



David Makongo, back right, with teacher Francis Chebii and pupils at Kamwen Primary School.

Knowing the source of the food: Matching smallholder farmers to the school meals market in Kenya

By Pamela Karg and David Makongo

Introduction

When Kenyan smallholder farmers think about the national Home Grown School Meals (HGSM) programme, they may appreciate the programme for providing a free lunch to their school-aged children. They may also have heard about the Government's investment in HGSM, which has grown from serving 540,000 pupils in 1,700 primary schools in 2009 to 760,895 pupils at 2,100 schools in 2015. However, until recently, few farmers would have seen the programme as a local, reliable market to which they could sell their products. Because HGSM runs for a fixed number of days per year and has a predetermined food basket, it represents a structured demand market for smallholder farmers: reliable and predictable.¹ Across the 2,100 primary schools covered, HGSM procures approximately Kenyan Shilling (KES) 1.5 billion, or USD \$15.4 million, in food annually.²

Founded in the Netherlands 50 years ago, SNV World has built a long-term, local presence in 38 of the poorest countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our global team of local and international advisors works with local partners to equip communities, businesses and organisations with the tools, knowledge and connections they need to increase their incomes and gain access to basic services, empowering them to break the cycle of poverty and guide their own development.

The Procurement Governance for Home Grown School Feeding (PG-HGSF) project is a five-year programme funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and implemented by SNV USA in Ghana, Kenya and Mali. In Kenya, PG-HGSF is implemented in 15 districts, with the goal of involving 10,000 smallholder farmers in local school feeding programmes, including at least 30% women.

This document is part of a series of PG-HGSF learning cases that capture lessons from pilot interventions linking smallholder farmers to school feeding programmes. To find out more about PG-HGSF, contact Katherine Casey, Learning Manager, at kcasey@snvworld.org or visit www.snvworld.org/en/procurement-for-hgsf

Kenya School Feeding Programme Overview

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) manages Kenya's Home Grown School Meals (HGSM) programme in 16 semi-arid counties. Each school's HGSM programme is run by a School Meals Procurement Committee (SMPC) led by the school's head teacher, or principal, and composed of parents, teachers and members of the community. SMPCs use MoEST guidelines to implement all aspects of HGSM, from the procurement process to food quality assurance, storage and handling. Each committee determines local requirements by calculating enrolment, number of feeding days, and government-recommended rations per child. The recommended ration is 150g of cereals (maize, rice, sorghum, millet, etc.); 40g of pulses (beans, pigeon peas, cow peas, etc.); 5g of vegetable oil; and 2g of iodised salt per child per day. HGSM acquisition is governed by public procurement processes. SMPCs are required to secure at least three competitive bids for each food procurement contract. Interested bidders are invited to participate through public notices and advertisements.

During the Procurement Governance for Home Grown School Feeding (PG-HGSF) project baseline study, SNV found that farmers are selling, either individually or through their farmer based organizations (FBOs), to traders who in turn sell to HGSM schools. However, these traders purchase just 13% of their HGSM products from smallholder farmers.³ The baseline revealed that while some farmers were selling directly to HGSM schools their participation was negligible.

Beyond education and nutritional aims, HGSM also has an agricultural development objective: to boost local food production by linking school feeding to agricultural and community development.⁴ Despite HGSM's good intentions, the agricultural development objective was not internalised by school feeding buyers or suppliers. School Management Procurement Committees (SMPCs) do not have a budget or time for advertising procurement opportunities,

so the dissemination of tender announcements was limited. As a result, few to no farmers or farmer organisations responded to tenders. From the farmers' perspective, there was a general lack of information on how they could participate in the HGSM market. They did not know when SMPCs purchased food, what their requirements were, or how to respond to calls for tenders.

PG-HGSF is designed to pilot interventions that remove barriers to smallholder farmer sales to the HGSM market. Cultivating business relationships between SMPCs and farmer organisations takes time to establish trust, communication, and an adherence to transparent procurement processes. In early 2013, PG-HGSF staff at SNV Kenya piloted six matchmaking events to start bridging these gaps and to create a space for awareness-building to introduce school feeding to the HGSM market and the procurement process to smallholder farmers. SNV's matchmaking events allow buyers and sellers to meet and interact. Sellers get to know the buyers' requirements in terms of quantity and quality, as well as terms of payment. Buyers meet new suppliers and get to know their ability to supply products. While HGSM procurement processes remain competitive and transparent, SNV monitors interactions between matchmaking participants to ensure structured conversations take place, and that verbal resolutions to make the procurement process accessible to smallholder farmer involvement are realised.

