr\)](#)

Over the next six months (August 2023 – January 2024), WFP DRC requires USD 793.3 million to provide emergency and development assistance country-wide. **WFP requires US\$ 35 million to meet its school meals program target of 500 000 assisted students over the 2023- 2024 school year.**

For this project, WFP proposes to support the school feeding programme in DRC, building on the implementation of the long-term commitment to the country to support progress towards zero hunger in the country while building human capital. Without investment in children’s health and education, the next generation will not achieve its social and economic potential, with negative impacts on economic growth and the advancement of the country in the medium to long term. School meals have been shown to contribute to several SDGs and improvements in education, nutrition, gender equality, and social protection and when linked to local purchases, local agriculture.

The proposed project is aligned with national priorities. Even though there is no published national policy on school feeding, school meals and canteens are part of the national development strategy (2019-2023), the national strategy on social protection (2018-2022), the national strategy on education and training (2016-2025) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Plan in DRC (2020-2024). In 2018, the government demonstrated its willingness to invest in school feeding programmes by drafting an Action Plan. President Tshisekedi renewed the commitment with the launch of his flagship policy in 2019 to eliminate primary school fees and a budget line in 2020 of approximately US\$ 10 million allocated to school feeding as a key component in the provision of free education. In 2020, the DRC also joined the School Meals Coalition and, as a signatory, has committed to scaling up its school meals programme to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Overall, the government recognizes the urgency to protect the most vulnerable children from hunger, malnutrition and learning loss, leaving no one behind. In 2022-2023, WFP continues to engage with the government to develop the national school feeding strategy and identify steps needed for the government to disburse national funds.

In addition to humanitarian response programmes, WFP has been working through a NEXUS approach (linking humanitarian, development, and peace activities) with other UN agencies (FAO and UNICEF) to allow communities to transition from emergency assistance to longer term development. School feeding has been a key component of this joint approach in recognition of the potential impact of school meals on human capital development. In fact, in Tanganyika, which is a Nexus priority province, WFP’s school meals programme has benefitted from complementary activities related to school gardens and WASH services provided by these agencies.

The school feeding programme facilitates access to education, increases attendance and retention rates, and improves the nutrition of school children while growing the local economy and reducing poverty when food is locally purchased. It is an integral part of the school health and nutrition package, a multi-sectoral approach which ensures children and adolescents develop adequately throughout the first 8,000 days of their lives. School meals are investments in the health, education, and futures of Congolese children and they incentivise parents to send their children, particularly girls, to school, narrowing the gender gap in education and literacy, and helping prevent recruitment into armed groups. Retaining children in schools also reduces their exposition to serious protection risks, such as exploitation and sexual violence.

Surveys conducted on WFP school feeding operations in 2022 showed that enrolment increased by 13.5 percent in the schools served in Tanganyika, likely due to the effect of WFP assistance. The retention rates in Tanganyika remained high at 93.8 percent.² While it was still below the 99.9 yearly target, the upward trend indicates that post-pandemic recovery efforts are helping to get children back to school. This suggests that serving meals in schools saved food expenditure for households which incentivised parents to invest in their children’s education. In turn, this minimises the risk of children being utilised for labour, and girls marrying early. School principals noted that this helped with social cohesion which is particularly important towards building peace amongst communities healing from years of hostilities.

As of 2018, efforts are being made to link smallholder farmers to the school market and promote the development of local supply chains while ensuring the provision of nutritious meals to vulnerable school children. Where possible, through the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) approach, WFP aims to source food from local smallholder farmers supported by the WFP resilience programmes. Through the link and synergies with the resilience programme, HGSF strengthens the human capital of smallholder farmers by training them in skills that will allow them to sell their products to schools. In this context, schools provide local farmers with a predictable outlet for their produce, which translates into stable income, more investment, and higher productivity, while providing a diversified diet to school children. HGSF also enables a much greater focus on food systems, market access, and buying local food through (but not exclusively) school feeding. Besides providing a market and resources for vulnerable farmers and

² [Democratic Republic of Congo 2022 Annual Country Report, WFP DRC, March 2023](#)

limiting post-harvest loss, the HGSF initiative offers a sustainable exit strategy by aiming to involve communities' participation in their children's health, nutrition, and education. Linking schools to local production also increases sustainability and is critical in transitioning school feeding programmes to sustainable national programmes.

