

DOCUMENT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

REGIONAL

SCHOOL FEEDING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

(RG-T4965)

PROJECT DOCUMENT

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**REGIONAL
SCHOOL FEEDING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
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PROJECT SUMMARY

Operation Type:	Technical Cooperation
Sector:	EDUCATION
Subsector:	PRIMARY EDUCATION
TC Taxonomy:	Research and Dissemination
Project Number under the Operational Support Taxonomy:	N/A
Technical Responsible Unit:	SCL/EDU-Education
Unit with Disbursement Responsibility (UDR):	SCL/EDU-Education
Executing Agency:	Inter-American Development Bank

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The general objective of this Technical Cooperation is to contribute to the IDB's leadership in the school feeding agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean by generating evidence, regional knowledge, and operational inputs that support the design, implementation, and supervision of efficient, sustainable, nutritious, and context-appropriate school feeding programs. The specific objectives are to: (i) generate comparative evidence on the real costs, cost drivers, and operational models of school feeding programs in selected Caribbean countries, with a focus on food security, efficiency, sustainability, and contextual adaptation; (ii) produce an updated regional snapshot of school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean, identifying trends, gaps, innovations, institutional models, and lessons learned to inform policy dialogue, regional learning, and strategic investment decisions; and (iii) develop practical inputs and knowledge translation products to support IDB project teams and country counterparts in the preparation, implementation, and supervision of school feeding operations.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Financing Type	Fund	Amount in US\$
TCN - Nonreimbursable	P3E - OC SDP Pillar 3 - Social Protection and Human Capital Development	430,000
Total IDB Financing		430,000
Counterpart Financing		0
Total Project Budget		430,000
Donors:	N/A	
Disbursement Period:	36 months	
Execution Period:	36 months	

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

1. JUSTIFICATION AND OBJECTIVE

- 1.1. **Diagnostic.** School feeding programs are among the most widely implemented social protection instruments linked to education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2022, they reached approximately 78.5 million children, with coverage ranging from 30 percent to 100 percent across countries (WFP, 2025). Their scale and diversity reflect their importance for food security, school participation, learning readiness, and human capital development, particularly for vulnerable children. In recent years, countries in the region have strengthened these systems through expanded policy frameworks, stronger political commitment, improved monitoring, links with local production, and adaptation to national and local contexts. At least 19 countries have adopted a specific school feeding or school nutrition policy or law (IDB & WFP, 2024). However, despite this progress, governments continue to face important challenges in designing and implementing school feeding programs that are efficient, fiscally sustainable, nutritionally adequate, and responsive to local food systems and cultures.
- 1.2. A central challenge is the limited availability of updated, comparable, and integrated evidence to guide decisions on the design, financing, implementation, and sustainability of school feeding programs. Significant evidence gaps persist around real program costs, cost drivers, operational efficiency, procurement arrangements, delivery models, nutritional adequacy, and fiscal sustainability. This limits governments' ability to compare different approaches, identify efficiency gains, assess trade-offs across program design options, and ensure that public investments translate into healthy, context-appropriate meals for children. Available estimates show substantial variation in the annual cost of school feeding per child in the region, ranging from as low as US\$10 in low-income countries to approximately US\$293 in high-income countries (IDB & WFP, 2024). This variation suggests that fiscal capacity, procurement arrangements, scale, menu design, and delivery models can significantly affect program costs and sustainability. However, the lack of comparable analytical frameworks makes it difficult to determine which factors explain these differences and how they should inform policy and operational decisions.
- 1.3. This evidence gap is particularly relevant for Caribbean countries, where structural constraints make the design of efficient and sustainable school feeding systems more complex. The region imports between 60 and 80 percent of its food, making food import dependency both an economic and food security challenge (FAO, 2023). Caribbean countries are also highly exposed to external shocks, including dependence on tourism, extreme hydrometeorological events, and the increasing impacts of climate change on food availability, prices, logistics, and program continuity (FAO, 2023). These conditions affect the cost, reliability, and nutritional quality of school meals and create additional challenges for program planning, procurement, and delivery. As a result, policymakers require more comparable evidence to determine which school feeding models are most appropriate under different fiscal, institutional, geographic, and food security conditions.
- 1.4. Another underlying constraint is that evidence on school feeding often remains fragmented across separate dimensions, such as nutrition, costs, procurement, delivery models, food systems, and education outcomes, rather than integrated