The matchmaking events are part of a suite of activities under the PG-HGSF supply chain strengthening component that generate both short- and long-term impacts. In the short term, the events kick-start commercial relationships and expose farmers to the HGSM market, resulting in 38 first-time sales between HGSM schools and farmer organisations to date. Over the long term, the matchmaking events create successful links between HGSM schools and FBOs and deliver profits to farmers while supporting the HGSM agricultural development objective: to date, matchmaking has involved 40 FBOs representing 2,983 farmers, and yielded a total of 59 transactions at a value of KES 6 million or USD \$62,900.

1 A structured demand market is considered a reliable and predictable demand from public and non-governmental institutions.

2 760,895 pupils, 195 school feeding days per year, 10 KES per meal per pupil.

3 Commandeur, Dick. *Challenges and Opportunities: Smallholders and School Feeding Initial Baseline Report*, SNV, 2012, 15–16.

4 Republic of Kenya, *Home Grown School Meals Programme: Implementation Guidelines*, 8.



This case study examines SNV Kenya’s approach to matchmaking between smallholder farmers and HGSM markets, and assesses the short- and long-term business relationships that emerged as a result of one such event in Baringo County.

Linking Farmers to Markets: Overview of Kenya Matchmaking Events

SNV Kenya initiates matchmaking events by identifying FBOs that grow the food demanded by schools, but are not yet engaged in the HGSM market. SNV assesses each FBO’s business potential by seeing what foodstuffs they currently stock and their prices, and identifying their existing customer base. SNV also checks to see if the FBO has a bank account, if the FBO is legally registered, and if it has the capacity to deliver goods to schools—all requirements for HGSM suppliers.

For FBOs that are new to working with SNV, the project takes the additional step of having the FBO’s products pre-inspected by a team of professionals (either representatives from the East African Grain Council, public health officials, or representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture) to inspect their produce quality, storage and warehouse operations. These inspectors also give recommendations for improvements, if necessary, to make the FBO’s offering more competitive for school markets. SNV organises such pre-inspections to allay concerns often voiced by SMPC members about the potential for FBOs to supply the quality and quantity of food they require for their HGSM programmes.

SNV also checks in with SMPC members prior to each matchmaking event to learn whom they currently purchase from, and the prices they are paying. SNV asks if the SMPC is experiencing any challenges to implementing their meals programme. For example, many schools do not receive three bids during their tendering process, which is a requirement outlined in the HGSM procurement guidelines. Such information helps SNV prepare both the SMPC and other participants to benefit from the matchmaking events.

The setting of each matchmaking event is chosen strategically. When the schools invited do not have experience procuring food from FBOs, or when they express concerns about the ability of FBOs to satisfy their orders, SNV holds the matchmaking at one or more FBO stores, stretching the event into a multi-stop tour. This allows SMPC members to take an on-site tour and learn about the FBO’s grain facilities, either a store or a warehouse; its quality assurance procedures; capacity; and overall processes. Alternatively, SNV will choose to organise matchmaking at a school when it is important for FBOs to appreciate a school’s remote location and the ramifications of transporting goods, or the challenges the SMPC faces in storing food on school premises.

Following these pre-event activities, SNV convenes SMPC members, including head teachers,⁵ traders engaged in HGSM, and FBO leaders for a one- to three-day matchmaking event. SNV opens each event with an overview of PG-HGSF and its objectives, including why each organisation or person—i.e., school committee members and teachers, farmers and their FBOs, traders, regulators, grain inspectors—is included and the particular role they can play in facilitating stronger links between farmers and the school feeding market. A representative of the county education office gives an overview of the HGSM



Local farmers deliver their maize crop to a farmers’ cooperative in Baringo County, Kenya

⁵ In the Kenya public school system, the principal of the school is known as the head teacher.



programme, particularly the procurement process, and shares a list of contact information for head teachers in the area. Some matchmaking events also include participants from the local Ministry of Agriculture offices that work with farmers, FBOs, other agribusinesses and other non-governmental organisations that support FBOs in their quest to become self-sustaining businesses. When these representatives attend, they make a short presentation about their respective roles in the supply chain or school meal procurement process.