Finally, the school feeding and HGSF programmes contribute to providing inclusive social protection and safety nets for vulnerable households. School meals save up to 10 percent of household income, and linking local production to local consumption helps create a stable and predictable market to translate into a stable income. With an added focus on supporting women small-holder farmers as a priority, the HGSF also contributes to addressing gender-specific economic inequalities and strengthening women's empowerment.

3. Objectives of this project

Within the framework of WFP's Country Strategic Plan for DRC (2021-2024), the proposed interventions fall under:

Strategic Goal 1: Support countries to achieve zero hunger (SDG 2)

Strategic Objective 1: End hunger by protecting access to food

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food (SDG Target 2.1.)

Strategic outcome 2: The human capital of conflict affected and/or at risk populations is equitably and inclusively protected and strengthened by 2024

Activity 4. Provide nutritious school meals to targeted school children and support the implementation of the home-grown school feeding programme (SMP: School meal activities)

Strategic Objective 3: Achieve food security.

Strategic Result 3: Smallholders have improved food security and nutrition through improved productivity and incomes

Strategic outcome 3: Smallholder farmers and food value chain actors have improved livelihood opportunities, resilience, social cohesion and protection and make progress towards gender equality by 2024

Activity 6. Support smallholder farmers' and value chain actors' equitable access to climate and nutrition-smart livelihood opportunities, services and markets (SMS: Smallholder agricultural market support activities)

For this project, WFP proposes to support the school feeding programme in DRC, building on the implementation of the long-term commitment to the country to support progress towards zero hunger in the country while building human capital. As such, the project aims to 1) improve the health and nutrition of children, thus strengthening their learning capacity and educational outcomes; and 2) strengthen the resilience and food security of smallholder farmers, in particular women, through the Home-grown component school feeding programme. Through the distribution of school meals, this project will not only contribute to improving children's nutrition levels and food security (particularly girls), but it will also increase their access to education and learning outcomes. Moreover, the project will also benefit local economies in rural areas, including women farmers and farmers' organizations, and will contribute to strengthening the rural economy and rural women empowerment.

4. Activities and Beneficiaries

The funds will support the school feeding programme in the targeted schools. WFP will proceed to purchase 413 MT of food composed of 4 commodities including cereals, pulses, oil and salt to provide a daily nutritious hot meal to 11 000 schoolchildren throughout the 2023-2024 school year (September 2023 – June 2024), with a potential carry-over the 2024-2025 school year depending on the date of reception of funds (September – December 2024). A total of 220 teachers will also benefit from the same meal package. Complementarily, WFP will provide 110 cooks each month with the equivalent of three General Food Distribution (GFD) rations per cook to incentivize them to participate in the implementation of the school feeding programme. The food ration will consist of foods such as those in the WFP basket, with consideration for hygiene and nutritional quality; this ration will occasionally be supplemented with fresh food harvested from the school garden. Then, the project will contribute to improving children's nutritional status and reducing poverty. The benefits of school feeding are particularly essential for the most disadvantaged children; school meals are often the only nutritious food these children can rely on.

Through food locally purchased, the project will contribute to building the local economy of communities surrounding the targeted area. It is planned to identify existing small producers in the area, with a focus and preference for women producers, and promote their engagement in the production of nutritious including fresh foods, which may be supplied to schools. This will involve training on agricultural practices and the provision of agricultural inputs for the production of vegetables and other indigenous crops. The project will also foster linkages with local private-sector traders and buyers to purchase available commodities of the school meals basket in local markets, particularly in areas where the local private sector is more vibrant.

The approach is based on Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) and consists of strengthening the organizational and production capacities of the communities, in addition to the accompaniment of specialized government services. WFP will ensure that the Ministries of Education and Agriculture are deeply involved in all processes for the ownership and sustainability of the programme.

Supporting smallholders' access to markets will also involve building capacity in food safety and quality control. Members of parent organizations will be trained in quality control and standards; and equipped with appropriate equipment such as scales, moisture meters, and other quality and quantity (Q&Q) tools to enable them to meet contractual obligations. In doing so, the project is expected to help improve immediate household food insecurity and strengthen communities to promote growth and resilience to shocks.

To support the local economy, WFP will favour local purchases from suppliers capable of supplying good quality food. If this is not available, WFP will purchase externally.

5. Programme implementation and coordination

WFP has provided school feeding in DRC for over twenty years. WFP is supporting the School Feeding Programme in several provinces of DRC and has built an important network of partners who can contribute to the implementation of the proposed project. Currently, WFP is operating this programme in Kasai Central, Tanganyika, South Kivu and North Kivu provinces, benefitting 97,416 schoolchildren as of June 2023.

