During his first ever visit to Ghana, Bill Gates joined the Partnership for Child Development to talk with smallholder farmers, teachers and caterers to better understand the issues and opportunities presented by Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programmes.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have been supporting the development of government-led, HGSF programmes since 2009. These nationally owned initiatives enable schools to procure the ingredients for their school meals from local smallholder farmers.

The benefits of programmes, such as the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP), are felt by the school child and farmer alike with school children getting free nutritious hot meals whilst the farmer gets access to a regular market, providing a win-win for both education and economic development.

To see for himself the impact that HGSF is having on local communities, Bill Gates traveled with Gates Foundation grantee, the Partnership for Child Development, to meet with local smallholder farmers and representatives of the Ghana School Feeding Programme to discuss issues including market access, crop storage facilities and linkages between the farmers and school caterers.

During the visit to the Kwabenya-Atomic area of Accra, Mr Gates was taken on a farm tour by local farmer Jacob Mechi, who makes his living by selling his crops to GSFP caterers.
Speaking of the GSFP, Jacob said, ‘The school feeding programme is very good for me because I can sell my crop direct from my farm without having to spend extra money on transporting it to market.’, he added, ‘I am proud that it is my produce that is being used to feed the school children.’

Mr Gates later visited the nearby Kwabenya-Atomic MA3 Primary School to see school feeding first hand and speak with the admistress about the positive effects that school feeding has had on enrollment and pupil attention. He also joined in a lively discussion with the school feeding caterers who, under contract from the GSFP, supply the cooked food to the school children.

PCD, based at Imperial College London, together with development partners including the World Bank, WFP and SNV, have been providing technical advice to the GSFP to support the Ghanaian Government’s plans to extend the reach and impact of the programme.

Following the visit Mr Gates met with Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama who commended the Gates Foundation on the contributions it had made to boosting the nutritional needs of school-age children and increasing school enrollment through its support of the GSFP.

Bill Gates and PCD’s Daniel Mumuni discuss school feeding with Ghanaian smallholder farmers (Photo courtesy of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation)