

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



SCHOOL FEEDING IN 2018

Beyond the Annual Performance
Report 2018 Series



October 2019

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Photo: WFP / Tara Crossley

In our efforts to create a world where the opportunities for economic growth reach everyone, schools play a very significant role. Schools are where we shape future political leaders, scientists, economists, artists and thinkers. Schools are where we nurture dreams and aspirations. Schools are where we lay the foundation for future economic growth and human capital.

Time and time again, our experiences show that health and education are two sides of the same coin, and investing in one requires simultaneous investment in the other.

While building human capital depends on quality education, good health and nutrition are also required for children and adolescents to be able to participate and learn in school. When we improve the health and nutrition of schoolchildren, we transform the rest of their lives. Children who are well-nourished learn more, and subsequently earn more and are more productive as adults. That transformation carries through to the next generation with the improved health of their own children, creating a long-term cycle of economic growth and progress.

This is why most countries have established school feeding programmes to provide a safety net for vulnerable families, increase their food security and boost their children's educational and health outcomes. However, in many low-income countries, national school feeding programmes remain incipient.

For the past six decades, the World Food Programme (WFP) has provided operational support and technical assistance to help children in the poorest regions of the world attend school and reach their full potential. Ten years ago, WFP decided to rethink the way it conceived and implemented school feeding. Through a policy that was approved by the Executive Board in 2009, WFP committed to moving away from a food aid approach to a more sustainable safety net approach by supporting governments to implement nationally owned, home-grown school feeding programmes (HSGFs) that could be institutionalized and provided on a stable basis to vulnerable children.

In 2013, WFP updated its policy to reflect the growing body of evidence of the benefits of school feeding, the requirements for the transition to national ownership and the various objectives of WFP's assistance in different contexts. Since then, the organization has been working at all levels to implement the policy.

Although the 2013 policy has not yet been evaluated comprehensively, there has been impressive progress in certain areas.¹ Over the last ten years, WFP and partners have helped to change the landscape of school feeding worldwide, especially through innovative South-South sharing led by WFP's Center of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil, which was created in 2011.

Today, more than half of the world's school children receive food at school, the largest number and proportion ever. Around 30 countries have started their own school feeding programmes since 2009, while 20 national school feeding policies have been adopted during the same period. These country-led changes have been supported in part by new global public goods, including WFP's Center of Excellence Against Hunger, established in partnership with the government of Brazil, and by the Global Child Nutrition Foundation's annual school feeding forum.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, nearly all countries now provide school meals to their children.² In the Middle East, interest is growing thanks in large part to the Middle East and North Africa Initiative for School Meals and Social Protection launched with the support of WFP.³ In Asia, school feeding programmes have been introduced by most countries, with exceptionally large-scale programmes in China and India.

In Africa, where the need is greatest and the programmatic response has traditionally been weakest, there is a renaissance. During the African Union Summit in 2016, 54 Heads of State committed to promoting nationally-owned home-grown school feeding (HGSF) programmes and are working to operationalize these commitments.⁴

In West Africa alone, governments are investing USD 500 million dollars per year on school feeding, and in 2019, a new Center of Excellence in Côte d'Ivoire has been inaugurated to support South-South efforts across the African continent.

In 2018, WFP decided to re-energize its school feeding efforts and created a new School Feeding Service to chart the course for WFP's global leadership in this flagship area for the next ten years. Since its inception in August, the Service has undertaken extensive internal and external dialogue to pave the way for a new strategy to be launched in early 2020.

This dialogue included discussions with all regions; three donor roundtables in Rome and visits to Washington D.C., Canada and Brussels; a workshop with regional programme advisors; an initial consultation with more than 55 non-governmental organization (NGO) partners representing 40 countries; sharing of ideas at the Global Child Nutrition Forum, including a side meeting attended by more than 100 WFP staff; and more than 15 country missions.

Thus, 2018 was a year of extensive discussions, reflection and learning at the global level. At the same time, at the country level, WFP continued its efforts to provide the best support possible to children in need. This Thematic Report, produced jointly by the Performance Management and Reporting Division and the School Feeding Service, summarizes WFP's progress on the ground and its efforts to review, discuss and learn from past experience to inform its future strategic direction.

This report contains three more sections. Section II highlights WFP's achievements in 2018 to assist the world's most vulnerable children and their families, communities and governments through school feeding activities based on analysis of Annual and Country Performance reports. Section III presents the previously unpublished findings of the stocktaking exercise covering recent evaluations, audits, and country, regional and global discussions, conducted in 2018, which forms the basis for WFP's new global strategy. Section IV discusses the conclusions and implications for WFP's way forward.

1 A strategic school feeding evaluation is planned for 2019/2020 to be led by the WFP Office of Evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be incorporated into future WFP policies and this strategy as necessary.

2 WFP. 2017. Smart School Meals: Nutrition-Sensitive National Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean, A Review of 16 Countries. Rome, WFP.

3 WFP. 2017. Middle East and North Africa Initiative for School Meals and Social Protection: A partnership for enhanced nutrition, education and resilience. Cairo, WFP.

4 African Union. 2018. Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union. Addis Ababa, African Union.

II. RESULTS ON THE GROUND



WFP'S GLOBAL REACH

In 2018, WFP assisted 16.4 million school children with nutritious meals, snacks or take-home rations (THR) in 61 countries, making school feeding WFP's second largest programme in terms of beneficiaries. About 51 percent of the schoolchildren assisted through WFP school feeding activities were girls and the target for female retention rate was met in 73 percent of countries that reported on this indicator.

The number of beneficiaries reached in 2018 falls short of what WFP had planned (19 million children), for several reasons. The main reason is a positive one: more progress than expected was achieved in handing over operations to governments, signalling an increase in national political will and highlighting that WFP's policy and new strategy are being successfully implemented. Handover led to a total reduction of 2.5 million children assisted by WFP in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Côte D'Ivoire, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Zambia. In some cases, the handover is still ongoing. For example, in Zambia, WFP successfully handed over responsibility to the government for 600,000 school-age children, thus reducing its school feeding beneficiaries from about 800,000 in 2017 to 200,000 in 2018.

Funding shortfalls and operational constraints have also kept WFP from assisting 1.1 million school children. In Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Niger, for example, funding shortfalls have led to a reduction of 100,000 children per country. Regarding operational constraints, in Chad, schools were closed for a large part of the school year due to social strife. This was compounded by limited resources, leading to a reduction in the number of children reached. Another operational shift occurred in Pakistan where the school meals programme was redesigned to better respond to local conditions and fit in the changing context, so the programme was put on hold in 2018.

Finally, school feeding activities were scaled up in 20 operations to reach an additional 1.7 million children in fragile settings such as Mali, South Sudan and Yemen and in more stable settings where WFP implements school feeding based on the request of the host government, such as Benin and Sierra Leone.

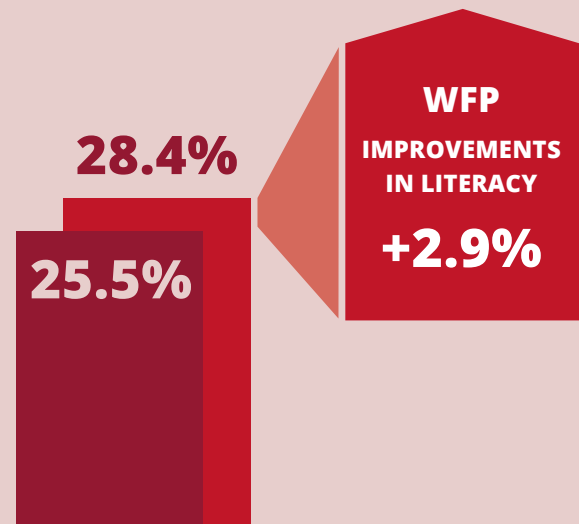
In accordance with its School Feeding Policy, WFP plays a dual role in fostering access to school feeding: through direct service provision and country capacity strengthening. In 2018, WFP provided direct operational support to 61 countries that were unable to fully implement school feeding because of recurrent economic or natural shocks, instability or insufficient capacity.

