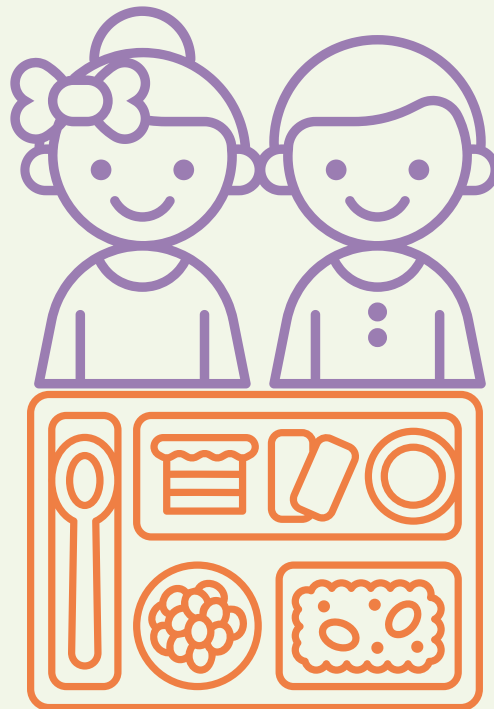


*Information Note for November 20, International  
Children's Rights Day*

# **SCHOOL MEALS**

# **COALITION**

**2023**



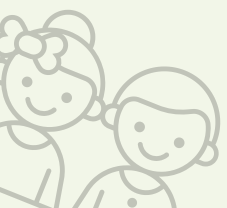
**DEEP  
POVERTY  
NETWORK**

An Initiative of Open Space Association.

This fact sheet does not contain all information about the School Meals Coalition and does not bind the Coalition.

We would like to thank our volunteers Simge Akkaş, Betül Alp, Bilge Begüm Bay, Yasemin Cura, Nalan Ergincan, Roysi Florentin, Demet Hakman, Deniz Hallık and Melih Kuran for their contributions to this fact sheet.

**Solidarity Keeps Us Alive!**



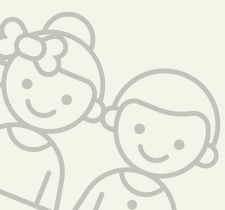


## Foreword

As the Deep Poverty Network (DPN), during the 2021-22 academic year, we started raising awareness in Turkey, especially among the related government bodies about the School Meals Coalition and the importance of partnering with such efforts which we believe will be an important threshold for nearly twenty million students to access free and healthy school meals. This document is an introduction to the activities of the School Meals Coalition and how a fruitful partnership can help Turkey achieve its objectives for school children.

We would like to bring to the attention of policymakers, civil society organizations, the media and public officials this document which summarizes the obligations and benefits of our country's participation in this coalition, which was established in 2021 with the goal of providing healthy food to 724 million primary school students in the world by 2030. The Coalition is currently composed of 90 countries and 101 supporting partners, including various international organizations such as UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), WFP (World Food Programme), WHO (World Health Organization), civil society organizations, foundations, and academic institutions.

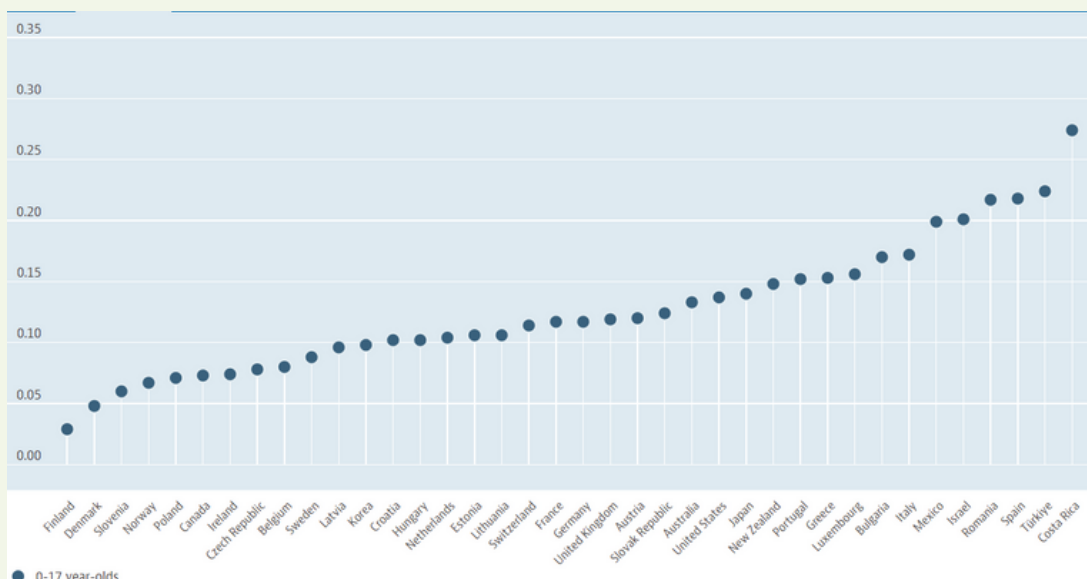
With love and solidarity,  
Deep Poverty Network



