

EXAMINING LESSONS LEARNED FROM USDA-WFP LOCAL AND REGIONAL PROCUREMENT PROJECTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE

Elizabeth Tabares & Rafael Landaverde

INTRODUCTION

- Local procurement for school meals helps achieve equitable, health-promoting, high-quality educational goals.
- The USDA Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Program (LRP) was aimed at strengthening local food systems in developing countries and address food insecurity through the procurement of local agricultural commodities.
- The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) implemented four out of the total twelve USDA-LRP projects, in Lao PDR, Rwanda, Kenya, and Cambodia.
- Procurement in school feeding systems include sourcing through existing distributors, partnerships with food hubs, campus-based food production, governmental support mechanisms, and nonprofit-supported partnerships (Tauranac, 2019).
- There is a growing interest in demand-driven and environmentally sustainable procurement as well as innovations such as digitalizations and and information-management applications (WFP, 2024).

METHODS

- This case study explores the WFP experience institutionalizing local procurement from LRP projects.
- Critical narrative approach to guide the search, analysis, and discussion of explicit and implicit models of local food procurement and its components if informed in the final evaluations of the four USDA-WFP LRP projects.
- Guidelines from the University of Southern California Libraries (2025) for writing a case study.



ABSTRACT & REFERENCES:

RESULTS

Overview of the USDA-WFP LRP Projects:

Country (Year of award)	Grant duration	Perspective	Procurement approach	Benefits	
				Students	Farmers
Lao PDR (2016)	Jan 2017- Jun 2019	Link community to school (supply of vegetables)	Direct local purchase/community	4,973	474
Kenya (2017)	Apr 2017- Sep 2019	Support to government's HGSMF	Soft tender + Forward Delivery Contracts (FDC)	382 schools	78 Coop 29 traders
Rwanda (2016)	Oct 2017 - Mar 2020	Strengthen farmer cooperatives	Framework contracts + cooperative aggregation + structured commercial	43,855 (2017) 41,521 (2018)	5,617 16 Coop
Cambodia (2019)	Nov 2019 - Sep 2023	Pilot project to support strengthening NHGSFP	Decentralized school procurement + supplier tendering	47,003 131 schools	750

TAKEAWAYS

Lao PDR (Das et al., 2020)

Institutionalization

- Improved meal supply
- Localized governance
- Local vegetable supply

Farmer integration

- Fresh produce improved
- Strong participation
- Semi-formal markets

Challenges

- Weak formal systems and small scale
- Dependence on local motivation

Impact

Community-owned local supply model with strong local capacity gains but uncertain long-term procurement sustainability.

Rwanda (Visser et al., 2020)

Institutionalization

- Reliable procurement
- Better procedures and quality standards

Farmer integration

- Stronger cooperatives
- Reliable aggregation
- Market coordination

Challenges

- Dependence on cooperative capacity
- Aggregation variability
- Moderate decentralization

Impact

More developed cooperative procurement pathway with increased aggregation and market linkages, but fragile commercial capacity.

Kenya (Dun & Otsola, 2020)

Institutionalization

- Pilots implemented
- Better transparency
- Scheduled deliveries

Farmer integration

- Supplier contracts
- Better deliveries but uneven integration

Challenges

- Limited scaling
- Farmer integration uneven
- Pilots not institutionalized

Impact

Institutional foundations were in place, but farmer-inclusive procurement remained uneven and partially operationalized.

Cambodia (Janzti, 2024)

Institutionalization

- Functional procurement
- Government handover

Farmer integration

- Local procurement expanded
- Suppliers trained
- Improved linkages

Challenges

- COVID-19 disruptions - major drawback
- Implementation delays
- Remaining dependence on WFP support

Impact

Advanced institutionalization and generally successful procurement transition, but persistent weakness in systematic smallholder sourcing.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- Procurement effectiveness depended on stakeholder coordination, supplier training, logistics management, and simplified procedures.
- The evaluations show that process complexity, administrative burdens, and weak synchronization with agricultural production cycles reduce smallholder participation.
- Limited detail regarding systematic farmer mapping and supplier-capacity assessments before implementation but highlight the importance of combining technical training with stronger monitoring, knowledge management, inclusiveness, and risk-sensitive approaches.
- Given the common conceptual frameworks and instruments, WFP should expand the use of meta-synthesis methodologies to generate cumulative evidence and strengthen adaptive programming across procurement contexts.



Comparative Pathways of Procurement Institutionalization and Farmer Integration:

Maturity of National School Feeding Procurement System				Maturity of Farmer-Market Integration Mechanisms	
Institutional transition	Kenya Grant \$ 1M Established HGSEP Weaker farmer integration		Cambodia Grant \$ 1M Advanced NHGSFP transition Strong procurement integration	Community-embedded	Advanced integration
		Established institutional procurement	Rwanda Grant \$ 2M Strong cooperative integration Moderate institutionalization		
		Emerging institutionalization	Lao PDR Grant \$ 1M Community based Weaker formal institutionalization		