In almost all countries where WFP implemented school feeding, as well as those where these activities were fully handed over, WFP also provided technical assistance to

BANGLADESH



In line with the programme objectives of developing a sustainable national, government-led school feeding programme, WFP provided technical support and capacity development to the government ministry, built gender awareness and strengthened the management capacity of schools and community members. As a result, the government took over WFP activities in most of the schools. Despite improvements in literacy from 25.5 percent to 28.4 percent, the planned literacy target was not reached mainly due to factors outside of WFP's control.

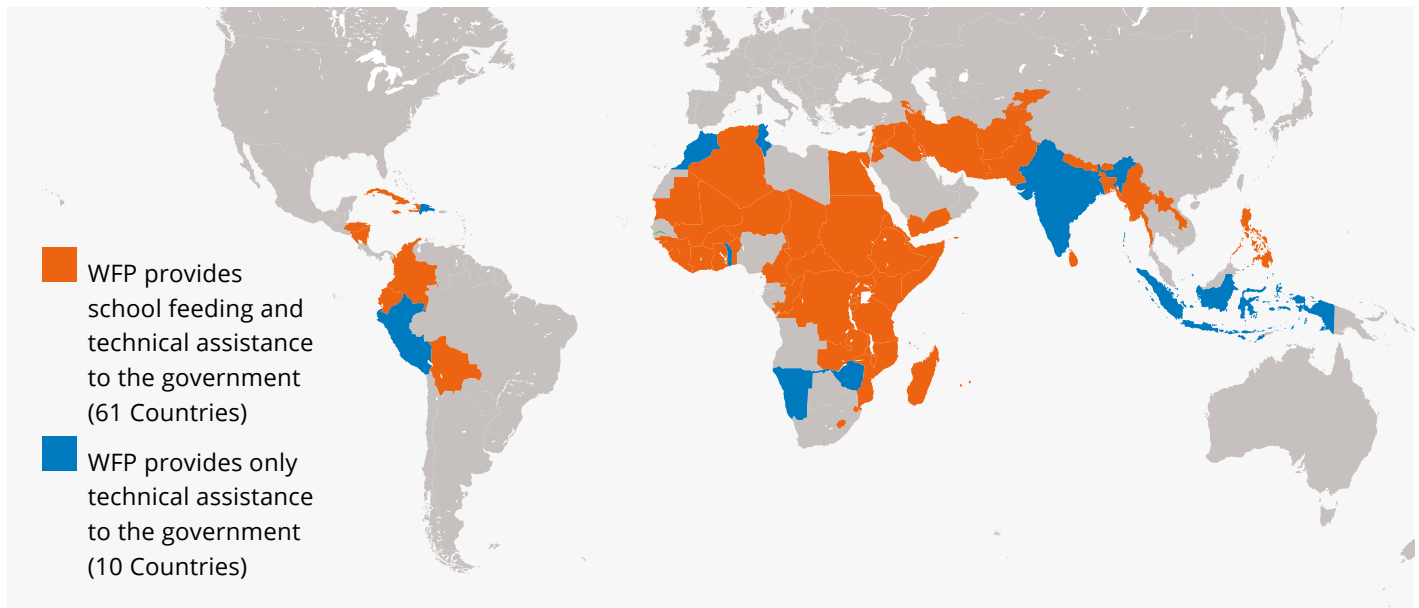


help build the skills, systems and structures required for government-led programmes.

In another ten countries with more stable contexts, and at the request of governments, WFP focused solely on the vital role of establishing, strengthening and consolidating nationally-owned and operated school feeding programmes. In capacity strengthening settings, a relatively small investment had very strong multiplier effects. For instance, from 2013 to 2018, the budget dedicated to Tunisia's national school feeding programme increased fourfold. In 2018 alone, the Government of Tunisia's strong commitment to the implementation of innovative school feeding modalities was reflected by the Ministry of Education's complementary direct investment of USD 1.7 million in WFP Country Strategic Plan activities.

In the 71 countries where WFP provided school meals, technical assistance or a combination of both, nearly 167 million additional children benefitted from

Figure 1: Global reach of WFP's school feeding activities in 2018

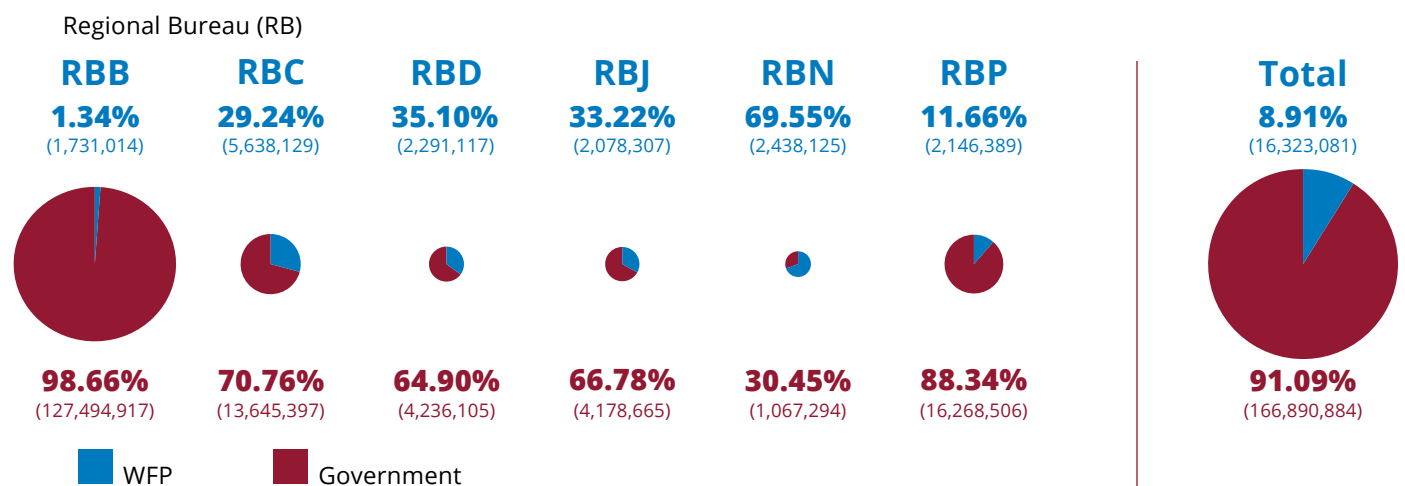


government-provided school meals. Thus, WFP's influence on school feeding activities globally is extensive.

Figure 2 illustrates the respective school feeding coverage by WFP and governments in 2018 by Regional Bureau (RB)⁵. In total, government investment and support to children largely outweighs WFP's contribution, illustrating the widespread political will, commitment and ownership of school feeding by countries themselves. In Asia and Latin

America, governments manage to cover a large proportion of their school-aged population. In Africa, efforts towards ensuring that all vulnerable children have access to these programmes have started and several large-scale national programmes are ongoing. However, research commissioned by WFP indicates that approximately 73 million more children around the world require school feeding support but are not currently covered by existing programmes; about 62 million of them are in Africa⁶.

Figure 2: WFP and government school feeding coverage in 71 country offices



5 The data on government-assisted school meal beneficiaries are taken from four different sources, by decreasing order of priority:
 -African Union. 2018. Sustainable School Feeding across the African Union. Addis Ababa, African Union. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36100-doc-sustainable_school_feeding_1.pdf
 -WFP. 2017. Smart School Meals: Nutrition-Sensitive National Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean, A Review of 16 Countries. Rome: WFP. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000019946/download/?_ga=2.88863771.1491961294.1564494036-1398024210.1564494036
 -World Bank. 2018. The State of Social Safety Nets 2018. Washington, D.C., World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29115>
 -WFP. 2013. The State of School Feeding Worldwide. Rome, WFP.
https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp257481.pdf?_ga=2.84605977.1491961294.1564494036-1398024210.1564494036

6 Partnership for Child Development. 2018. Global figures for children in need of School Feeding. London, Imperial College.

WFP's ultimate goal is to promote long-term sustainability of school feeding activities globally, by supporting countries to own and invest in their own nationally-managed school meal programmes. In 2018, WFP successfully handed over school feeding activities to national authorities in Bhutan and Kenya. This brought to 44 the total number of countries where WFP handed over its support over the years. Particularly in countries with stable contexts, WFP aims to hand over full control to national partners.