# Nutrition in Education in Turkey

As of 2022–2023 academic year, the total number of students at all levels of education in the Republic of Turkey increased by 3.92% compared to the previous period and reached 19,904,679. Of these, 5,535,531 attend primary school and 2,055,350 attend pre-school education (2).

Despite the increase in the number of students, the Ministry of National Education's budget for 2023 increased only by 130.33% in TL terms compared to the previous year, while the ratio of this year's budget to the central budget decreased by 9.73% compared to the previous year (3). According to the 2023 Ministry of National Education Budget Analysis published by Eğitim-Sen, the ratio of education expenditures to national income remained at 2.6%, which is less than half of the OECD average of 6% (4).



OECD countries' poverty rates between 0-17 years  
<https://data.oecd.org/inequality/poverty-rate.htm>

In light of these numbers, one can assume that a large portion of education expenditure is borne by households in Turkey. Among many expenses such as stationery, uniforms, transportation and, registration fees, nutrition also has an important share in this category. With the pandemic and the crisis of distribution, the share of food and non-alcoholic beverages expenditures of low-income groups has also increased significantly. The Household Consumption Expenditure 2019 data published by TurkStat (Turkish Statistical Institute) in July 2020, shows the share of these expenditures for the lowest 20% income group as 30.7% (5); while in 2022 data.



Published in June 2023, the figures for the same category increase to 35.8% (6). According to data from TÜRK-İŞ's October 2023 Hunger and Poverty Line survey, the hunger line for a family of four has increased by 84.37% in the last year. The increase was 83.47% for children aged between 4-6 and 83.55% for those aged between 15-19 (7). According to the World Bank's Food Security Report 2023, Turkey is the fifth country in the world with the highest nominal food inflation (8). According to a Euronews calculation based on data from TurkStat and FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), in five years (from August 2018 to August 2023) food prices increased by 29.1% on average globally, while in Turkey this increase was 464.5% (9).

Gelire göre sıralı %20'lik gruplarda tüketim harcamasının türlerine göre dağılımı (%), 2018, 2019

Harcama türleri	En düşük gelir grubu (En düşük %20)		En yüksek gelir grubu (En yüksek %20)	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
<b>Toplam</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Gıda ve alkolsüz içecekler	28,7	30,7	15,4	15,3
Alkollü içecekler, sigara ve tütün	5,0	4,7	3,1	3,6
Giyim ve ayakkabı	4,1	3,8	5,0	5,6
Konut ve kira	31,4	31,2	20,3	20,1
Mobilya ve ev eşyaları	5,9	5,3	6,8	6,9
Sağlık	2,3	2,0	2,5	2,4
Ulaştırma	9,3	9,0	21,6	20,0
Haberleşme	3,2	3,5	3,7	3,5
Eğlence ve kültür	2,1	1,8	3,8	3,9
Eğitim hizmetleri	0,5	0,9	3,9	4,4
Lokanta ve oteller	4,3	4,0	7,8	8,1
Çeşitli mal ve hizmetler	3,1	3,2	6,0	6,5

Source: Household Consumption Expenditures 2019,  
<https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Tuketim-Harcamasi-2019-33593>