Head teachers share statistics about their particular school: number of pupils, number of days meals are served, types and quantities of foods procured, and who has been supplying the schools (or was awarded the tenders) to date. When multiple schools are present, the head teachers focus on the challenges they face with respect to receiving enough tenders and food pricing. They also share insights including the quality of food they are looking for, as well as their SMPC's process for selecting and contracting the winning tender.

FBO representatives give brief histories about their organisations and marketing experience, including information such as grain trading (whether bulking or collective marketing⁶), previous sales, estimates of their potential to engage in the market (quantity and quality), storage capacity, and level of knowledge about the school feeding procurement process. When in attendance or working with local FBOs, traders explain how they fit into the seller-buyer equation.

The events conclude with sellers-buyers stating their intention to transact via verbal resolutions. In these resolutions, both parties state how they intend to work in the future, but fall short of making financial commitments, since HGSM requires the food procurement process be open and transparent. Resolutions can be as simple as one or both parties stating their intention to follow up with additional information. A typical resolution is for schools and government officials to state their intention to notify FBOs when the school has released its call for tenders.

After the initial matchmaking event, SNV monitors the relationships emerging among participating schools, traders, and FBOs, managing any challenges that may arise as the buyers attempt to source foodstuffs from the FBOs. When HGSM funds are dispersed to the schools, SNV follows up with the schools to ensure that they received their budget allocation. Likewise, SNV follows up with FBOs to ensure that they have received the call for tenders and tracks the business transactions that occur as a result of the event. Despite resolutions and intentions to buy or sell, not all matchmaking events result in immediate sales between SMPCs and FBOs. When there are no immediate sales, SNV brings the parties together again for a debrief. Participants learn why schools did not award their contracts to the FBOs, so that they can improve their proposals in advance of the next procurement cycle. FBOs strengthen their understanding of the procurement process, as well as the challenges SMPCs face, implementing HGSM at their schools.

Making the Match in Baringo County

In February 2013, SNV organised a three-day matchmaking event in Baringo County for representatives from 12 schools and 13 local FBOs. Prior to the event, none of the participating schools had procured

Baringo HGSM Fast Facts

- 🌽 217 schools (primary and early childhood development)
- 🌽 63,170 pupils
- 🌽 Main foods: cereals (maize, rice, sorghum, millet); pulses (beans, pigeon peas, cow peas); vegetable oil; salt
- 🌽 195 school feeding days per school year
- 🌽 Allotment per child, per meal: KES 10, USD \$0.11
- 🌽 Total Annual Budget for Food: KES 123 million, USD \$1.3 million

⁶ Bulking (also called aggregating) is the process of compiling produce from multiple farmers or suppliers together, enabling them to satisfy larger orders. Collective marketing is selling produce on behalf of a number of producers and sharing the proceeds according to the contributions. Bulking is done for the purposes of collective marketing.



foodstuffs from FBOs. With HGSM payments regularly delayed up to one month or more, Baringo's head teachers are under a lot of pressure to procure goods immediately when funding arrives. In light of these delays, as well as the teachers' lack of familiarity with local FBOs, SNV decided to organise a matchmaking event where a small group of teachers could visit each FBO over a series of days before sharing what they learned to a larger audience of teachers and other SMPC representatives. The premise was, if teachers could see the quality and quantity of products available first-hand, they would be assured of the FBOs ability to fulfil a contract, should the SMPC select an FBO's tender during a normal or accelerated procurement cycle.

Matchmaking tours

The Baringo matchmaking tour included stops at 13 FBOs in Kabarak, Sacho, Tenges, Seretunin, Riwo and Marigat. At each stop, participants toured storage facilities, learned basic information about each FBO, including membership and quantities of goods available. The teachers carried copies of their HGSM procurement manuals, and checked FBOs against the requirements for HGSM suppliers. For example, HGSM requires FBOs to be legally registered, have a bank account, include the cost of transportation in their quotes, and hold a certificate from government officials certifying that their goods are fit for human consumption. Referencing the guidelines, the teachers could ascertain the status of each FBO visited, while FBO members, in turn, learned which requirements they would need to demonstrate their competitiveness for HGSM tenders. Head teachers also shared an overview of their HGSM procurement process, and how they evaluate tenders.