into analytical frameworks that allow governments to assess trade-offs across program design choices (Alderman, Bundy, & Gelli, 2024). Existing studies and tools show that menu design can influence both nutritional adequacy and costs, while procurement and delivery arrangements affect operational efficiency, local food system linkages, fiscal sustainability, and program resilience (Aliyar, Gelli, & Hadjivayanis, 2015). At the same time, school feeding programs can improve attendance, learning readiness, and school participation when they are well designed and implemented (WFP, 2025). However, without more integrated and comparable analysis, governments may face difficulties identifying opportunities to improve meal quality, reduce waste, optimize procurement, expand coverage, strengthen resilience, or ensure that each dollar invested contributes effectively to children's nutrition and learning conditions.

- 1.5. At the regional level, there is also a need for an updated and comprehensive overview of school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean. The 2022 IDB-WFP report provided the first regional assessment of school feeding in LAC, but programs have continued to evolve rapidly since the pandemic, as countries expand coverage and adapt school meals to new priorities related to food security, local procurement, fiscal sustainability, nutrition, monitoring, and resilience. As school meals are increasingly viewed as strategic investments in education, health, social protection, and food systems, policymakers and partners need updated, comparable, and actionable information on coverage, institutional models, operational arrangements, innovations, gaps, and lessons learned to inform policy dialogue, regional learning, and investment decisions.
- 1.6. These constraints create a clear need for regional technical cooperation that can generate comparative evidence, update regional knowledge, and translate analytical findings into practical operational inputs. By addressing the lack of comparable data and integrated analysis, the TC will help governments and IDB project teams better understand the costs, cost drivers, operational models, efficiency conditions, and sustainability challenges of school feeding programs. This will support the design, implementation, and supervision of more efficient, sustainable, nutritious, and context-appropriate school feeding programs in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 1.7. **Request.** Based on the diagnostic presented above, the Education Division of the Inter-American Development Bank has requested this regional technical cooperation to generate regional knowledge and operational tools on school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean. The TC will benefit all 26 borrowing member countries by producing comparative evidence and practical inputs for policy dialogue, project preparation, implementation, and supervision. The operation is recommended given the Bank's interest in strengthening human capital development, improving the effectiveness of school feeding operations, and supporting countries with evidence-based guidance on efficient, sustainable, and context-appropriate program models.
- 1.8. **Objective.** The general objective of this Technical Cooperation is to contribute to the IDB's leadership in the school feeding agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean by generating evidence, regional knowledge, and operational inputs that support the design, implementation, and supervision of efficient, sustainable, nutritious, and context-appropriate school feeding programs.

- 1.9. The specific objectives are to: (i) generate comparative evidence on the real costs, cost drivers, and operational models of school feeding programs in selected Caribbean countries, with a focus on food security, efficiency, sustainability, and contextual adaptation; (ii) produce an updated regional snapshot of school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean, identifying trends, gaps, innovations, institutional models, and lessons learned to inform policy dialogue, regional learning, and strategic investment decisions; and (iii) develop practical inputs and knowledge translation products to support IDB project teams and country counterparts in the preparation, implementation, and supervision of school feeding operations.
- 1.10. **Complementarity.** The proposed TC complements the Bank's growing regional agenda on school feeding by building on both operational experience and knowledge generation. On the operational side, the Bank is already supporting school feeding interventions in countries such as Haiti and Argentina and is exploring opportunities to support similar efforts in other countries in the region.¹ These operations show the relevance of school feeding as part of broader education strategies to improve attendance, retention, learning readiness, nutrition, and educational trajectories among vulnerable students. As the Bank continues to support and expand this agenda, it is essential to generate more comparable evidence on the costs, cost drivers, operational models, and sustainability conditions of different school feeding approaches.
- 1.11. On the knowledge side, the TC builds on previous IDB analytical work, including *State of School Feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2024) and *More than a Meal: How School Meals Can Drive Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Food Systems* (2025), which analyze the role of school meals in advancing nutrition, food security, sustainability, and human capital development. Building on this operational and analytical foundation, the TC will update and expand the evidence base, generate comparative evidence on costs and operational models, and translate findings into practical inputs for policy dialogue, project preparation, implementation, and supervision. In doing so, the TC will help consolidate the Bank's technical leadership in the school feeding agenda and contribute to the sector's strategic vision of positioning school feeding as a multisectoral platform that supports education outcomes, nutrition, social protection, and resilient food systems.
- 1.12. **Strategic Alignment.** This TC is consistent with the IDB Group Institutional Strategy: Transforming for Scale and Impact / IDBStrategy+ (CA-631), particularly with the core objective of reducing poverty and inequality and the operational focus area of social protection and human capital development. School feeding programs are among the most widely implemented social protection instruments linked to education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean, reaching approximately 78.5 million children in 2022 and supporting vulnerable students through access to nutritious meals, improved attendance, concentration, learning readiness, and long-term human capital formation. The TC contributes to this strategic priority by strengthening the evidence base and operational knowledge

¹ Relevant operations include HA-L1102, HA-G1055, HA-G1059, HA-J0006, HA-G1061, and HA-J0013 in Haiti, and AR-L1367 and AR-T1310 in Argentina.

needed to design efficient, sustainable, nutritious, and context-appropriate school feeding systems.

- 1.13. The TC is also aligned with the objectives of the Ordinary Capital Strategic Development Program, Pillar 3- Core Operational and Analytical Work (P3E), in accordance with GN-2819-25, as it will generate analytical evidence, regional knowledge, and practical operational inputs to support the design, implementation, supervision, and effectiveness of school feeding programs across the region.. By generating comparative evidence on costs, operational models, fiscal sustainability, nutrition, and implementation arrangements, the TC will support more informed decision-making and more efficient use of public resources in education and human capital development. The regional knowledge products and practical operational inputs financed by the TC will help strengthen social sector systems, improve service delivery, and enhance the impact of investments supporting vulnerable children. In this sense, the operation directly supports P3E's emphasis on strengthening social protection and human capital systems, improving the quality and efficiency of service delivery, and ensuring that investments translate into better nutrition, learning readiness, attendance, and equity outcomes.
- 1.14. Given its regional scope, the TC adds value by producing comparable evidence and operational inputs that individual country operations would not be able to generate on their own. It will help governments and IDB project teams identify suitable school feeding models for different fiscal, institutional, geographic, and food security contexts, while helping consolidate the Bank's technical leadership in the school feeding agenda.

I. COMPONENTS

- 2.1 **Component 1. Comparative evidence on costs and operational models of school feeding in the Caribbean (US\$200,000).** This component will strengthen the evidence base for designing efficient, sustainable, and context-appropriate school feeding programs in the Caribbean. It will focus on understanding how different operational models — including centralized procurement, decentralized delivery, local procurement, and mixed approaches — affect program costs, fiscal sustainability, operational efficiency, and potential contributions to children's nutrition and learning conditions. The analysis will also help identify how school feeding programs can respond to food security challenges and nutrient deficiency risks among school-age children in selected Caribbean contexts.
- 2.2 This component will finance the analytical and technical work required to produce the two main outputs: a working paper on the costing of school feeding in the Caribbean and a technical paper on operational models and their implications for nutrition outcomes, operational efficiency, and learning conditions. This includes consulting services for data collection, costing analysis, technical modeling, preparation of the papers, and validation with relevant experts and stakeholders. The component will finance the hiring of individual consultants and firms.
- 2.3 For Component 1, the analysis is expected to focus on selected countries within the IDB's SIDS-7 group, preliminarily including Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados,