PASSING THE BATON TO KENYA'S HOME-GROWN SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMME



Kenyans are world-famous for long distance running; the Olympic medalist Paul Tergat has given credit to WFP school meals he received as a child for his success. So, it is no surprise that in June 2018, the Government of Kenya completed a handover process begun in 2009 by taking full control of the HGSF programme. Over 1.6 million children in 4,048 schools will receive a hot lunch under the USD 23.8 million programme, which is fully funded and run by the national government. Almost all covered schools will receive cash to buy food locally, thereby promoting agricultural production and trade. Over the past ten years, WFP built the skills of the relevant ministries, donated essential equipment and developed and piloted a programme strategy for the arid districts. WFP will continue to support the government by seconding a technical assistance officer to the Ministry of Education to help it monitor and evaluate the national programme, strengthen education policies and integrate nutrition education into the school curriculum.



1.6 MLN CHILDREN



4,048 SCHOOLS



RECEIVED HOT LUNCH

MILE HIGH MILESTONE IN BHUTAN



The mountainous terrain of Bhutan poses a major hurdle for children living in remote rural areas: they often must walk several hours to get to school. For over 40 years, school meals have been essential to help fuel their journey and support their cognitive and physical development. In 2018, after years of building the government's capacities and providing it with policy and technical advice, WFP successfully handed over its remaining 14,000 school children to the national school feeding programme (SFP). The Bhutanese government will fully fund, manage and implement the national SFP from 2019 onwards and intends to expand coverage to a total of 30,000 schoolchildren.



14,000 SCHOOL CHILDREN IN 2018

30,000 OBJECTIVE FROM 2019

+114%

In Rwanda, where WFP is engaged in a transition process towards national ownership, a McGovern-Dole evaluation published in 2017⁷ illustrated positive achievements in capacity development which were consistently reported by the evaluation. These included:

- capacity development of key education staff at the decentralized level (district officers, school managers, school feeding staff);
- the placement of staff in five government offices, which reportedly enhanced the capacity of public institutions for support and supervision;
- WFP's consistent engagement in policy dialogue and strengthening, through the funding of various studies to inform decision-making; and
- the drafting of a National White Paper on School Feeding and the support to a School Feeding Policy and Strategy.

⁷ Leturque, H., Visser, M., Bâcle, P. & Dukundane, A., 2017. Operation Evaluation: Rwanda, Common Country Programme, 200539, mid-term evaluation (2013-2016). WFP, Rome.

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

WFP's school feeding activities are tailored to the diverse realities encountered in its six regional bureaux. The highest numbers of beneficiaries in 2018 were in the Middle-East, East Africa and West Africa regions, where many countries endured conflict or climate-related crises or exhibited highly vulnerable contexts. WFP assisted a relatively lower number of children and countries in Latin America and Asia, where much of the transition process from WFP-operated school feeding programmes to government-led programmes has already taken place. WFP continues to be engaged in these contexts by providing technical assistance, which is crucial to ensure government capacity to support vulnerable children.

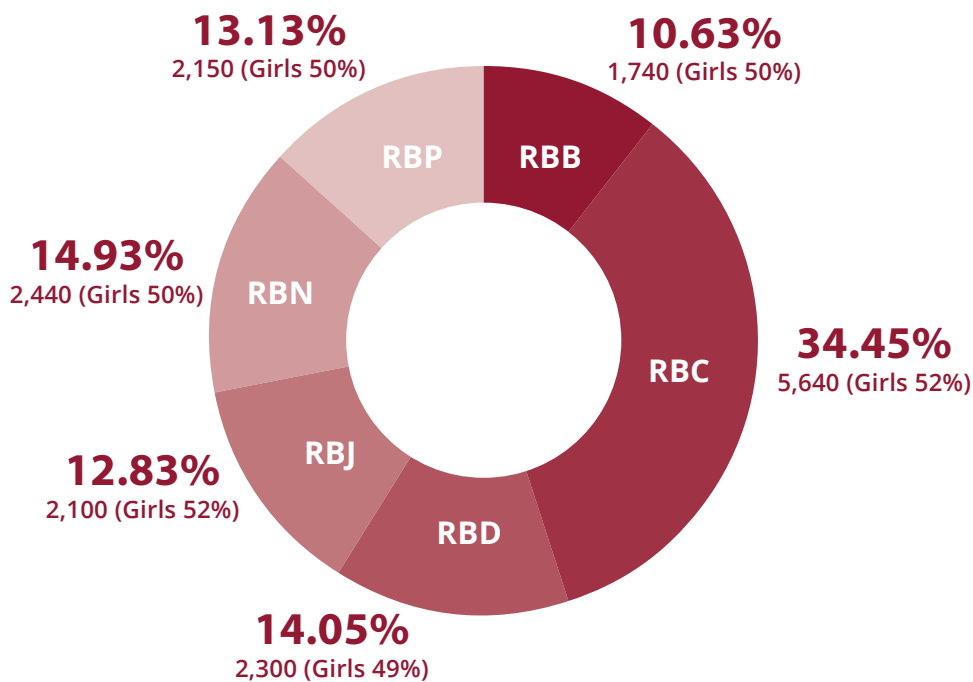
Figure 3 provides a disaggregation of 2018 school feeding beneficiaries by region, along with the percent of female recipients.

recipients. The largest single programme was in Burundi (over 600,000 boys and girls), while some 720,000 children were aided in L3/L2 emergencies in Ethiopia and South Sudan. A major milestone was the handover to the Kenyan government in October.

Regional Bureau Dakar (RBD): The West Africa region reached 14 percent of school feeding beneficiaries. Over 720,000 schoolchildren were assisted in seven countries that experienced L3 or L2 emergencies in the region. The largest number of children reached (583,000) was in Benin, whose government in 2017 allocated USD 47 million to WFP to feed schoolchildren over a five-year period.

Regional Bureau Panama (RBP): This region accounted for over 13 percent of school feeding participants, which reflects the fact that most school feeding programmes in this region are now government-led. Of the

Figure 3: School feeding children reached by region (1,000s) and % of girls



Regional Bureau Cairo (RBC): This region accounted for 35 percent of WFP-assisted girls and boys, mainly due to one-off distributions in Egypt, and large programmes in conflict-affected Level 3 (L3) and Level 2 (L2) emergency countries (Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen). RBC also supported the largest number of children in a single country – over two million – in Egypt. Despite the high number of beneficiaries reached, most countries did not achieve 100 percent of planned feeding days.

Regional Bureau Nairobi (RBN): The Eastern Africa region accounted for 15 percent of WFP's school feeding

2.1 million children assisted, over half (1.2 million) were in Honduras, representing WFP's second largest school feeding programme in the number of beneficiaries. However, in most countries of this region, WFP has been focusing on technical assistance and capacity strengthening activities in support of national school feeding programmes.

Regional Bureau Johannesburg (RBJ): Nearly 13 percent of schoolchildren were reached by RBJ. The largest school feeding programme—50 percent of region's total—was in Malawi, a result which builds on strong partnerships with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

Regional Bureau Bangkok (RBB): Although RBB accounted for only 11 percent of WFP global school feeding beneficiaries (1.7 million children), technical assistance was provided to large-scale government-owned programmes in India and Indonesia. The largest programmes were carried out in two L2 emergency countries, Bangladesh and Myanmar while in Bhutan, WFP successfully handed over its direct beneficiaries to the government.

SCHOOL FEEDING IN EMERGENCIES

Conflicts and natural disasters disrupt children’s ability to attend school and threaten their food and nutritional security. As the world’s largest humanitarian organization, WFP is recognized as a leader in providing emergency school feeding to provide a safety net for children and their families and help restore normalcy. In emergency contexts, school feeding is coordinated under the Education Cluster and WFP closely collaborates with education partners. In 2018, WFP assisted nearly 3.4 million beneficiaries in L3 and L2 emergencies (see Figure 4).

YEMEN



Since the outbreak of conflict in 2015, an estimated 500,000 children had left school in Yemen, bringing the total number out of school to two million. After consultations with the government and the Education Cluster, WFP began providing emergency school feeding in April 2018, delivering nutritious snacks to nearly 394,000 girls and boys in 13 priority governorates. To support the economy and reduce lead times, the bulk of the snacks was produced locally. Complementary education and sanitation activities were carried out with UNICEF and other partners in four governorates, benefitting 76,000 children. The snacks helped to alleviate children’s short-term hunger, assist their conflict-affected families and encourage regular school attendance. The overall attendance rate was 78 percent; however, the rate remained lower for girls, likely due to ingrained discrimination against girls’ education. Given the success to date, WFP plans to begin scaling up the programme in 2019.