Information Sharing

On the third day, the head teachers were joined by additional teachers, SMPC representatives, FBO members, and Ministry of Agriculture and Education officials at the Kenya School of Government (formerly Government Training Institute) in Kabarnet to discuss the results of their tours. SMPC members from 50 schools participated: who are responsible for feeding 13,600 pupils through HGSM, representing a market size of KES 30 million, or USD \$319,500.

The head teachers reported on the previous two days, reviewing information about the FBOs visited and their capacity to sell to HGSM schools. An inspection team from the Ministry of Agriculture shared the results of their storage inspection and the public health office presented an assessment of the FBOs' produce. The officials pointed out that the greatest challenge FBOs face is adequate storage to maintain quality produce. Some farmer groups stored the produce on the floor as opposed to storing on pallets, or put the maize in storage without leaving enough space for aeration. However, the officer noted that all the food stored was properly dried and had no infestation at the time of inspection. Baringo Central School Feeding Officer Joshua Kiptum discussed the programme's objectives, emphasising the agricultural objective, and informed the teachers that the area FBOs currently have over 1,000 bags of maize available for the school feeding market. Finally, the FBO representatives were given an opportunity to respond to questions stemming from the Ministry and teacher presentations. They cited some challenges their FBOs are facing, including a lack of funds to improve farming techniques and a lack of organisation and awareness of FBO initiatives among



their members. They agreed that the prices quoted during the head teacher tours were negotiable and that they would include the costs of transport in the final quotation.

At the conclusion of the event, participants agreed to the following resolutions:

-  Schools and the Ministry of Education to give an opportunity to all farmer groups to tender by informing when HGSM funds are disbursed and when calls for tenders are open.
-  Schools to record how many farmer groups tender and how many groups are awarded. For groups that are not awarded a contract, the schools are to give reasons why they were not successful.
-  Ministry of Agriculture to link traders who supply to HGSM with farmer groups, for those groups that lack the capacity to supply directly to HGSM schools and to ensure that the food is locally sourced.
-  Schools to inform the Ministry of Agriculture when they award a tender to a particular group in order to ensure that the group delivers successfully.
-  Ministry of Agriculture to share the list of farmer groups they have with the Ministry of Education to make it easier for schools to determine which groups to invite to tender.

The HGSM procurement process, as described by an SMPC member:

-  SMPC members discuss their budget for the quarter, what the menu should include (i.e., type of beans), and how much can be purchased depending on market prices and the length of the term.
-  The SMPC places a public call for bids in key places. The bid requires suppliers to cover the cost of transporting products to the school. The call is also posted in neighbouring markets because not all foodstuffs can be procured locally (i.e., maize).
-  The school is expected to receive a minimum of three bids, which aligns with Kenya's public procurement procedures.
-  The SMPC first checks bids to ensure that they qualify (based on registration, valid licensing, and proper storage) and then looks at each bidder's offer in terms of price and quality. Based on their assessment, the successful bidder is identified and contracted.
-  SMPC checks the quantity and the quality of the food on delivery. After the committee approves, the school pays the supplier.
-  Thereafter, every morning the children are counted during role call to see how many meals should be prepared.
-  There is one cook who is paid by the parents. The parents are also responsible for delivering firewood or charcoal to the school.

Matchmaking Follow-Up Meeting

Four months after the matchmaking tours in Baringo, SNV returned to Baringo to check in with FBOs and SMPC members, identify commercial transactions that resulted from the February event, and address constraints to linking FBOs to school feeding. HGSM officer Joshua Kiptum reported that the HGSM funds for the school term following the matchmaking event should have been disbursed in January 2013, but actually arrived in late March when schools were closing for the first term. Furthermore, the disbursements only covered the remaining 25 school feeding days left in the term, far short of the 70 days per term HGSM is mandated to cover. As a result, none of the FBOs present sold their goods to HGSM schools, and all of the schools in attendance contracted a trader.

