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SCHOOL FEEDING INITIATIVE

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INTRODUCTION

1. Earlier this year, United States Ambassador George McGovern urged developed nations to ensure that every child in the world has a meal at school. United States President Bill Clinton supported the idea and committed US\$300 million (in food, transport and overhead costs) as an initial contribution to the McGovern Initiative. The donor decided that a portion of the available resources would be donated through the World Food Programme.
2. President Clinton made this announcement at the G8 Summit in Japan on 23 July 2000 and called on other nations to contribute as well.
3. The objective of the Initiative is to encourage governments throughout the world to put in place national school feeding programmes, which will provide nutritious food to all children who need it.
4. This Initiative promotes “Education for All”, a universal commitment of the world community (Jomtien Declaration of 1990 and the Dakar Framework of April 2000).
5. The benefits that can be expected to be derived from this Initiative include:
 - Increased school attendance. In families struggling to make ends meet, a school feeding programme can make the difference between sending children to school or relying on their labour to supplement the family income.
 - A reduction in the “gap” between the rate of school attendance of girls and boys, which persists in a number of countries.
 - Improved learning. A meal early in the day helps children to remain alert and to concentrate.

WFP SCHOOL FEEDING ACTIVITIES

6. WFP will seek funding both for ongoing and new School Feeding Initiative activities in development, protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO), and emergency operation (EMOP) categories.
7. Executive Board approval will be sought for WFP’s school feeding activities as per normal procedures.
8. WFP will implement activities within the framework of policies and procedures approved by the Executive Board. The approach will be to concentrate School Feeding Initiative resources on the neediest people¹ and countries in accordance with the Committee on Food Aid’s decision to provide at least 90 percent of WFP’s development assistance to low-income, food-deficit countries and at least 50 percent of its development assistance to least developed countries. Commitment to the Enabling Development principles will be respected.
9. Under the Initiative, WFP’s proposals may involve school feeding activities of three kinds, selected and combined according to the requirements of the situation:

¹ Normally, poor and hungry people are those who earn less than the equivalent of one dollar a day, or who allocate the majority of their household budget to food.



- A meal at lunchtime: This has had a positive impact on school attendance in many countries. The opportunity for a nutritious meal is an incentive for parents to send their children to school.
- A breakfast or a mid-morning snack: This approach is particularly helpful when children go to school without a morning meal, often after walking a long distance. By mid-morning their alertness and concentration drop off sharply, and learning suffers. A nutritious meal or snack early in the school day enables these children to learn better and gain the most from school.
- Outside-of-school rations: WFP has been able to bring about dramatic increases in girls' school attendance by providing "take-home" food for the girls' families. WFP believes that there is great additional potential for this approach in countries where girls are traditionally kept out of school. WFP is also considering the use of food rations (in addition to those provided in schools) to support the daily living requirements and school enrolment of HIV/AIDS orphans in countries particularly affected by HIV/AIDS.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

10. There is no substitute for national political commitment. WFP already insists on the direct involvement of each host government: the activity must be supported by the national government and local communities; a significant amount of resources and infrastructure must be provided as counterpart contributions; and there must be evidence that the activity will some day be taken over by the government.
11. With this Initiative (as is the case for all other WFP school feeding activities), those principles are to be respected in that governments who receive this food should:
 - Have made a commitment to "Education for All";
 - Be working to build a nation-wide school feeding programme;
 - Begin building sustainability measures and commit to taking over the financial and management responsibility after a certain number of years;
 - Have agreed to WFP's usual monitoring, reporting and evaluation requirements;
 - Keep and allow access to detailed and up-to-date records of the numbers of children (and their gender) enrolled and benefiting from school feeding; and
 - Have a track record of respecting agreements with WFP and other donors.
12. In some cases, national governments will be unable to demonstrate their commitment to school feeding due to emergency conditions. While there is no substitute for national commitment, WFP feels that even when the national government situation is not ideal, hungry children should have access to food and education and that basic steps can be taken which will contribute to viable national systems being possible over the longer term. Thus, provision will be made for WFP school feeding activities in some emergency and protracted relief situations where full government support is not possible.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

13. Food alone is not enough to make school feeding effective. Expertise is needed as well, to help countries to strengthen their capacity to plan and implement school feeding



activities. A relatively small investment in technical advice and support can contribute a great deal to the effectiveness and sustainability of a national school feeding programme. WFP will seek contributions of technical expertise and/or funding for technical support activities directly related to the School Feeding Initiative from the private sector, donor governments and other organizations.

14. Technical support can be provided in a number of ways, including:
 - Workshops for national decision-makers, to convey an understanding of the benefits that school feeding can bring, and make them aware of key design and management issues;
 - Training for key personnel;
 - Development of manuals and guidelines;
 - “Twinning” of specialized institutions;
 - Periodic visits to work with national personnel to build capacity and sustainability;
 - Brief field missions by technical experts to assess problems and provide advice; or
 - Exchanges or missions to share experience among countries.
15. An Executive Board decision (1997/EB.2/1—May 1997) gave WFP the authority to provide services, advice, good offices, logistical support and information, and support to countries in establishing and managing their own food assistance programmes. In this context, WFP can envisage the possibility of providing technical advice also to middle-income countries which may not need nor be eligible for food assistance, but might want to create their own national school feeding programmes.
16. A small School Feeding Support Unit is being created within the Division of Strategy and Policy to provide this expertise or find consultants who can provide it. That group will also arrange for baseline surveys of all countries, with assistance from UNESCO, to compile a comprehensive list of the status of school feeding programmes in all countries. This database will serve as a monitoring and evaluation tool and will facilitate the sharing of domestic expertise from one country to another.

INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

17. WFP will collaborate with a number of other organizations that are contributing to the goals of “Education for All”.
18. As also announced in Okinawa, the World Bank will be providing substantial funds to the education sector in coming years. The Executive Director has written to World Bank President Wolfensohn regarding the strengthening of WFP-World Bank collaboration in education. A key role of the WFP staff member assigned to the new post for liaison with the Bretton Woods Institutions will be that of building this collaboration.
19. The Executive Director has also written to the heads of UNESCO and UNICEF. The School Feeding Initiative offers WFP an opportunity to deepen the long-standing good working relationship with UNESCO and to collaborate more extensively with UNICEF. WFP intends to seek advice from nutrition experts at the United Nations University as well.
20. There are many private volunteer organizations (PVOs) and foundations whose work supports the education sector or helps school-age children. WFP anticipates many



opportunities through the School Feeding Initiative to work with or complement the activities of these PVOs.

FUNDING

21. Funding of activities through this Initiative will go to: increasing support for those existing, but under-funded school feeding activities; expanding current activities; and undertaking new activities.
22. The participation of multiple donors will ensure that this is a truly global Initiative. WFP strongly encourages donations to school feeding from both governments and the private sector.
23. Contributions of either cash or commodities are welcome. Contributions will be in compliance with the full cost recovery principle.