Suriname, and Belize. These countries have been identified given their relevance to the school feeding agenda and the common challenges faced by small island and coastal states, including food import dependency, exposure to external and climate-related shocks, limited economies of scale, and constraints related to procurement, logistics, and fiscal sustainability. The selection also seeks to capture diversity in program models, institutional arrangements, and implementation contexts, while ensuring feasibility of data collection and stakeholder engagement. The final country selection may be adjusted during implementation in coordination with the IDB team and relevant partners.

- 2.4 **Component 2. Regional knowledge and benchmarking on school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean (US\$120,000).** This component will strengthen the IDB's role as a regional knowledge partner in the school feeding agenda by supporting evidence-based policy dialogue and regional learning across Latin America and the Caribbean. It will help identify common trends, emerging challenges, and promising practices that can inform program design, implementation, and investment decisions in the region, particularly in areas such as food security, local procurement, fiscal sustainability, nutrition, monitoring, and resilience.
- 2.5 This component will finance the analytical, editorial, and dissemination work required to produce the main knowledge product under this component: a regional monograph on the state of school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean. This includes consulting services for data compilation, comparative analysis, drafting, editing, design, and dissemination. The component will finance the hiring of an individual consultant or firm.
- 2.6 **Component 3. Operational support and knowledge translation for IDB-supported school feeding operations (US\$110,000).** This component will strengthen the use of evidence generated under the TC by translating analytical findings into practical inputs for IDB project teams and country counterparts involved in school feeding operations. It will help ensure that lessons on costs, operational models, nutrition, fiscal sustainability, resilience, and implementation arrangements can inform project preparation, implementation, and supervision. The component will also support the adaptation of regional and comparative evidence to specific country contexts and operational needs.
- 2.7 This component will finance technical, analytical, and operational support to IDB-supported school feeding operations and related knowledge products. This may include country-specific analytical inputs, methodological guidance, benchmarking inputs, technical recommendations, support to monitoring and evaluation activities, and operational tools for project teams. The component will finance the hiring of an individual consultant.
- 2.8 The activities to be financed — including comparative evidence on costs and operational models in the Caribbean, an updated regional overview of school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean, and practical knowledge translation products — will support policy dialogue, project preparation, implementation, and supervision across country and sector programs related to education, nutrition, food security, social protection, and human capital development.

- 2.9 **Expected Results.** The result of this project will be the strengthening of the design, efficiency, sustainability, and contextual relevance of school feeding programs in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), through the generation of comparative evidence, regional knowledge, and operational inputs. This result will be achieved by: (i) improvement availability of comparable evidence on the costs, cost drivers, operational efficiency, and fiscal sustainability of school feeding models in the Caribbean, through the preparation of a working paper on school feeding costs; (ii) strengthening understanding of the implications of different operational models for nutrition outcomes, operational efficiency, and learning conditions, through the preparation of a technical paper focused on Caribbean countries; (iii) str strengthening regional knowledge and policy dialogue on school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean, through the publication of a regional monograph identifying trends, gaps, innovations, institutional models, operational arrangements, and lessons learned; and (iv) improving operational support for IDB project teams and country counterparts, through the development of country-specific analytical notes, methodological guidance, benchmarking inputs, and/or practical tools to support the preparation, implementation, and supervision of school feeding operations.
- 2.10 **Beneficiaries.** The direct beneficiaries are governments, policymakers, and technical teams responsible for the design and implementation of school feeding programs in the 26 borrowing member countries of the IDB. Relevant regional partners and technical stakeholders working on school feeding, food security, nutrition, and education may also benefit from the knowledge products generated by the TC. Additional beneficiaries include IDB project teams working on school feeding, education, nutrition, social protection, and food security operations. Final beneficiaries are vulnerable school-age children and students who benefit from more efficient, sustainable, nutritious, and context-appropriate school feeding programs.