WFP, UNICEF AND OTHER PARTNERS

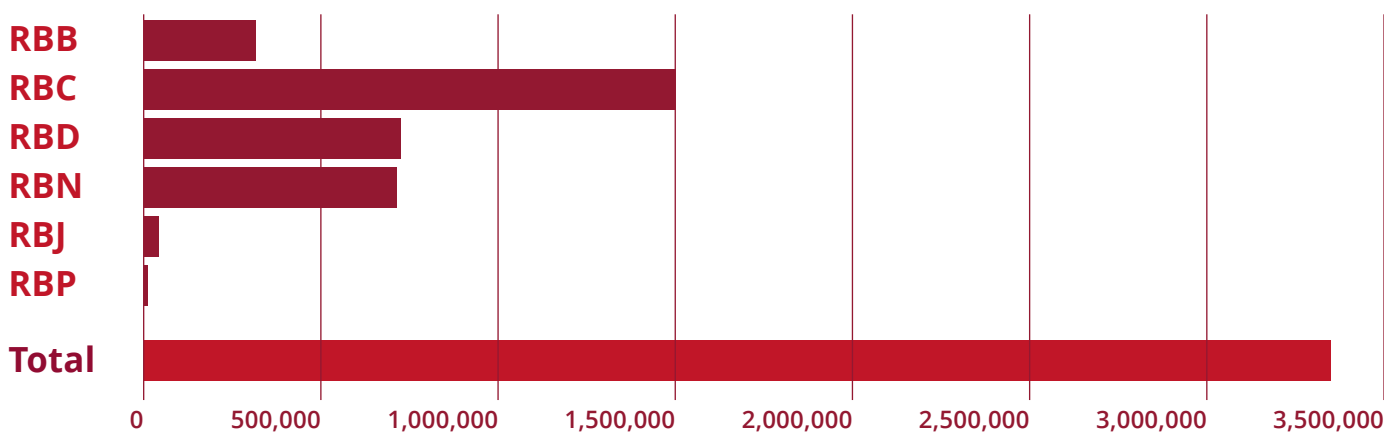


76,000

CHILDREN RECEIVED ADDITIONAL COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES OUT OF 394,000



Figure 4: Regional Share of L3/2 School Feeding Participants



SYRIA

Despite some progress made in overall school enrolment in recent years, an estimated 1.75 to 2.1 million children nonetheless remained out of school inside Syria. These children remained vulnerable and at increased risk of exploitation and abuse, including child labour and early marriage. This systemic crisis was likely to have an impact on future generations. The school meals programme was launched in Syria in August 2014, with the aim to encourage enrollment and regular attendance while improving the nutritional intake of schoolchildren. The programme has since witnessed a significant scale-up in a complex humanitarian context. In collaboration with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and within the overall framework of the “No Lost Generation” initiative, WFP targeted 650,000 children in 2018 in more than 1,000 schools, providing fortified date bars (80 grams) in addition to a glass of fortified milk to pre-primary and primary school children. WFP initiated a pilot to provide fresh snacks to 10,000 children in schools in Aleppo.

The meals, consisting of a sandwich and a piece of fruit or vegetables and providing over 500 Kcal daily, are prepared by displaced women employed in the initiative. The bread used for the sandwiches is produced by contracted local bakeries using fortified wheat flour provided by WFP. WFP covers all the associated costs, including the salaries of the women employed



FRESH SNACKS PROVIDING OVER 500 Kcal DAILY



10,000 CHILDREN

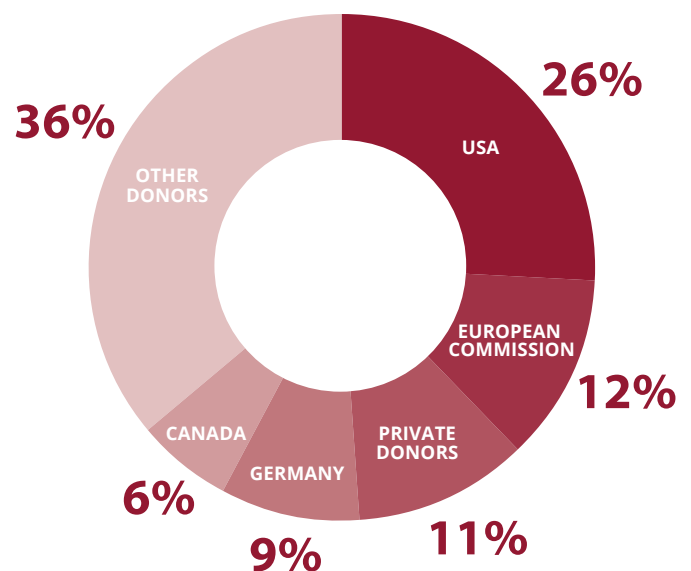
FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

The level and predictability of funding for school feeding activities remained a challenge in many contexts. Based on a review of 12 country or regional evaluations conducted in 2015 and 2016, funding constraints were mentioned in over half of the countries⁸. These gaps were found to reduce enrolment, attendance and programme sustainability due to decreases in the ration, the number of feeding days and/or the number of schools assisted.

Greater access to multilateral, flexible funds is key to addressing these problems and improving the timeliness of responses. For example, in the drought-prone Sahel, a challenging lean season made 5.8 million people food-insecure in 2018. Despite funding challenges across the region, WFP was able to feed nearly 643,000 children in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal thanks to an infusion of flexible funds, which accounted for 22 percent of total funding.

WFP continued to explore opportunities and innovative financing approaches to secure new multilateral funds. From 2015 to end 2018, this enabled WFP to raise over USD 25 million from 44 emerging donors and the private sector to maintain existing programmes, reach new areas, support smallholder farmers and assist handover to governments.

Figure 5: Top 5 donors to WFP school feeding programmes



In addition to providing much-needed funds, several private sector partnerships mobilized their technical expertise and advocacy services to underpin WFP's activities. In 2017, for example, Mastercard – WFP's top corporate donor – launched an initiative to raise significant funds for, and awareness of, the importance of school

⁸ Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Iraq, Mauritania, Tanzania and Uganda.

meals in keeping children in school. Through this initiative, Mastercard and its partners conducted fundraising activities in almost 40 countries, donating the value of 69 million school meals in 2017-2018. Also, since 2015, Mastercard employees have applied their professional expertise via 20 missions to conduct the WFP School Meals

Cost-Benefit Analysis, which has found that each USD 1 invested in school meals brings USD 3 to 10 in economic return. This analysis supports WFP in demonstrating the transformative power of school meals programmes to government officials and key stakeholders.

MASTERCARD HELPING TO MASTER HUNGER

Mastercard is helping children to realize their potential through the power of school meals. Thanks to support from Mastercard and other donors in 2017-2018, WFP was able to:

Bangladesh: provide school meals to 21,258 children in 120 schools, benefitting the 2,770 local women growers and ultra-poor smallholder farmers who supply the schools with fresh vegetables



Cambodia: expand the HGSF programme from 84 schools in 2017 to 205 schools in 2018



Mali: help reopen closed canteens and expand to new locations, thus enabling 40,000 children to receive meals for the entire 2018/19 school year



Liberia: reinstate HGSF which was shut down due to funding constraints, and expand from 12 schools in 2017 to 62 schools in 2018 – reaching more than 20,000 schoolchildren



Rwanda: support an additional 85,000 children in 104 schools by sustaining the HGSF programme through February 2019, set up new kitchens in 55 schools and train 300 cooks on safe food preparation



Kenya: successfully hand over school feeding activities to the government



Zambia: scale down direct operational support from 100 percent to 20 percent while enhancing the government's capacity to manage its own national programme



STOP HUNGER, AN ENDOWMENT FUND CREATED BY SODEXO TO FIGHT HUNGER THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Stop Hunger and WFP have been working together for over four years; support has been primarily focused on three key pillars including homegrown school meals, women's empowerment and emergency assistance. In the first pillar, the objective of the Sodexo partnership is to increase the sustainability of school feeding addressing specific school feeding value chain components from production to consumption. This includes areas such as logistics, storage, supply

chain and linkage to smallholder farmer production. The second pillar aims to support food safety and quality by assessing the current food safety and hygiene situation in and around schools to identify capacity development needs. This resulted, among others, in the recent publication of Food Safety and Quality Guidelines for Safer School Meals⁹, with a special focus on gender. While funding comes from Stop Hunger, Sodexo staff provide their expertise to WFP in two main areas: supply chain, procurement, food quality and safety issues related to school meals, and paper and digital vouchers. Sodexo also leverages its network of stakeholders to fundraise on WFP's behalf, particularly for the most acute emergencies.



SCHOOL FEEDING AND ITS MULTIPLE BENEFITS

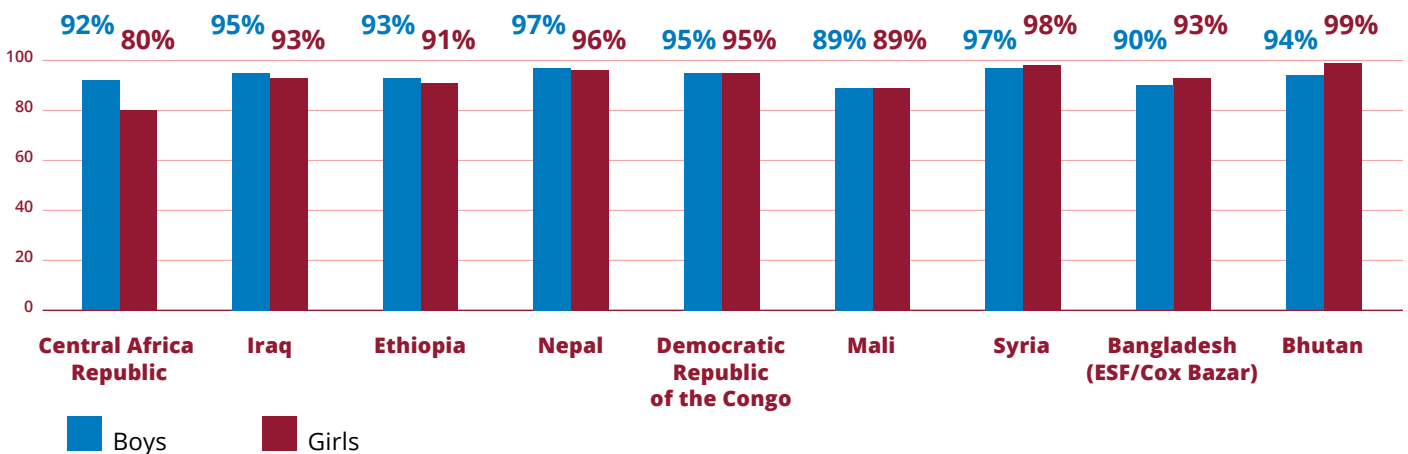
Removing the barriers to education

Hungry children are less able to concentrate and retain knowledge. WFP aims to enable access to education by using school meals to increase attendance and retention rates so that children can reach their full potential. In 2018, 45 operations representing emergency and stable settings reported on the retention rate.

Of these operations, 73 percent met the established targets; in 78 percent of cases, girls did as well as boys in meeting the targets. Figure 6 illustrates variations in gender parity in different countries.

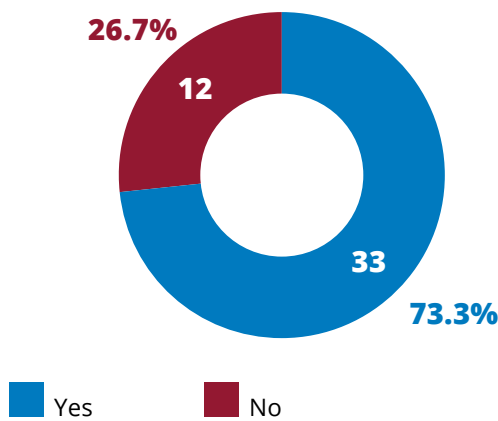
High retention rates of girls in Bhutan were in line with WFP and government efforts to improve gender parity in the country. In Uganda, the school feeding programme in crisis-affected Karamoja contributed towards gender parity in education through increased enrolment, attendance and retention. In many cases, girls from poor and food insecure households are denied

Figure 6: Overview of gender disparities in retention rate



⁹ <https://newgo.wfp.org/documents/food-safety-and-quality-guidelines-for-safer-school-meals>

Figure 7: Number of countries meeting their retention rate target



a chance of accessing education because their families give preference to boys. However, in many countries this gender gap is still evident: the low retention rate of girls versus boys in the Central African Republic was attributed to parents' tendency to keep girls at home to help with domestic and agricultural tasks.

Results from earlier evaluations confirmed that increased access to education, made possible by school meals, contributes to improving equality and inclusiveness in education. An evaluation of the WFP school feeding programme in Kenya¹⁰ showed that improvements in school

KEEPING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL DURING CONFLICT

School meals provided under Iraq's Emergency School Feeding programme to 89,000 children contributed to retention rates of 94 percent; overall attendance increased by 3.8 percent compared to the baseline. In Mali, a 15 percent increase in enrolment was observed, with 16 percent for girls and 13 percent for boys.



enrolment and completion are stronger when school meals are combined with other school-based interventions, such as community sensitization campaigns and sanitation programmes. Similarly, an evaluation in Ethiopia¹¹ found that the available evidence “underscores that the introduction of the take-home rations has greatly increased girls’ enrolment, maintained school attendance, prevented school dropout, and narrowed gender gaps in the target schools. . . . In-depth interviews also suggest that from the perspective of the communities, the take-home ration is leading to a decrease in [the risk of] early marriage.”

RESULTS FROM EVALUATIONS IN ETHIOPIA AND MALI

Ethiopia: Provision of a monthly THR of two litres of vegetable oil to girl pupils improved their participation and achievements in education. Specifically, WFP schools were associated with greater school enrolment, a more favourable Gender Parity Index and 10 percent lower grade repetition rates (particularly for girls) compared to non-supported schools. Among the issues identified were the need to ensure sustainability of the THR and to develop mechanisms for increasing the participation of women and girls in school feeding design and implementation¹².



Mali: A research paper indicated that emergency school feeding during the conflict increased enrolment by 11 percent, added an additional half-year of completed schooling and reduced the time spent by girls in child labour relative to children in the comparison group¹³. However, the increased attainment was mostly observed in children who did not reside in the immediate vicinity of the conflict.



10 Dunn, S. & Otsola, J. 2017. Final evaluation of the World Food Programme USDA/McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme (FFE 615- 2013/041/00) in Kenya (Decentralized Evaluation). WFP. P. 26 sq.
 11 Visser, M., Alder, D., Bhatia, R., Bultosa, G., Berhanu, D. & Fenning, C. 2018. Final Evaluation of WFP's USDA McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme in Afar and Somali Regions in Ethiopia from 2013 to 2017. WFP, p. 25.
 12 Visser, M., et al. 2018. Ibid.
 13 Aurino, E., Tranchant, J., P. Diallo, A.S., & Gelli A. 2018. 'School Feeding or General Food Distribution? Quasi-experimental evidence on the educational impacts of emergency food assistance during conflict in Mali'. UNICEF Office of Research -Innocenti Working Paper WP-2018-04/June 2018. Florence.

Enhancing children's nutrition and wellbeing

Nutritious meals are essential to provide children with the micronutrients they need to develop properly. Adequate calories and micronutrients help support children's cognitive development, prevent anaemia in adolescent girls and combat nutritional deficiencies in other age groups. School feeding represents an effective nutrition-specific intervention, as it contributes directly to making sure that children receive adequate food and nutrients.

In 2018, WFP provided school meals in 40 countries, consisting of a "basket" of foods known to meet the essential nutritional requirements of growing children. In a further 19 countries, WFP supplied nutritious snacks such as fortified date bars and high energy biscuits (HEB). To further diversify children's diets, WFP used cash-based transfers (CBT) and HGSF whenever possible. CBTs were used in 32 countries to allow decentralized procurement by schools of locally-grown foods. For example, in Armenia CBT allowed the schools to purchase up to 20 food items from local traders, compared to the six previously supplied. According to the principal of one school, "the difference is obvious as you see smiling faces of children in cafeteria eating fast to get second helpings".