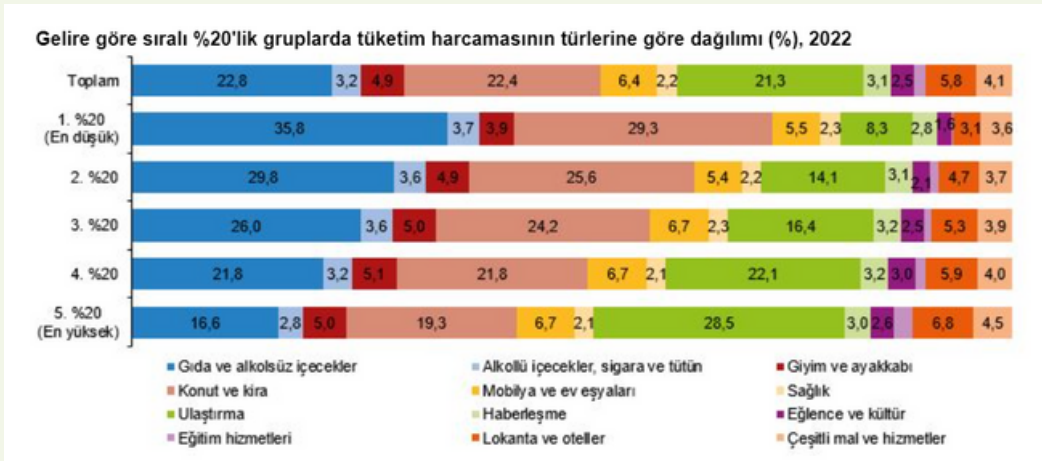
According to 2018-2021 data, Turkey ranks 2nd among OECD countries in child poverty (0-17-year-olds) (10). As the Deep Poverty Network, we observed that the nutritional problems of school-age children of the households we visited in April 2023 were getting even more serious : For example, Ç.D., a mother of three, said that she could only put "chocolate bread" in the diets of her two school-going children, while M.A. said that she could only take "pastries and bagels" to school from home for her first-grade daughter. P. T., who is trying to send her two daughters to school, stated that she could put cream cheese and salami in toast bread in the diet of her daughter who attends the 2nd grade of primary school. She also stated that she could give her a daily allowance of 25 TL, but with this money, her daughter could only buy toast and water. H. C., who was able to prepare sandwiches and toast for her 3rd grade daughter



"if she has the ingredients", said that she could not give anything to her son in the 3rd grade of high school who was at school until 15:30 (Personal interviews, April 2023).

At the beginning of the 2022–2023 academic year, only 1.5 million students in Turkey benefited from free meals, while the implementation was planned to reach 5 million students as of February 6, and a "Food/Nutrition Preparation and Distribution Guide" was sent to the governorships to gradually extend the implementation to primary and secondary education. Accordingly, students attending unified primary schools with kindergarten classes would also benefit from daily meal services, and all daytime students attending regional secondary boarding schools who do not benefit from boarding services would be provided daily with one free meal.

It was also announced that the necessary budget allocation had been made to the relevant schools for the feeding costs of kindergartens and schools and institutions with nurseries that would prepare meals in their kitchens, and for schools that could not prepare meals in house the meal services would be provided only by purchasing from vocational high schools and teacher training centers affiliated to MoNE and other public institutions that prepare meals (11). However, in September 2023, the "Regulation on Preschool Education and Primary Education Institutions" was amended and the practice of providing meals to kindergarten students in provinces other than the 11 provinces affected by the February 6 earthquake was abolished (12).



Source: Household Consumption Expenditures, 2022, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Tuketim-Harcamasi-2022-49690>

To summarize: The decrease in the MoNE budget share in the face of an increase in the number of students, the increasing share of nutrition in the expenditures of low-income households, the alarming problems of school nutrition programmes and the abandonment of free school meals which we observed in the field show that a new policy on school nutrition should be adopted. Considering all these factors, we believe that Turkey's inclusion in the School Meals Coalition, where governments and

international organizations support and discipline each other, would be very beneficial.

## What is the School Meals Coalition?

The School Meals Coalition was established at the United Nations Food Systems Summit in September 2021, led by France and Finland, with 46 countries and the African Union agreeing to work together to improve the quality, sustainability and scale up national school meal programmes in order to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a healthy, nutritious meal in schools by 2030.

Today, the School Meals Coalition includes 90 countries representing more than 60% of the world's population. The coalition works with 101 supporting organizations from United Nations agencies, inter-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector.