II. BUDGET

- 3.1 **Budget.** The total budget of this TC is US\$430,000, to be financed by the P3E – OC SDP Pillar 3- Social Protection and Human Capital Development, under the Ordinary Capital Strategic Development Program (OC SDP) (GN-2819-25). No local counterpart contribution is expected.

Budget in US\$			
Components	Description	P3E/ OC SDP	Total
Component 1: Comparative evidence on costs and operational models of school feeding in the Caribbean		200,000	200,000
Senior consultant for the working paper on the costing of school feeding in the Caribbean	Costing analysis and comparable framework.	100,000	100,000
Senior consultant for the technical paper on operational models in the Caribbean	Analysis of operational models and implications.	100,000	100,000

Component 2: Regional knowledge generation and policy dialogue on school feeding in LAC		120,000	120,000
Consulting firm for the preparation of the regional monograph	Research, analysis, and drafting.	100,000	100,000
Editing and design of the publication	Editing, design, and dissemination materials.	20,000	20,000
Component 3. Operational support and knowledge translation for IDB-supported school feeding operations		110,000	110,000
Technical consultant for operational support and knowledge translation	Technical, analytical, and operational support to IDB-supported school feeding operations and related knowledge products	110,000	110,000
Total		430,000	430,000

III. EXECUTION STRUCTURE

- 4.1 The TC will be executed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), through the Education Division (SCL/EDU), in accordance with the Bank's Technical Cooperation Policy (GN-2470-2). Given its nature as a research and dissemination operation, the TC will focus on generating regional evidence, knowledge products, and operational inputs to support school feeding programs across Latin America and the Caribbean. Bank execution will facilitate the coordination of analytical work, ensure technical consistency across countries and products, and support the dissemination and use of knowledge products by IDB project teams and country counterparts.
- 4.2 **Institutional Capacity.** The IDB is well positioned to execute this TC given its experience supporting school feeding, education, nutrition, food security, and social protection operations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Bank execution will also facilitate the translation of analytical findings into operational inputs for IDB project teams and country counterparts.
- 4.3 As executing agency of the TC, the Bank will be responsible for: (i) coordinating the internal Bank teams involved in the activities of the TC; (ii) identifying the analytical and technical work required to implement the TC; (iii) selecting and contracting individual consultants and consulting firms; (iv) supervising the consulting services and reviewing intermediate and final deliverables; and (v) managing the execution of the activities and the delivery of the knowledge products and operational inputs.
- 4.4 **Procurement.** All procurement to be executed under this Technical Cooperation have been included in the Procurement Plan (Annex IV) and will be hired in compliance with the applicable Bank policies and regulations as follows: (a) Hiring

of individual consultants, as established in the regulation on Complementary Workforce (AM-650) and (b) Contracting of services provided by consulting firms in accordance with the Corporate procurement Policy (GN-2303-33) and its Guidelines.

- 4.5 **Non-Competitive Method: Single Source Selection.** Under Component 1, the TC may include the direct contracting of the World Food Programme (WFP) for the preparation of the working paper on the costing of school feeding in the Caribbean. This contracting would be justified by WFP's specialized technical expertise in school feeding operations, costing, data collection, and comparative analysis across countries. WFP's regional presence and institutional knowledge of school feeding programs would facilitate access to relevant data and government counterparts, supporting the development of a comparable costing framework to assess operational efficiency and fiscal sustainability across different program models.
- 4.6 Also under Component 1, the TC may include the direct contracting of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), for the preparation of the technical paper analyzing operational models of school feeding programs in Caribbean countries. LSHTM would be the contracting party and would enter into the contract with the IDB in its capacity as host institution of the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition, in accordance with the applicable Bank procurement policies and procedures. This contracting would be justified by LSHTM's specialized technical expertise in school health and nutrition, nutrition modelling, program implementation analysis, and comparative assessment of school feeding models. LSHTM has demonstrated institutional and financial capacity to deliver this type of assignment and would execute any resulting contract, invoicing, and payment arrangements as the host institution of the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition.
- 4.7 Under Component 2, the TC may include the direct contracting of the World Food Programme (WFP) for the preparation of the second edition of the Regional Flagship Report on the State of School Feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean. This contracting would be justified by WFP's specialized technical expertise in school feeding, regional knowledge, evidence systematization, and publication development, as well as its prior collaboration with the IDB on the first regional flagship report. WFP's regional presence and institutional knowledge would support the preparation of an updated, comparable, and policy-relevant publication for Latin America and the Caribbean
- 4.8 International Individual Consultant Selection Based on Qualifications (IICQ). Under Component 2, the TC may finance the selection of an international individual consultant to support the editing, design, and publication process of the updated regional monograph on the state of school feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean. This method is appropriate given the need for specialized editorial, publication, and knowledge dissemination expertise, while allowing the Bank to select a qualified consultant based on relevant experience and technical qualifications.