However, sufficient food and micronutrients are not enough. In many communities, knowledge about how to improve nutritional outcomes is lacking. Thus, WFP uses schools to promote broader changes in nutrition-related practices by informing millions of parents, teachers, children, local farmers, cooks and caterers about nutrition and healthy eating habits. Nutrition-sensitive programming was increasingly employed in 2018. In most countries, WFP complements school meals with Social and Behavior Change Communication activities, including nutrition education, leading to healthier diets, reduced anemia levels and reduced micronutrient deficiencies.

FOCUSING ON NUTRITION IN HONDURAS



WFP supported the Government of Honduras to provide 1.3 million pre- and primary school children nationwide with nutritious meals. Of these children, 24 percent received fresh fruits, vegetables and eggs as well as the basic ration because of activities undertaken to strengthen the local supply of foods from school gardens and smallholder farmers. Parents, teachers, educational authorities and farmer organizations were trained on nutrition and food preparation and quality control. To further impact nutritional outcomes, complementary micronutrient supplements were supplied in 60 WFP-assisted schools and a deworming campaign was implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Health.



1.3 MILLION PRE- AND PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN PROVIDED WITH NUTRITIOUS MEALS



24 PERCENT OF THEM RECEIVED FRESH FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND EGGS AS WELL AS THE BASIC RATION

14 Fisher, M., Gichigi, W., Iakupova, M. & Jantzi, T., 2017. Kyrgyz Republic DEV 200176: Optimising The Primary School Meals Programme: An Operation Evaluation. Rome, WFP.

SUPPORTING POLICIES FOR BETTER NUTRITION IN KYRGYZSTAN



In Kyrgyzstan, WFP assisted the government in developing an extensive policy framework for a national school feeding programme comprised of over twenty policies, strategies and decrees. An evaluation¹⁴ of the pilot programme implemented from 2012 to 2016 in 261 government-supported schools found that, compared to the pre-pilot status, WFP's efforts directly contributed to:

improving the nutritional value of school meals, benefitting 79,776 children;

increasing the average frequency of hot meals in these schools from 2.7 to 3.6 times per week;

raising the kilocalorie value of these meals from 471 Kcal/meal to 515 Kcal/meal;

significantly **improving** the diversity and doubling the protein and micronutrient value of the school menus: WFP provided extensive technical guidance to develop 130 recipes adapted to cultural preferences and using local ingredients.



79,776
CHILDREN



261
SCHOOLS



**HOT MEALS:
FREQUENCY PER WEEK**

FROM **2.7** TO **3.6**



**MEALS:
KCAL PER MEAL**

FROM **471** KCAL TO **515** KCAL

Providing a safety net for children and families

Poor families often cannot afford to send their children to school because they rely on earnings from child labour to make ends meet. Without access to education, their children are more likely to be trapped in the inter-generational cycle of hunger and poverty. WFP aims to stop this negative cycle by using school feeding as a safety net to improve the food security of the most vulnerable families. This is done by scaling-up assistance through schools in shock-affected communities, providing an income transfer to households to allow them to meet other basic needs and ensuring appropriate targeting to the poorest areas and to low- and middle-income countries.

REDUCING THE BURDEN OF CHILD LABOUR

In Lebanon, Syrian refugee children received a basic monthly education transfer of USD 13.50 to USD 20 to cover a portion of the indirect costs of going to school during the 2017-2018 school year. An impact evaluation on a sample of 1,440 households found that, compared to children who did not receive this transfer, children attending the schools exhibited a 13 percent reduction in hunger (in terms of skipping a meal the previous day or going to bed hungry) and a 17-20 percent reduction overall in carrying out household chores¹⁵.

**MONTHLY
EDUCATION
TRANSFER**



FROM
USD 13.50
TO
USD 20

These results are consistent with a quasi-experimental impact evaluation of WFP school feeding in Mali, published in 2018¹⁶. This study showed that WFP school feeding provided in crisis-affected areas of the country between 2013 and 2017 led to a lower participation and time spent in labour among girls by 10 percentage points, corresponding to working one month less per year.

¹⁵ UNICEF and WFP. 2018. "Min Ila" Cash Transfer Program for Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon. Endline Technical Report.

¹⁶ Aurino et al., 2018. School Feeding or General Food Distribution? Quasi-Experimental Evidence on the Educational Impacts of Emergency Food Assistance during Conflict in Mali. Innocenti Working Papers no. 2018-04, UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, Florence

Developing links between school feeding and local agricultural production

Locally sourced food is usually more varied and nutritious than other foods; moreover, purchasing food that is grown locally supports small-scale farmers, many of whom are women. WFP aims to increase the links between school feeding and local agricultural producers by transferring funds directly to schools for purchasing food for their school meals. This helps to increase local food production and provide jobs and stable markets for smallholder farmers, while meeting education and nutrition objectives.

In 2018, nearly 70 percent of countries in which WFP provided direct food support, implemented HGSF activities. Sixty percent of the food purchased by country offices for school meals was procured locally; out of this figure, seven percent was purchased from smallholder farmers, representing an investment of USD 3.2 million.

In Cambodia, a Country Portfolio Evaluation published in 2018 on WFP activities between 2011 and 2017 concluded that HGSF positively contributed to strengthening the sustainability of the programme, in a context where WFP is transitioning its school feeding activities to national ownership. This approach is well-accepted by parents, who trust the quality and safety of food items produced by farmers they know. This model also helped increase the engagement of women in the programme.

COMMUNITY GARDENS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In 2018, WFP scaled up HGSF activities in five provinces of Chad and procured some 2,000 mt directly from smallholder farmers. In Chaouir, WFP supported the construction and management of school kitchens, canteens and food storage rooms and the production of compost for the community gardens which provided fresh vegetables for the targeted schools. Banate helps with the Chaouir community garden and his activities children attend the primary school there. "We are very satisfied. The best vegetables in our crop are used to prepare the children's meals at school. We can make money by selling some of the products at the market", he says.



RESULTS FROM AN EVALUATION IN SENEGAL



One of the programme objectives in Senegal was to stimulate the local economy through local purchases. An evaluation of the school feeding operation reported that the use of CBTs increased school performance, positively impacting the local economy and allowing schools to be more independent in managing their canteens. The development of tools to select and monitor traders helped to build the network of retailers; however, capacity building and monitoring activities were found to be overly focused on WFP's programmatic issues.



III. TAKING STOCK OF WFP SCHOOL FEEDING EFFORTS



LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTATION

In this section we present the results of a wide stocktaking and situation analysis carried out by WFP to inform its emerging school feeding strategy. During 2018, WFP engaged in a broad consultative exercise which included a review and analysis of key documents to inform the way forward, including:

- 82 approved Country Strategic Plans from all regions;
- reports of regional school feeding workshops held in 2017-2018;
- the External Audit of WFP School Feeding (2016); and
- 20 WFP evaluations (school feeding, portfolio, operation and impact evaluations).

Consultations for the stocktaking exercise were carried out on the following occasions:

- the school feeding strategy retreat (August 2018);
- the Regional Programme Advisor Meeting (September 2018);
- consultation calls with all regional bureaux programme teams and school feeding focal points (August-September 2018);
- the Global Child Nutrition Forum side-event for 100 WFP staff (October 2018); and
- the Country Director meetings (regional bureaux of Johannesburg, Dakar and Bangkok).

The insights drawn from this analysis are presented in this section.

POSITIONING AND STRATEGIC FRAMING OF SCHOOL FEEDING AT COUNTRY LEVEL

The Zero Hunger Strategic Reviews have, in many cases, highlighted the value of school feeding as a hunger-reduction measure and recommended that WFP support governments to strengthen national school feeding policies and systems. The Country Strategic Plans (CSPs) have clearly provided WFP an opportunity to align its school feeding portfolio with national policy priorities including national development plans, education sector plans and various multisectoral policies. An increased number of CSPs have clearly articulated capacity strengthening objectives based on solid capacity analyses.

In CSPs, school feeding is generally framed as contributing to human capital, social protection and resilience, which closely aligns to the current global thinking on school feeding. Also, school feeding is connected to the three focus areas of WFP's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, with a predominant tendency to link to development objectives: 40 CSPs link school feeding to root causes, 33 to resilience and 9 to crisis response.

There is a need to further support country offices to flesh out the operational implications of each of these approaches. For example, CSPs do not always articulate the operational difference between implementing school feeding in development or crisis settings. Moreover, there is a need to clearly signal the trade-offs and decisions that have been made at country level to ensure that programmes are of good quality and correspond to best practice.