WFP will collaborate with the Ministry of Education, the education cluster, and implementing partners for the implementation of school feeding activities. As part of this project, WFP will work with local education authorities and school management committees. Where possible, WFP will build synergies with UNICEF and FAO's programmes in the same project areas, with greater potential in HDP Nexus provinces such as Tanganyika.

The broader coalition of partners in school health and nutrition will look at providing fuel-efficient stoves; deworming; water points; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities; and other school feeding infrastructure, as well as health and nutrition education. Children's access to school meals must be complemented with better school hygiene (WASH) in order to improve nutrition outcomes. WFP will therefore target schools where NGOs and UNICEF are already providing WASH services.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

WFP monitoring tools align with corporate standards and depending on the context to ensure that proper monitoring and evaluation inform decisions accordingly. Process monitoring tools enable the program to address operational challenges, adjust implementation and improve where possible. Corporate indicators for boys and girls are also documented with the ability to compare achieved results to baselines; WFP also capitalises on lessons learnt for future programming. Existing beneficiary feedback mechanisms of WFP and partners are also a key source of information, ensuring that channels (Hotline, suggestion boxes, Complaints and Feedback Mechanism committees) are available to schools and communities to share any kind of feedback with WFP. Regular communications and meetings are conducted to inform donors and facilitate the collection of feedback and recommendations and the implementation of any corrective measures required among cooperating partners, stakeholders, and WFP.

7. Reporting and visibility

WFP publishes the Annual Corporate Report (ACR) at the beginning of every year. As such, upon reception of this contribution in 2023 for a 12-month duration, the contribution will be officially reported in the 2024 ACR, expected to be published in March 2025. The ACR is the principle means through which WFP informs donors how resources for given projects were obtained, utilized and accounted for during the preceding year. The report will be available at: <http://www.wfp.org/government-donors>.

WFP also disseminates monthly country briefs, external situation reports and external dashboards that showcase achievements, improvements, challenges and needs related to WFP's work in the IDP camps and other program areas.

WFP is committed to pursuing its donor visibility strategy to acknowledge the contribution and thank the people of Belgium for their generosity. Belgium's logo will therefore be placed on all visibility materials as appropriate. We will display Belgium's logo

and recognition across all WFP communications and media platforms to showcase their invaluable support in our humanitarian efforts. Our communications strategy is tailored to reach local and global audiences. It uses various platforms to highlight Belgium's contributions and their impact on supporting communities in the DRC, including traditional and social media. We will design and display banners, posters, and other visibility materials during WFP distributions and community engagement activities to raise awareness.

8. Budget

Activity Costs Summary	USD	euro
Transfer	831,644	750,143
Implementation Costs	154,603	139,452
Direct Operating Costs (DOC)	986,247	889,595
Direct Support Costs (DSC)	54,737	49,373
Total Direct Costs	1,040,984	938,967
Indirect Support Cost (ISC)	67,664	61,033
Grant Total Activity Costs	1,108,647	1,000,000

Definitions:

- *Transfer Costs is the total value of the transfer, including procurement, transport, and distribution of specialized nutritious food.*
- *Implementation Costs includes all costs directly attributable to the implementation of activities associated with a transfer. Examples include, but are not limited to, WFP staff costs who provide direct operational support, monitoring and evaluation directly related to the activity, and office expenses related to the activity. They also include recurrent expenditures, including monitoring missions.*
- *Direct Operating Costs (DOC) are the costs highlighted here above linked to WFP country office operational implementation.*
- *Direct Support Costs (DSC) are managed at the country level and directly support activities related to the transfer of assistance and implementation of programmes. These costs are relevant to WFP presence in a country and influenced by the scale of activities undertaken. These include recurring expenditures, capital equipment and other costs, cost related to assessment, evaluations that are not linked to specific activities and staff salary and staff related costs.*
- *Indirect Support Costs (ISC) is a fixed rate resourced from all donor contributions, which is used to cover (non-project) corporate overhead costs. It covers the minimal staffing structure and all WFP core support provided to WFP offices through the Regional Bureau (RB) and WFP Headquarters (HQ). The level of ISC is determined by WFP's Executive Board and is added to all Project Budgets Plans. Currently, the ISC rate is 6.5 percent. Given the complexity of WFP operations, the support coming from the RB and HQ is instrumental for WFP field offices that can always rely on the guidance and best practices shared through the RB and HQ.*