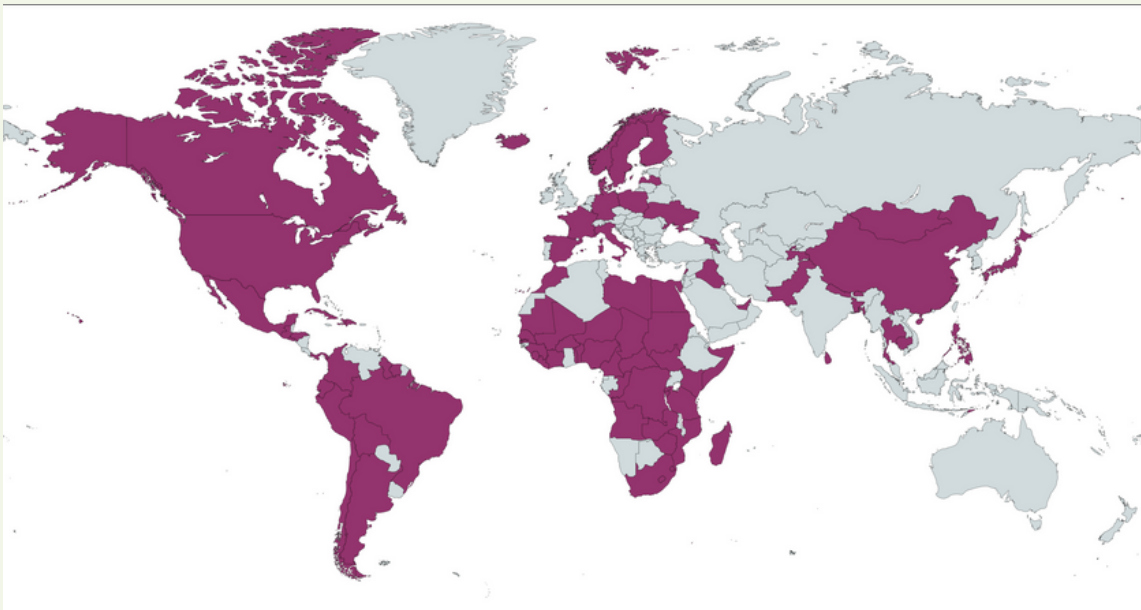
Apart from the secretariat of the coalition itself, which is undertaken by WFP, the coalition has three-pillars body: The first one is the Task Force Group, which covers the strategic decision-making body and guides the Coalition's initiatives; the second is the Working Group where the members serve as a forum for governments to share information and best practices ; and the third, chaired by WFP, is the Stakeholder Group which provides a platform for exchange of information at the technical level of the organizations supporting the Coalition(13).

The Coalition held its first global summit in Paris on October 18-19, 2023, where 22 states participated at the ministerial and 8 at the deputy ministerial level while the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank, as well as nine new countries also joined the Coalition. At this summit, 28 countries shared progress on school feeding programmes and 6 countries made new commitments. Member states agreed to continue their discussions at COP28, which will be held in Dubai in December 2023. In addition to France and Finland, Brazil has been appointed co-chair of the Coalition. Brazil will also host the next summit in 2025(14).

### Obligations of the Coalition and Institutions:

The Coalition, which was formed to ensure that 388 million children who had access to school meals before the COVID-19 pandemic do not lose this





Geographical distribution of countries in the School Meals Coalition.

access, now has a bigger goal today which is to provide healthy meals to 724 million primary school students around the world by 2030. To this end, the Coalition aims to be a multi-actor network that shares good practices, optimizes collaboration, synergies, alignment, and complementarity; and helps countries meet their school feeding commitments. The means to achieve these goals are to pool best practices and experiences; provide information and technical support to governments; address problems in implementing nutrition programmes; ensure better collection of data to aid decision-making; create opportunities for more effective coordination and provide the necessary political will and buy-in. The Coalition is a voluntary, collaborative partnership based on clear and action-oriented commitments. Although it has a catalytic role to play, the Coalition is not and will not be a financing mechanism despite the need for significant funding to develop and scale up programmes in countries that do not provide or manage financing for themselves or for their partners. The Coalition recognizes the sovereignty of member states in this regard and local financing arrangements will be discussed, defined, and addressed at the country level, led by national institutions. (15).