WFP decentralized evaluations and the 2016 External Audit confirm that many country offices are still finding it difficult to articulate transition plans or handover strategies with the government. The CSP review confirms this: 43 of 60 countries either had not yet formalised a hand-over plan, were in discussions to define a hand-over plan or had not yet started the discussions.

This is surprising because governments have demonstrated a significant increase in political will and commitment for school feeding: African countries such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have greatly stepped up their investments in school feeding. This means that WFP country offices are engaging in the right type of policy dialogue, and – supported by South-South cooperation approaches through the Center of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil – have managed to mobilize national interest in school feeding. The fact that these discussions are not translating into formal handover plans means there is a need to further support this area to capitalize on national interest and ensure transitions are implemented systematically.

PROGRAMME QUALITY: FOCUS ON INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING FOR LASTING IMPACT

There is a clear shift towards more sustainable models of school feeding which include local purchases: in around 40 CSPs, WFP commits to support a national HGSP model. This trend is clear in all regions except the Middle East. Evaluations show that HGSP provides opportunities to align with inter-governmental initiatives such as the African Union HGSP initiative and government agendas, and that HGSP is a generally a powerful way to promote government investment in school feeding.

Practically all CSPs envision more nutrition-sensitive school feeding. School feeding has great potential to address the many determinants of malnutrition and promote healthy eating from an early age, boosting health, growth and cognitive development. School feeding can also be mobilised to meet the challenges of the “nutrition transition” or rapidly changing diets coupled with reduced physical activity. WFP country offices have modified the operational design of the programmes to enhance sustainability, diversify food baskets and support a handover to the government by, for example, decentralizing the purchase of food to the school or district level.

To further support these efforts and truly achieve scale in HGSP approaches, there is a need to continue analyzing what is the best practice across countries and in different contexts. There is a need for stronger guidance on how to address government system bottlenecks in HGSP: WFP should take stock of what has worked in procurement and food quality and safety regulations, government resource transfer systems, monitoring and reporting and community sensitisation, along with mechanisms for accountability and feedback and complaints.

Guidance also needs to be developed in cases where WFP country offices decide to decentralize the purchases of food to the schools. Finally, there are still gaps in WFP’s ability to ensure that school feeding is complemented by activities such as deworming, water, sanitation and hygiene activities and nutrition education to address other barriers to school.

A FOCUS ON GIRLS: SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT GIRLS FACE AND THE NEED FOR WFP TO LOOK AT INTEGRATED PLATFORMS AT SCHOOL LEVEL

A multitude of gendered barriers may hinder the access of children, and adolescent girls in particular, to schools. Financial, social, religious, health and safety concerns may all present disproportionate obstacles to school attendance of girls. A WFP multi-country study found that school costs were the dominant barrier preventing school attendance, compounded by the opportunity costs associated with taking time away from income-generating activities and elevated poverty rates¹⁷. In Adjumani, Uganda, school fees were emphasised as a particular obstacle for refugee orphans, directly limiting their participation in the school system. In Cambodia, girls described the pressure they felt to leave school to seek employment (primarily low-skilled work in garment factories) to contribute to their household’s finances.

In some contexts, as girls grow older they might not drop out completely but their relationship to school and their attendance becomes more fluid and seasonal. Girls are more likely to miss more days of school during lean seasons or harvest.

In Cambodia, Kenya and Uganda, girls and their caregivers confirmed that they often missed school due to menstruation, associated embarrassment and limited personal knowledge and opportunities to manage hygiene. Additional factors affecting access to education include early marriage, which accounts for higher drop-out rates in many lower income countries, and early pregnancy, which further reduces years in school and is exacerbated in armed conflict and displacement settings¹⁸.

Some of the most common health conditions affecting education are more prevalent in girls and gender inequalities and exclusion can place girls at greater risk of ill health, neglect and hunger¹⁹. For example, women and girls are more likely for physiological reasons to experience higher rates of anaemia than are men and boys. Girls can also benefit greatly from health promotion and life-skills lessons offered in schools.

Finally, the location or school environment itself may present a source of protection risks for adolescent girls. Safety and security affect families’ decisions to allow daughters to attend school, especially if they have to travel long distances. Schools may be a place where students suffer from discrimination, bullying, violence and harassment, either by

17 WFP & Anthrologica. 2018. Bridging the Gap: Engaging Adolescents for Nutrition, Health and Sustainable Development. A multi country study. <https://bit.ly/2z7489K>

18 Chapter 21, DCP-3. Washington D.C., World Bank, 2018.

19 Bundy, D. 2011. Rethinking School Health: A Key Component of Education for All. Directions in Development-Human Development. Washington D.C., World Bank.

THE NIGER ADOLESCENT GIRL STRATEGY



In 2012, WFP Niger started a partnership targeting vulnerable adolescent girls with a joint education and nutrition programme in three municipalities of the Zinder region, where school attendance was the lowest in the country. Unlike most WFP school meal programmes, the project targeted both primary and secondary students to encourage school attendance and performance, while simultaneously improving student nutrition knowledge and status. The integrated approach intended to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition, improve girls' school enrolment and retention rate in secondary education, prevent early marriage and pregnancy and enhance their nutritional status. Approximately 15,000 adolescent girls from very poor households enrolled in the first year of secondary education benefitted from three activities:

Scholarships in the form of cash

grants (approx. USD 6.9/month) were provided to adolescent girls attending school throughout the academic year; these provided the girls with a certain financial independence and served as an incentive to continue with their education;



Sensitization and awareness-raising efforts

were provided, targeting boys and girls as well as communities with messages on nutrition, nutrition-sensitive practices, life skills, education, the dangers of early marriage and pregnancies and HIV/AIDS;



Under the activity's nutrition axis, the adolescent girls received iron folic acid

, provided by UNICEF during the lean season, along with awareness raising materials. The project was jointly implemented with the Nigerien government, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women.



their peers or by their teachers; and where discriminatory gender roles are reinforced. Schools are sometimes used to recruit or abduct children by traffickers and armed groups. Lack of infrastructure, trained teachers and impunity can place girls and boys at risk of violence.

In some countries WFP has successfully operationalized approaches to address some of these barriers through integrated platforms; this needs to be scaled up. In Liberia, for example, WFP initiated a joint programme with UN Women and UNFPA, which uses school feeding as an entry point to improve adolescent girls' and women's food security, sexual and reproductive health and strengthen protection from violence. Given that food security presents a critical concern in Liberia and has long-term impacts on access to education, the project provides:

- a combined approach of THRs to adolescent girls enrolled in schools where gender parity is disproportionately against girls;
- development of a dedicated curriculum on sexual and reproductive health and support to access counselling services;
- capacity building and awareness raising on gender-based violence; and
- access to business development and financial literacy for young women and adolescent girls. In the future, WFP needs to scale up these approaches with partners.

An evaluation of the project found an improved success rate of girl students' education: from 32 percent in the 2013-2014 school year to 68 percent in the 2014-2015 school year. The evaluation found that the project helped to significantly decrease the prevalence of anaemia, raised nutritional awareness and supported behaviour change such as hygiene and hand washing. The project also contributed to improving adolescents' ability and confidence to solve problems with their peers and express their ideas.

PARTNERSHIPS: NEW POSITIONING FOR HUMAN CAPITAL SYNERGIES

Education partners are crucial to ensure that investments in the health and nutrition of children are coupled with investments in learning and proper quality education. Propelled largely by a realization that there is a need to invest in the learning (the supply side of education) and the learner (the wellbeing of the children themselves), education sector partners have shown increasing interest in supporting a broader package of school health and nutrition interventions to children in school.

Feedback from partners indicates that there is an opportunity for WFP to capitalize on the increased interest through more robust engagement with the education sector. More engagement would leverage initiatives such as the Focusing Resources for Effective School Health (FRESH)²⁰ initiative: in 2000, as part of Education for All movement (EFA)²¹, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) led with other United Nations agencies the launch of FRESH²², a comprehensive evidence-based framework that promotes better education results through health interventions delivered by schools, especially health-related school polices, safe water and sanitation facilities, skills-based health education and health and nutrition services. Other important United Nations initiatives to which WFP intends to better link up include the Essential Package, Child-Friendly Schools, the World Health Organization's (WHO) Health Promoting Schools, FAO's School Food and Nutrition Education programming, and the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition. There are also several global initiatives on girls' education that WFP could explore.