The FBOs reported that the delay had a huge impact on their ability to engage with the HGSM market. Eight of the nine FBOs present targeted HGSM schools during the term following the matchmaking event, with three groups reserving a portion of their maize exclusively for HGSM. In total, the nine FBOs had 1,165 90-kg bags of maize for sale to HGSM and other markets, but three FBOs needed to urgently sell their stocks to fund agricultural inputs for their members, while others sold their goods after three months without receiving a HGSM tender announcement. One FBO, Kesbai Self Help Group, even contacted the Ministry of Education to inquire about the status of the delayed disbursements. In one instance, the Kesetan Farmers Group agreed to supply maize to Tinomoi Primary School, but could not fulfil the order due to a lack of transportation for delivering the goods to the school. While none of the FBOs sold their goods to



HGSM schools, two FBOs—Seretunin Farmers’ Association and Kesbai Self Help Group—supplied food to a secondary school.

Head teachers from Kamwen, Kiplabat, Tinomoi, Sironoi and Kapkelelwa Primary schools all confirmed that they advertised a call for tenders for their school’s HGSM food procurement, representing a combined need of 36 90-kg bags of maize and 7.5 90-kg bags of beans. All schools reported contracting a trader, two of whom confirmed that they supplied products that were sourced from an FBO. Kamwen, Tinomoi and Sironoi only received tenders from traders. Kiplabat was in touch with the Soman



Catherine Muringo Mutea, Deputy Head Teacher, is responsible for procurement of school meals at Chumvi Primary School

Ak Iyai Self Help Group following the matchmaking event; however, by the time the school was ready to procure foodstuffs, the group had already sold their goods to a trader.

Reflecting on their experience trying to link FBOs to HGSM schools in Baringo, participants identified the following ongoing challenges:

-  Poor communication of tenders
-  Inability of FBOs to consistently supply the home-grown market (stock runs out)
-  Cashflow problems by FBOs
-  Delay in HGSM funding disbursements
-  Seasonality of produce
-  Poor linkages between farmer groups and buyers
-  High expectations by FBOs for the HGSM market
-  Lack of group cohesiveness and poor leadership resulting in no tangible benefits to the members

All participants left with action points to address the issue of communicating tender announcements. The Ministry of Education agreed to notify the Ministry of Agriculture when funds are received, and the Ministry of Agriculture will relay the information to the FBOs, so they can competitively participate in the tendering process. Teachers resolved to post tenders in all public places such as community notice boards, chief’s office, DEO’s office, and churches. FBOs agreed to be proactive in identifying target schools and collect information on their current supplier(s) and quantity needed, based on the student population. Furthermore, FBOs agreed to bid for supply tenders and take the initiative of following up to develop good business relationships. FBOs also left with some ideas for maintaining a consistent stock of goods to accommodate schools when they are procuring, which the FBOs learned, does not automatically adhere to the HGSM schedule. For example, the FBOs decided to look into bulking large volumes of grains, identifying surge-capacity farmers when their supplies are low, diversifying production, and creating a cash reserve for urgent FBO member needs.



Better Market Relationships Built: Actions Speak Louder than Words

SNV followed up two years later with the original participants in the February 2013 matchmaking event to see if the resolutions agreed to resulted in sales between HGSM schools and FBOs.

Participants noted that much progress had been made on the action points participants agreed to during the matchmaking follow-up meeting. On the issue of poor communication of tenders, head teacher Emily Tomno and deputy head teacher Francis Chebii from Kamwen Primary School reported that HGSM officer Joshua

Kiptum informed the school when funds were disbursed and reminded them to give priority to FBOs. Members from the Seretunin Sobetab Gaa farmers group also reported increased awareness of tendering opportunities; however, through SNV, rather than through the Ministry of Agriculture. As one member remarked, "We learnt about the disbursement through SNV; they called us and urged us to check with the schools."

Prior to the matchmaking event, Kamwen Primary School had never received an FBO response to their HGSM call for tenders, and had never procured foodstuffs directly from local farmers. With an average annual budget of KES 310,700, USD \$3,230, for food purchases, head teacher Emily Tomno and deputy head teacher Francis Chebii approached the February 2013 event with an open mind. By visiting the FBO stores, the teachers learned just how many FBOs had good quality maize for sale; however, they also had some concerns with respect to the prices quoted and the way the farmers were storing their maize.