84 organizations from the School Meals Coalition, including WHO, WFP, UNESCO and UNICEF, have made the following commitments in signed a statement of support :

- Restoring access to integrated school meal programs for children who lost them during the pandemic, particularly in countries most vulnerable to poverty and climate change, and supporting governments to develop





and implement national plans to reach countries that do not already have programmes.

- Develop approaches in a collaborative way by generating evidence, providing technical assistance, sharing best practices and lessons learned tailored to national and local contexts and strengthening the quality of programmes.
- Support the creation and work of the coalition's initiatives, including a research consortium, a sustainable financing initiative and initiatives related to best practices and monitoring.
- To reach these objectives, sectoral, regional, national and sub-national working in collaboration with all stakeholders at all levels. (16)

## Benefits of School Meals

As the various country examples show, governments' school feeding programmes have historical roots and strong institutionalization, and other countries involvement in the School Meals Coalition benefit from the accumulation. The observed and measured advantages of school meals also constitute an important part of this body of knowledge.

Below these benefits, observed in Coalition countries after the implementation of the programmes, are summarized and grouped in categories.

1- Child and Community Health: School feeding programmes prevent problems such as hunger and obesity in children and adolescents by providing healthy, balanced and sustainable food and contribute to the development of children's immune systems, healthy growth and well-being (17).

2- Academic Success: School feeding programmes help children enroll and attend school. Studies have shown that these programmes can increase school enrollment rates by an average of 9% (18). These programmes also increase learning capacity by improving cognitive skills through hunger prevention and better nutrition (19).

3-Social Equality and National Solidarity: In countries where equal opportunity in education is eroded, school feeding programmes reduce social inequality by providing equal nutritional opportunities to students in poverty conditions (20).



4-Social Gender Equality and Girls' Education: Nutrition programmes contribute to gender equality by encouraging girls, who experience school attendance problems more often compared to boys.

5- Economic Contribution: School feeding programmes support sustainable development by developing strategies for the long-term goals of countries. "School feeding programmes that provide healthy meals make an important contribution to the nutrition of school-age children and adolescents. They have especially a high degree of cost-effectiveness as they generate returns across multiple sectors, including education, health, agriculture and social protection: for every US\$1 invested in these programmes, US\$9 is returned" (21). School feeding programmes that outsource food locally can provide additional benefits for small-scale farmers and food suppliers, support local food production and local economies, and promote sustainable local markets that produce diverse, nutritious foods (22).

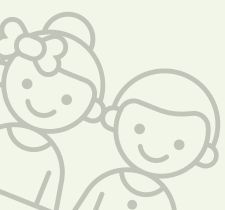
## Conclusion

As the Deep Poverty Network, we continue our campaigns and calls to defend the right of students to be fed in schools with this information note to emphasize the importance of the School Meals Coalition for the students of Turkey. We believe that Turkey's joining the School Meals Coalition will be an important threshold towards securing the fundamental right of our 20 million students to free and healthy school meals. Feeding our children a healthy and regular diet at school is not only about contributing positively to their physical and mental development. It also means:

- strengthening community health,
- giving children in poverty a fairer start in education,
- to contribute to gender equality,
- supporting environmental and economic development.

In this sense, we invite all subjects to make an effort for Turkey to join the School Meals Coalition.

Solidarity for healthy, balanced, adequate and equal meals for our children!