A review of WFP evaluations conducted between 2014 and 2018 showed clear gaps in operational complementarity

between WFP school feeding and the wider education sector partners in many countries; these examples of disconnect were found to potentially fuel donor fatigue and undermine programme quality²³. Regions confirmed that WFP and education partners have limited geographical overlap. Good examples, however, also exist: for instance, in Cambodia, where WFP-provided school meals are successfully combined with upgrading school infrastructure, early grade reading interventions, training of teachers by NGOs specialised in education, FAO support for HGSF through support for farmers and school gardens, and research and evaluations on school feeding models in collaboration with the Ministry of Education²⁴. There is great potential to take stock of experiences in the McGovern-Dole projects in this respect.

It is very clear from the 2018 consultations that WFP's global leadership in school feeding is very welcome and needed to ensure that no child goes to school hungry. But it is also clear that the nature of that leadership needs to change: rather than act as the sole implementor of school feeding efforts, WFP needs to foster country ownership by taking a larger role as a facilitator and catalyst for change by working with others. WFP needs to adopt a broader, more open and inclusive approach with its key partners: with countries, recognizing that WFP's main role is to facilitate the journey along the path to self-reliance; with United Nations Agencies, being more intentional about establishing functional partnerships, especially with UNICEF, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO, the United Nations Development Programme and UN Women, and with non-State actors, recognizing in particular the huge role that NGOs play in delivery. Stronger ties with the private sector need to be developed as well. WFP's perception of its role at the country level needs to transition from viewing itself as the main deliverer of services to becoming the lead facilitator of change.

20 FRESH (Focusing Resources on Effective School Health). 2015. "School Health Matters Beyond 2015." World Education Forum. Incheon, Republic of Korea.

21 <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/archives/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/>

22 UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, and Education International. 2000. "FRESH: A Comprehensive School Health Approach to Achieve EFA." <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001255/125537e.pdf>

23 Spaak, M., Blanc, L., Creti, P., Garcia, O., Solé, R. & Sosole Kahemu, C. 2014. La République Démocratique du Congo : une évaluation du portefeuille du PAM (2009-2019). WFP.

Vanbruaene, M., Bellin-Sesay, F., Ngendakuriyo, A., Nkinzwanayo, S., Malardeau, C., Zimmer, L., LaGuardia, D. & Lorenzoni, M. 2016. Burundi: An Evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2011-2015). WFP.

Maunder, N., Hoogendoorn, A., Coombs, D., Fenton, G. & Carboni, L. 2017. South Sudan: An Evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2011-2016). WFP.

24 Dunn, S., Silvéreano-Vélis, J.-P., Sin, S., Canteli, C. & Jahan, F. 2017. Endline Evaluation of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Grant Food for Education (FFE) Programme for WFP Cambodia, 2013-2016. WFP.



Photo: WFP/Hugh Rutherford

IV. INSIGHTS AND WAY FORWARD



A lot of progress has been achieved in school feeding, especially at regional and country levels, helping to change the landscape of school feeding worldwide. Beyond what WFP achieves directly, in terms of supporting the implementation of programmes and reaching large numbers of children each year, perhaps the most exciting development is the success of WFP's indirect support: providing policy advice, engaging in national and regional dialogue, supporting country-to-country exchange and providing tools and assistance to design and implement national programmes. This has led to the adoption of national school feeding programmes in several countries.

We are clearly living a moment of heightened government interest and demand for school feeding. This political momentum has been supported by WFP and partners at all levels and has translated into concrete national commitments and investment, benefiting millions of children worldwide.

During 2018, WFP asked "what is next?" for its efforts in school feeding. The new direction has been guided by what has been achieved and the lessons learned to date, and by a clear evolution in thinking on school feeding from focusing on food aid to prioritizing global policies for national and human capital development. The world has more than a century of experience of nationally organized school feeding programmes, and the last two decades have seen growing momentum for change.

Current government interest in school feeding matches recent developments in the evidence base, providing the strongest rationale for school feeding investments to date. In 2018, the World Bank published the third edition of the Disease Control Priorities series (DCP3), part of a 30-year effort by the global health sector to identify the highest return investments in health in low- and middle-income countries. The series includes a specific analysis on how health status affects the development of school-age children and adolescents, how an essential package of interventions targeting school-age children and adolescents, including school feeding programs, can promote human capital and how the impact of these interventions might manifest differently for girls and boys at different ages.

A key message from this analysis is that children require specific support throughout the 8,000 days of childhood and adolescence, or until they turn 21²⁵. Thus, the current focus on the first 1,000 days is an essential but insufficient investment. Intervention is also required in three later

phases: the middle childhood growth and consolidation phase (5–9 years), when infection and malnutrition constrain growth and mortality is higher than previously recognised; the adolescent growth spurt (10–14 years), when substantial changes require good diet and health; and the adolescent phase of growth and consolidation (15–19 years), when new responses are needed to support brain maturation, intense social engagement and emotional control.

The DCP3 proposes two cost-efficient health intervention packages, one delivered through schools and one focusing on later adolescence. When combined, these two packages provide phase-specific support across the life cycle, securing the gains of investment in the first 1,000 days, enabling substantial catch-up from early growth failure and leveraging improved learning from concomitant education investments. School feeding is recognized as a cost-effective intervention and a necessary component of this essential package, in particular due to the multiple benefits it achieves.

This peer-reviewed body of research led by more than 100 authors, confirms that school feeding during basic and secondary education helps secure the investment made in children during their first 1,000 days of life and helps ensure that this support continues during critical development phases in middle childhood and adolescence²⁶. In the long term, when linked to nutrition and education, well designed equitable and empowering school feeding programmes contribute to child development through increased years of schooling and improved nutritional status.

Thanks to the latest research, both the health and the education sectors increasingly recognize that there has been insufficient investment in the health and nutrition of school children and that this misalignment needs to be corrected to support education goals and outcomes. Specific packages of support to school children- including school feeding – need to be scaled up.

WFP will now champion this neglected issue. WFP has six decades of experience supporting school health and nutrition and a trajectory of working with more than 100 countries to set up sustainable national school feeding programmes. WFP's track record is well established, but there are no grounds for complacency: the stocktaking exercise and consultations in 2018 highlight that organizational learning and change are required if WFP is to be better equipped to more fully meet the challenges ahead.

25 Bundy et al, DCP3, Vol8 Child and Adolescent Health and Development <http://dcp-3.org/CAHD>

26 Bundy et al. 2018. Child and Adolescent Health and Development: Realizing Neglected Potential, In: Re-imagining School Feeding: A High-Return Investment in Human Capital and Local Economies, Disease Control Priorities 3, v. 8. <http://dcp-3.org/schoolfeeding>

One major challenge is that WFP is still learning how to hand over its operations to governments in the most appropriate way and learn from its efforts. In some cases, WFP has had difficulties working with governments to secure political support and national funding for school feeding (illustrated in the difficulties of formalizing handover strategies with countries) and there is uneven staff capacity to provide technical assistance to governments. In general, a different approach is needed to handle these development challenges while sustaining WFP's strong humanitarian footprint and identity. To be able to truly achieve change, WFP will need to address these issues at a corporate level.

At the same time, increased fragility in some contexts due to conflict, climate change, migration and food insecurity has led to increased needs in some countries which requires a concomitantly greater response from WFP. Increased support for school children and their families in countries affected by war and instability is crucial to peacebuilding, yet WFP school feeding programmes in

many contexts are chronically underfunded, and the resulting gaps in coverage leave millions of school children living in extreme poverty without assistance.

In general three major organizational changes are needed: 1) WFP needs to change the way it works with governments, increasing the sustainability and institutionalization of its efforts; 2) WFP needs to improve the way it delivers school feeding, ensuring better quality, integration and coherence; and 3) WFP needs to be a better partner, acting as a catalyst and a facilitator of country, regional and global efforts.

There are ten years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the process of implementing this strategy, WFP aims to directly improve the lives of millions of children and their families, to end child hunger and to make a substantive and concrete contribution to achieving the SDGs related to poverty, hunger, education, gender and health by 2030.



Photo: WFP/Shorif Sonia



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