The visits also made a lasting impression on the FBOs that hosted head teachers at their stores. "We did not know about the HGSM market [prior to the matchmaking event]," remarked a member of Seretunin, whose organisation had never sold to HGSM schools prior to the event. Seretunin learned that they already met HGSM supplier requirements, such as having a bank account, but were not happy about the fee to submit a tender,⁷ which recently increased from KES 500 to KES 2,000.

Since the February 2013 matchmaking event, Kamwen Primary School has held six calls for tenders. A total of three FBOs (Seretunin, Ngebetai Sarit Women Group and Kasore Farmers Group) and one trader responded to the calls, and two FBOs (Seretunin and Ngebetai Sarit Women Group) were awarded four out of the six contracts. The contracts with FBOs represent a total of KES 355,000 or USD \$3,700—information readily available because Kamwen Primary School maintains detailed records of all suppliers that responded to tenders, as per the resolutions. However, the execution of those contracts was not entirely problem-free. Reflecting on their three contracts with Seretunin, Tomno and Chebii remarked, "The first order was okay. In the second order they supplied maize that was not properly dried. There were a lot of stones in the beans and some sacks of beans had weevil infestation in the second order." To resolve the issues in the second order, Tomno approached the FBO directly, "I talked to them and they paid for labour to dry the maize in school...they have promised to improve." The prioritisation of FBOs gave one entrepreneurial trader the



The poor quality of roads leading to Kamwen Primary School increases transportation costs for HGSM suppliers

⁷ HGSM schools can charge a modest fee to cover the costs of printing and publicising tender announcements, and communicating the results to stakeholders.



motivation to organise a farmers group: “Gladys Saigut is a trader who used to supply us before.” Tomno and Chebii observed, “After [the matchmaking event], we informed her that we now prefer FBOs, and she went and formed a women’s group.”

Seretunin, which was awarded three contracts with Kamwen Primary School, also shared their experience selling to the HGSM school. Seretunin’s typical clients include local posho⁸ mills, open-air markets, walk-in clients, and the occasional non-HGSM primary school. Following the matchmaking event, Seretunin decided to submit a tender to Kamwen Primary School, because of the school’s location and the cooperative spirit of head teacher Tomno. Despite the school’s proximity, the poor condition of the 5km road leading to the school affected Seretunin’s transportation costs. “We don’t think we are making profits from those supplies, as we pay a lot for transportation,” remarked one member. “Last time we paid KES 6,500 (USD \$68). It is a lot of money. We may not tender next time.” Seretunin members also expressed concern about the HGSM disbursement delays. According to one member, “The problem is that sometimes the money delays and we can’t wait; so we sell to the posho mills and open-air markets who buy in small quantities. It is difficult to manage the money when it comes in small amounts.” Indeed, data from Kamwen Primary School’s ledgers illustrate the extent to which HGSM disbursements have been delayed. During the ten terms between 2012 and 2015, the school received a complete HGSM disbursement only once, did not receive any disbursement for two out of ten terms, and, in total, received an average of 58% of the budgeted HGSM funding. The delays affect the HGSM market size and the willingness of farmer organisations to prioritise HGSM schools as a market opportunity.

On whether Kamwen Primary School would consider working with an FBO in the future, there was no doubt: “Yes, I have no problem working with Seretunin or any other FBO,” remarked Tomno. “The programme requires us to try and support FBOs. The FBOs are from within and I know some of them, therefore I know the source of the food.”

Lessons Learned

1. Introductions are just the first step in a long path to partnership

The original matchmaking event in Baringo in February 2013 was successful in introducing HGSM schools to potential new suppliers, and breaking through some of their initial reticence in considering FBOs as partners in school feeding. For the FBOs, the matchmaking events introduced their members to a large and local market for their goods while reinforcing strong business practices. However, at six months and, then again, at two years after the event, business relationships continue to evolve, barriers remain, and additional competitors enter the market. The examples from Baringo demonstrate that introductions are significant; however, the real work begins after the match is made, especially in the face of challenges on the supply side (storage, transportation costs) and on the demand side (late or incomplete funding disbursements).