# References

- 1 Paris Statement – First School Meals Coalition Global Meeting Paris, 18–19 October 2023 <https://schoolmealscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Paris-Statement-School-Meals-Summit-2023.pdf>
- 2 T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, Milli Eğitim İstatistikleri 2021–22, Resmi İstatistik Programı Yayını, s. 58.  
[https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2022\\_09/15142558\\_meb\\_istatistikleri\\_org\\_un\\_egitim\\_2021\\_2022.pdf](https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2022_09/15142558_meb_istatistikleri_org_un_egitim_2021_2022.pdf); T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, Milli Eğitim İstatistikleri 2022–23, Resmi İstatistik Programı Yayını, s. 58.  
[https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2023\\_09/29151106\\_meb\\_istatistikleri\\_org\\_un\\_egitim\\_2022\\_2023.pdf](https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2023_09/29151106_meb_istatistikleri_org_un_egitim_2022_2023.pdf)
- 3 T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, Milli Eğitim İstatistikleri 2022–23, Resmi İstatistik Programı Yayını, s. 247.  
[https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2023\\_09/29151106\\_meb\\_istatistikleri\\_org\\_un\\_egitim\\_2022\\_2023.pdf](https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2023_09/29151106_meb_istatistikleri_org_un_egitim_2022_2023.pdf)
- 4 Eğitim-Sen 2023 Yılı Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Bütçesi Analizi,  
<https://egitimsen.org.tr/2023-yili-milli-egitim-bakanligi-butcesi-analizi/>
- 5 TÜİK Hanehalkı Tüketim Harcaması 2019 <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Tuketim-Harcamasi-2019-33593>
- 6 TÜİK Hanehalkı Tüketim Harcaması 2022 <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Tuketim-Harcamasi-2022-49690>
- 7 TÜRK-İŞ Ekim 2023 Açlık ve Yoksulluk Sınırı Araştırması.  
<https://www.turkis.org.tr/turk-is-ekim-2023-aclik-ve-yoksulluk-siniri/>
- 8 The World Bank Food Security Update, November 9, 2023.  
<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/40ebbf38f5a6b68bfc11e5273e1405d4-0090012022/related/Food-Security-Update-XCV-11-9-23.pdf>
- 9 <https://tr.euronews.com/2023/09/07/turkiyede-gida-enflasyonu-ile-genel-enflasyon-arasindaki-fark-aciliyor>
- 10 <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/poverty-rate.htm>
- 11 Anadolu Ajansı, Eğitim Kurumlarında Yarın Başlayacak Yemek Uygulamasında Son Hazırlıklar Yapılıyor, 5.2.2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/egitim/egitim-kurumlarinda-yarin-baslayacak-ucretsiz-yemek-uygulamasinda-son-hazirliklar-yapiliyor/2806579#>
- 12 Artigerçek, Bakanlık açıkladı: Depremden etkilenen 11 il hariç anaokullarına verilen yemek kaldırıldı <https://artigercek.com/guncel/bakanlik-acikladi-depremden-etkilenen-11-il-haric-anaokullarina-verilen-yemek-264534h>
- 13 WFP, State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022, s. 77.  
[https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000147507/download/?\\_ga=2.49772452.361617759.1700142136-130743104.1694370899](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000147507/download/?_ga=2.49772452.361617759.1700142136-130743104.1694370899)
- 14 Paris Statement – First School Meals Coalition Global Meeting Paris, 18–19 October 2023 <https://schoolmealscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Paris-Statement-School-Meals-Summit-2023.pdf>



15 WFP, State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022, s. 74.

[https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000147507/download/?\\_ga=2.49772452.361617759.1700142136-130743104.1694370899](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000147507/download/?_ga=2.49772452.361617759.1700142136-130743104.1694370899)

16 School Meals Coalition: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child

[https://schoolmealscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Declaration-of-support\\_partners-\\_May231.pdf](https://schoolmealscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Declaration-of-support_partners-_May231.pdf)

17 (Afrika Birliđi Komisyonu ve Afrika Birliđi Kalkınma Ajansı, 2022; FAO, 2019; Küresel Panel, 2015). (Ready to Learn and Thrive: School Health and Nutrition Around the

World, UNESCO, 2023 s.23) [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000146478/download/?\\_ga=2.230178004.971269000.1699987175-](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000146478/download/?_ga=2.230178004.971269000.1699987175-130743104.1694370899)

[130743104.1694370899](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000146478/download/?_ga=2.230178004.971269000.1699987175-130743104.1694370899)

18 Ready to Learn and Thrive: School Health and Nutrition Around the World, UNESCO, 2023 s.23 [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000146478/download/?\\_ga=2.230178004.971269000.1699987175-](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000146478/download/?_ga=2.230178004.971269000.1699987175-130743104.1694370899)

[130743104.1694370899](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000146478/download/?_ga=2.230178004.971269000.1699987175-130743104.1694370899)

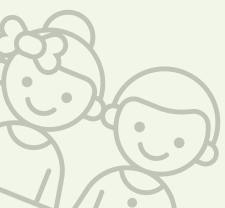
19 A.g.y., s. 23

20 A.g.y., s. 110

21 A.g.y., s. 110.

22 A.g.y., s. 19-20.

23 A.g.y., s. 111.





An Initiative of Open Space Association.