- 4.9 **Execution and Disbursement Period.** The TC is expected to have an execution and disbursement period 36 months from the date of approval. This period will cover the preparation, technical review, validation, and dissemination of the knowledge products and operational inputs financed under the TC.
- 4.10 **Monitoring, Reporting, and Supervision.** The TC will be supervised by the Education Division (SCL/EDU). A Senior Operations Sector Specialist in SCL/EDU, will serve as the Sector Specialist responsible for execution and will coordinate implementation, supervise consultants and firms, review intermediate and final deliverables, and ensure consistency with the Results Matrix and Procurement Plan. Monitoring and reporting activities will be carried out in accordance with the Technical Cooperation Monitoring and Reporting System (OP-1385-4). Given the regional nature of the TC, no single Country Office focal point is expected to be designated; however, relevant Country Offices and project teams may be consulted as needed for country-specific operational inputs.
- 4.11 Monitoring will be carried out on a continuous basis through follow-up on procurement processes, review of deliverables, and verification of progress against the outputs included in the Results Matrix. Sources of verification will include the working paper, technical paper, regional monograph, dissemination and publication materials, and operational support inputs. Reporting will be conducted through the Bank's Technical Cooperation Monitoring and Reporting System (TCM), in accordance with applicable Bank procedures. Supervision costs will be covered through the Bank's regular administrative and transactional budget resources, as applicable.

IV. POTENTIAL RISKS

- 5.1 The project does not have substantial implementation risks identified. Potential risks are mainly related to the timely availability of data and the coordination required for the preparation of regional knowledge products. To mitigate these risks, the TC team will work closely with individual consultants, consulting firms, and relevant technical partners, and will hold regular follow-up meetings to ensure that the products are delivered within the expected timelines and meet the technical quality standards required by the IDB.
- 5.2 The fiduciary risk is considered low, as the Bank will directly administer the resources, conduct procurement, process payments, and monitor the use of funds through its internal systems.
- 5.3 **Intellectual Property.** All knowledge products developed under this TC will be the intellectual property of the Inter-American Development Bank, in accordance with the Bank's Access to Information Policy (AM-331). Knowledge products derived from this TC and approved for publication will be published under a Creative Commons IGO 3.0 license, as applicable. At the specific request of the beneficiaries and in accordance with AM-331, intellectual property rights to such products may also be licensed through specific contractual agreements, to be prepared with the guidance of the Legal Department.

V. EXCEPTIONS TO BANK POLICIES

- 6.1 No exceptions to Bank policies are expected under this Technical Cooperation.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

- 7.1 This Technical Cooperation is not intended to finance pre-feasibility or feasibility studies of specific investment projects or environmental and social studies associated with them; therefore, this TC does not have applicable requirements of the Bank's Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF).

REQUIRED ANNEXES:

- Annex I: Results Matrix
 - Annex II: Terms of Reference
 - Annex III: Procurement Plan
 - Annex IV: Gender and Diversity Checklist
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