2. Tendering is a success, despite which bidder is ultimately awarded

Given the pervasive lack of awareness of the HGSM market and procurement process among FBOs when PG-HGSF began, the project celebrates when FBOs submit an on-time tender in response to an HGSM tender announcement, regardless of the outcome. Submitting a tender indicates that the FBO aware of the market opportunity has the aggregation, storage, and transportation capacity to deliver the items required.

3. Matchmaking to support institutional development

SNV Kenya’s matchmaking events reinforce best practices for both the buyers and suppliers. When teachers visit FBO facilities with their HGSM guidebooks in hand, they reinforce their knowledge of the requirements as they share them with potential suppliers. Furthermore, they act as agents for the programme’s agricultural objective at the local level, sharing the programme’s goal in this area with the local agricultural producing community.

continued

⁸ Posho mills process maize, millet, or sorghum flour for use in ugali, a local dish.



Likewise, participating FBOs gain new insights into building the capacity of their organisation to supply to a public tender. They learn about supplier requirements, such as having a bank account and maintaining certification from the Ministry of Health on the quality of their goods. Furthermore, they learn the process for participating in public tenders, which enables them to consider other public procurement opportunities in addition to HGSM.

4. Informed buyers, educated sellers

The additional capacity building provided before, during, and after the matchmaking events to both HGSM buyers and FBO sellers is empowering for both parties. In touring FBO stores, or hosting FBO members at their schools, SMPC members become informed buyers who understand what it takes for an FBO to fulfil HGSM contracts to their satisfaction. Likewise, the matchmaking events and capacity-building activities support FBOs as they enter new markets. The events force FBOs to consider how to be competitive in a market already occupied by suppliers, which may mean adapting their prices, negotiating the costs of transportation, or aggregating additional foodstuffs to put together an attractive bid.

5. There is a role for government officials to play in holding HGSM accountable

Disbursing school feeding funding late, and for less than the number of days designated, undermines all of the programme's objectives. Children bear the brunt of late and incomplete disbursements, but the delays also affect the ability of SMPCs to conduct full public procurement cycles and have an impact on the ability of farmers to maintain a consistent stock of goods to respond competitively to HGSM tenders. In order for the programme to boost local food production, HGSM in coordination with the National Treasury need to fulfil its responsibilities and pay on schedule. The information exchanged during matchmaking events can empower Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture officials to address the programme's weaknesses and limitations and support reform efforts to improve transparency and accountability at every stage.

Conclusions

SNV Kenya's matchmaking events lay the foundation for commercial relationships between HGSM buyers and FBOs with the capacity to fulfil their tenders. By introducing buyer and seller—at a location strategically selected to mitigate existing concerns by one party or the other—the events kick-start a relationship. However, the initial matchmaking event is only one part of a series of capacity-building activities that incubate and support these fledgling relationships through dialogue, problem solving, and action plans. The time it takes to develop these relationships cannot be understated: while a total of ten matchmaking events were held in 2013–14 and only one in 2015, FBOs are on track to submit more tenders in 2015 than in 2013 and 2014 combined.⁹ In addition, in terms of quality commercial transactions, the time invested in the initial matching and nurturing of relationships between buyers and sellers is paying off: of the 59 total tenders submitted, 16 resulted in repeat sales.

The matchmaking events also succeed in exposing FBOs to other local market opportunities for their goods. In addition to the 38 first-time sales between HGSM schools and farmer organisations, FBOs also credit the matchmaking events as the impetus for 17 contracts with non-HGSM schools and colleges in their vicinity. Sales attributed to participation in matchmaking events total KES 6 million or USD \$62,900.

While SNV's support for FBO suppliers and HGSM buyers as they initiate new business relationships is yielding results, there is also a role for local and national government officials to play their part to make the HGSM market a low-risk opportunity for FBOs. Without multiple levels of government officials calling for the programme's accountability, HGSM will continue to struggle to meet its education and agriculture objectives.

⁹ In 2013, FBOs submitted nine tenders to HGSM schools. In 2014, FBOs submitted 31. As of May 2015, FBOs have submitted 36 tenders to HGSM schools.

